

Student Project

***The relationship between motor development, balance
and attention in the child***

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Objectives.

The purpose of my project is to **relate balance to attention** in physical education classes in the second seven-year cycle of Waldorf schools.

The motivation to develop this project is a pedagogical and personal concern, which often arises with the children in my physical education or movement class in a Waldorf school where I teach this subject.

Rudolf Steiner, founder of Waldorf education, oriented his methodology according to what we could call evolutionary psychology. One of his revealing theories was that of the 12 senses, which serve as a framework for pedagogical intervention and curative pedagogy.

*The child will be born in each of us
when we faithfully strive
through the father, the goodwill.
through the mother, peace of heart.
This child lies,
in the manger of our daily thinking.
In the Bethlehem of our skull,
In the stable of our body.
Awakened thinking,
is the child's name.
In Bethlehem is found, the ox,
the donkey and the dear ones.
They nourish with their breath the tenuous being.
our eternal wisdom, the donkey.
Our sleeping perfection, the ox.
Only when we master our senses,
when we express our thoughts,
Through the ox, and through the donkey
Our consciousness is advancing.*

Rudolf Steiner

We come permeated by entities that make their substances available to us. It is the angels who send us astral substance, as a foreign substance, we make it our own and let it flow into us.

Rudolf Steiner (GA 115 - Berlin, 1909)

Rudolf Steiner organized three blocks of four senses each.

The first block corresponds to the bodily senses, i.e. those that inform us about ourselves. The sense of touch, the sense of life, the sense of movement, and the sense of balance.

The second block is made up of the emotional senses, which inform us about our environment, and which we respond to with sympathy or antipathy. The sense of smell, the sense of taste, the sense of warmth, and the sense of sight.

The third is the block of the cognitive or social senses, which help us to perceive other human beings. Hearing, speech, thinking, and the sense of the I.

Although from an early age we have all the senses, which belong to the physical body, active, they mature progressively in the Soul, through the contact with the environment. Pedagogy has an important role in respecting the evolutionary periods of the child.

The bodily senses are also called basic since they are the basis of the cognitive and social senses, which will develop during adolescence. A primary objective for the infantile stage is the cultivation of the perception of the basic senses that guarantee in the young person adequate social and cognitive capacities to perceive the other.

I am going to describe the Sense of balance, which is the topic I am going to develop, and the capacity of attention.

The **sense of Balance**, brings us balance at the physical level, gravitational stability, inner balance at the level of psychic mood. It develops the feeling of inner calm, feeling of self-confidence.

There is a lack of development of the feeling when there are factors of exaggerated external stimulation. Feeling of listening, of reading aloud, difficulty of orientation, especially backwards, difficulty to concretize an image mentally. Activities proposed to stimulate the child's feelings with respect to attention and balance.

The senses of touch, the senses of life, and the sense of movement and balance are all within our most intimate realm.

Dr. Emil Pikler, born in Vienna and worked as a pediatrician since 1946 in Budapest. She worked on the evolution of movement and she started to experiment with kindergarten children. She studied how the lack of freedom of movement influenced thinking and cognitive qualities.

She did a very deep research that revolutionized at the time the whole form and care of the child in the first years of life. She worked a lot with children from 0 to 2 years old, with the development from birth until the child walks.

What she proposes is that the conquest of balance and movement should be a personal conquest. She had a card and she saw how the movement patterns were repeated and repeated, it was a **Goetheanist** observation. She observed all the steps that the child takes in his physical evolution until he achieves balance.

It was a time when walkers and playpens were in fashion, which allowed the child to stand up, and there were a lot of things to stimulate the child in the first years of life. She was totally against it because it did not favor the movement towards freedom, which built the body, everything that was the development of the musculature of the spine, and the hip. Because we put it as a support for the child to stand up before its time.

She argues that any supplementary support to help the child to sit or stand is detrimental, to make their body their own. And it would be detrimental in the adults to have a good balance or a good movement and feel inside the body when moving. He speaks of contractures that become chronic, and the germ of these contractures, begins at five or six months of life. And then they develop as chronic contractures in adulthood.

Basically, she proposes that the children carry out the movement in freedom. The movement should come from within, and not imposed with things that we propose. She says that we should not use the walker at all, neither the safety tools. We have to develop everything that man brings, that is inside him. Why that being came?

She saws that when babies have in their surroundings rattles, elements to stimulate them to pick them up, by its own incentive, will try to move. They want to get closer, so they turn, move their head and their legs, until he stands up, but standing up, and achieving that balance he conquers the space but doesn't strengthen the hips and the spine. The child should be on the floor for a long time. Belly up, belly down, in a protected space where he can develop the strength. She says that there can be several babies, that, if they can coexist, they will relate to each other, each one will go his own way. And we have to trust that they are not going to hurt each other.

