

Engaging the Will through Therapeutic Eurythmy

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"You should do your eurythmy. You'll feel better"

"I had to do my eurythmy 'B' at the airport so I wasn't afraid of being so crowded"

(quote from a student)

Engaging students in therapeutic eurythmy movement can be beneficial on many levels; one of which is enabling them to activate their own will in guided movement.

In eurythmy we are given the opportunity to connect directly with the universal archetypes, the cosmic forces which have formed us. In 2008 at the first World Conference for Eurythmy Therapy. Dr. Michaela Glöckler spoke of eurythmy therapy as a 'decisive instrument' and an 'infinite blessing' that helps one enter into their body, to act on and give guidance to the formative forces. Eurythmy, as an immensely human activity, enables one to take part in one's own healing process, not just on a physical level but on a karmic, spiritual level. Do we have the courage and inner strength to take on a path of healing in which we become co-creators?

"The form of each organ stands in a certain relationship to a possible form of movement of the outer human being. Let us assume that some organ, has the tendency to deformation, a tendency to assume an abnormal form. A form of movement exists which will counteract this tendency. And such is the case with every organ."

Rudolf Steiner April 12, 1921, Dornach, GA315

It is not difficult for us to understand that if we practice playing our musical scales on the piano we can strengthen our fingers, make them more flexible and improve our playing. If we study a language over time, see the constellation of letters, listen intently to how the sounds are formed, and practice ourselves, we can gain ability in speaking and understanding another language.

Is it such a leap to think that by doing a sequence of eurythmy gestures with intention, care, focus, and continuity over time, that one could affect and improve the condition of one's health? That through practice one could take an active part in the transformation of self.

Much like trying to memorize a poem by repeating the words both outwardly and inwardly, when one repeats specific eurythmy movements over a period of time one's activity can imprint deeply into the resonating life body to have a healthful effect. After such a period of self-practice, many people feel a deep connection to the sounds and gestures and have "made them their own." Children and adults can have a clearer sense of self both in body and soul.

One of the first exercises, given in the Therapeutic Eurythmy Course 1921, is called the "fidgety iambus ." It is an aid in bringing calm to a child that tends to be overly excitable, fluttery. The movement consists in lifting the left arm up to mid-level, followed by lifting the right arm up to the same level creating an open angle. Then both arms are released and the actions are repeated, but each time with encouraging the child to remember which arm is to be lifted first- left then right. This awareness is an important aspect.

Additionally a stepping forward can be added - left foot forward, then right foot placed next to the first. This seemingly simple exercise can be an incredible challenge: the remembering, the following through, the coordination of arm movements and stepping; the arms open, the feet closed. Engagement of the upper/head pole occurs through consciously remembering. The middle breathing realm is activated through the open left and right arm movements. The lower pole is engaged through a clear step and a consolidation by bringing the feet together. Thus the whole person becomes involved through this seemingly simple exercise.

Having witnessed it practiced over time, the effect can be amazingly powerful. One student I worked with began with much inner restlessness and impatience, not yet able to guide their own movements. They came to sessions after not being able to focus or sit still in class. They lacked inner will effort, since many tasks they could have been capable of learning were being done for them, such as tying their shoes.

We began slowly, and at first the movements appeared so easy to the student that not much effort was put forth. The first attempts were overly quick and there was mixing up the left and right sides even with the arm movements alone. All the restless activity was still hovering about. Keeping it playful with a story of the hare and the tortoise made it enjoyable. First we concentrated on just the arms, then just the stepping, later combining them and changing tempo.

After a few weeks I could see that something was shifting inwardly in the student's movements, their concentration, and stature. The movements had more clarity, the stepping and pace was steadier, an inner confidence and joy at success shone through. They exhibited satisfaction and pride when completing the whole series with a subtle sense of harmony and inner continuity emanating.

I continually marvel at the richness and endless well of possibility that therapeutic eurythmy can offer us as human beings in becoming more of who we are. That our true humanity can be given a space to shine ever more brightly. I give my gratitude to all the students, faculty, parents and colleagues that carry and support this therapeutic movement gifted from Rudolf Steiner.

"... the soul-spiritual qualities which a person portrays proceed from the whole human being, not solely from the brain and nervous tissue. One must learn to understand that one thinks not only with the brain but also with the little finger and the big toe. There is a certain significance in achieving lightness — particularly in the limbs — as this will bring lightness into the soul-life as well."

Therapeutic Eurythmy course , lecture 1, April 12, 1921