This study takes us out of very built-in things. Adults should not play with children, the child should employ his own world. And in any case. Very similar with Waldorf pedagogy, the teacher does not play with the students. The teacher is not going to propose "let's play", that's not going to happen in Waldorf school, the child is going to play at being an adult. The child is always going to play at things of life, to be a father, to be a mother. To imitate the adult. The conquest of inner independence, we should not entertain the child as if we were entertainers at a birthday party. Even if he is an only child, the child does not get bored to be with himself; perhaps we are cooking, the child is playing, we are accompanying him. It should not be required to play always with him.

Not with us, but with him. It is important not to give him audiovisuals so that he does not kill his creativity.

No one can do it for us, the child stands up, can stand upright. It is an ego conquest. Standing up is very much related to that moment, which will be between 1 and 2 years of age, when the child says "I"; those are the milestones, which will build the "I" that will later finish incorporating itself between 21 and 23 years of age.

But in principle it is to be able to stand up, and then when the child says "I", it is something that no one can say but me.

Is this conquest of equilibrium inside the human being or is it outside the human being?

Steiner, through spiritual science, developed the theory of the 12 senses and demonstrated how the human being achieves balance.

How can it be that we can maintain balance on one toe or on the arms? We know what is balance? Why are legs or feet keeping us in balance? Can I do it with my head? Can I do it with my hands? With one hand?

It's like aligning with the cosmos. An alignment with the surrounding space. Now I am not only registering my movements, but I feel the space. I feel the location of my body in space. Balance is one of the senses that links to the "I am". Now I move in space, I stand upright.

Steiner, in the course of healing pedagogy, states that the human being, whether child or adult, normally achieves the uprightness, as a straight line like a sheath, which allows us to enter and leave permanently. How can I track with my ears what is going on around me? And how to then ask myself where I am? Am I inside my body? Am I in the tracking of the sound? Am I in the corner of the wall looking at the wooden ceiling? Where is the "I"-consciousness?

Steiner says that the "I" must enter and leave the body, permanently, through the senses. A constant change with the outside and with the inside. So that we are healthy.

When we stay too much inside, the "I" remains as if trapped; he calls it **epileptic polarity**. As if we were a shell, as if when the "I" remains inside, the "I" remains too dense, it is difficult for us to enter. And this associates with situations of incapacity, of illnesses, of not being able to go out with the "I" when I have to be able to go out.

And in turn, in the other polarity, which he calls **hysteria**, the "I" is very much outside, as if it were in that last little leaf of the tree, which is always in movement and is moving with every breeze. He gives the example of hysteria with respect to the

constitutive. As something that is extreme perception. It does not have a good perception of the outside, and it cannot perceive itself. Because I am perceiving everything outside, then I am not able to perceive myself either.

They are poles of non-perception. The norm of what is healthy is to be between both poles. In balance, and this is where this balance of being able to be between the inside and the outside comes in. Where I can see myself, but I can also perceive the outside. That is what one should balance.

Steiner says that when we are in a room, the body is much larger than physically, and we embrace absolutely everything. We feel the space, we feel the location. In the balance, we are not holding ourselves inside, but we are being held. By the surrounding space. By the walls, by the windows, by everything around us. Even all the dancers who are balancing, they look at a point in front of them and they can turn, as they stick their eyes there. We are touching the walls with the tentacles of sight. We are anchored to that place, and when we move with our head we will fall, but if we have our sight there we will achieve balance.

What am I putting out when I'm being moved? And what I have to achieve to have balance? What does the body do to maintain that balance? Steiner says that we lean on the surrounding space, and when we lose balance or when we have vertigo, is when we cannot feel through our "I", the hardness, the support, the walls, the floor, and we perceive the movement of the earth, the rotation and translation of the earth; for an instant that movement is so strong that our body cannot embrace that movement with the soul, and we feel *vértigo*. This happens also when we are in a very high place or we feel like vomiting. Or we go backwards or in a boat. Maybe the cliff is so immense that we don't reach the bottom with our "I", that space is so large and deep that we feel vertigo. What he says about balance is that balance is not something that arises from one thing, we know that it is part of the balance. If one knows that he has a contracture in the cervicals, he can lose balance, have nausea, headache, and some ear problema; if it is a physical problem it is traced and it is connected with the balance. He poses as a receiver of the balance that is more cosmic. That we align it and perceive it.

There are people who have the gift of putting things in balance, putting things on top of each other. There are moments in childhood when we want to play at making little piles, so that things do not fall down, or those little houses with the cards so that they do not fall down. What does that person connect with, what is he or she finding? The line of balance?

Steiner says that everything in the universe is in equilibrium, at a defined distance, and there is nothing in the world that is separate, even this capacity of equilibrium gives us the possibility of being, in ourselves and in the world. That is why he associates it directly to the "I". And that is why it is important that we give the small child the conquest of balance, and not as a permanent cane. Steiner describes it as a

state of calm of the soul. When he brings it later to what is animic. Not etheric, but astral he links them with the hands. And with the hands we can link ourselves with the world. Linking us through their language, which goes beyond words.

In the hysteric polarity, when the child stretches himself, tries to touch. I do not say to touch an adult. If I do not have limits I go out looking for the limit, looking for that at some moment there is a limit, I stretch myself and I do not find any kind of limit, like when I want, I throw tantrums, I cry for everything and I get it. If not limits are put necessary to form his skin his body, his psychic, psychic skin, the Child falls in the hysterical polarity. He is looking for the limits, he is looking for the skin. Popular sayings tell us that if the family does not set the limits, the world will set them.

The same happens when the behavior is reversed. The epileptic polarity.

Everything has to be in a certain way. You eat at this time, you do this, you do that. Everything is in a certain way, you can't breathe, the child goes inside, becomes hardened and stop perceiving the outside. And it ends up with being super selfish. We should have a polarity that moves inward, and outward, and not pathological. When we talk about epilepsy, where does this word come from? Steiner said that epilepsy is an "I" that is trapped, and when the "I" wants to get out, it collides with the walls of the organ, and when it cannot get out, it generates a movement that generates a convulsion; we are talking about epilepsy. Not of the epileptic polarity. This gives even a physical constitution. All that is hysterical is sulphurous; they are white, red hairs with freckles. And what is epileptic is darker. We are speaking with children or adults with special capacities for some pathology. He speaks that in general it is the liver, but not only. The "I" would be trapped in an organ, which cannot get out and manifests itself in a seizure. He also speaks of mental illnesses within the organs.

Habits are inside the etheric body. When you call the child with a flute and he comes, he comes because of the habit that we have created in the etheric body.

When there is a very big etheric body, very enlarged, he touches with his "I" the walls of a room. Without moving, that person is touching with his etheric body.

The relationship of the sense of balance to attention and other phenomena of life.

The science of the spirit considers human nature subdivided into body, soul, and spirit.

In a cycle of lectures held in Berlin in 1910, Steiner held 4 lectures concerning the human soul and the phenomena of the soul life, which deal with memory, attention, passions and affections, and the phenomena which we can already bring into the field

of truth, beauty, and the good. The soul touches a corporal side and on the other side the spirit. That it is the soul life in which we will deal between the spirit and the body.

In what we call external world, that this environment certainly does not do what it does to the soul life. We do not consider minerals, plants and animals as part of our life, independently of what we attribute to them when we make a representation. They are not part of our soul life. If we meet a person we observe him, he gives us the sensation of pleasure; a sensation of pleasure is part of our soul life. If I observe his face, his hair and I make a representation, we cannot say that it belongs to our soul life.

Whether interest is born for that person, whether we find him sympathetic or unfriendly, whether we think of him with love or movements of sympathy or antipathy or interest, are for us experiences of the soul.

Steiner tries to avoid definitions, preferring to characterize which elements are to be considered part of the life of the soul.

Let's look at another example. Let us imagine to observe someone who acts, and let us retain that it should be said, it is a good action, an action that morally is worthy of approval. The soul experience leads to the affirmation. It is a good action. If we say that the action is good we know that the recognition should not depend on us. If we want to be conscious of the action we must formulate a judgment in our soul. The action of the judgment depends on us, it must be a personal experience.

One concept that we can characterize the life of the soul is Judgment. Judgment is one of the activities of the soul. The sum of the other, characteristic, experiences ends in the two inner experiences of love and hate.

To these elements we must add something that the soul experiences, which is the feeling. The fluctuating feeling, which sometimes determines the character.

The most elementary are the sensory perceptions. Our soul life is based on the sensory perceptions, on the various experiences, in sound, sight and taste.

When we experience external things thanks to our sense organs, it is received in our soul in this continuous living.

We call sensory perception the experience that is exposed to the external impression, and during the impression itself.

Sensory sensation is that impression that remains in the soul. The sensory sensation arises by virtue of what flows in the interior of our soul being. By virtue of the longing that is in us.

When we have chromatic perceptions, or sonorous, olfactory, something pushes the desire to the external; the attention is a sensorial experience that we only fix to the emptiness, it provokes in us an impression, but if it is fixed to the emptiness it does not

produce it, it does not remain in the life of the soul. We must move it from the internal by meeting with the attention. The greater the attention, the more easily the soul carries the experiences of the senses of its life of representations.

The soul joins the external world in a way of pouring its interiority and its substance, of bringing to the extreme of its being, as seen in the attention. As we have followed the path of the story, everything leads us to a possible conclusion that are the feelings developed in the soul, both the senses, and the characteristics of the soul to develop them in this case in children in their activity of movement.

Rudolf Steiner, shares a series of tips or exercises that we should propose to children, adolescents and adults. To favor the memory and the soul life.

He maintains that we always use etheric forces for the attention, for the memory. For example he proposes to enumerate a drama, all the moments of which a story is developed, to enumerate a drama; he proposes to relate it from back to front. This is how the astral body acts.

In this stage of the Conscious Soul, the human being does not need teachers as in the past, like the baptism in the Jordan. Now the human being educates the human being; the doctor together with the patient improves health. To the extent that the human being begins to unlearn and build new forms based on spiritual science, we will help to form beings capable of improving the education of the world.

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