

TO THE PROBLEM OF CRITICISM OF EURYTHMY AS A SCIENTIFICALLY UNFOUNDED METHOD IN PEDAGOGY

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Annotation

The article is devoted to the analysis of criticism of eurythmy as a therapeutic and pedagogical method of psycho-emotional development of a personality. Exploring the scientific literature on this issue, the author comes to the conclusion about the insufficient development of the categorical-conceptual apparatus and eurythmy as a kind of pedagogical and therapeutic activity, as a component of **Waldorf pedagogy**. At the same time, relying on his pedagogical experience, as well as the results of official research, the author proves that the lack of scientific reliability in itself should not be considered as evidence of the complete inefficiency of the method.

On the contrary, such insufficiency should be considered as an incentive for additional research that allows to «filter» the existing categorical-conceptual apparatus from «metaphysical concepts», to clarify the theoretical and methodological foundations of the process in order to more effectively adapt it to solving general and particular psychotherapeutic and pedagogical tasks of an individual.

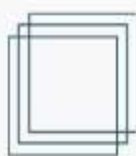
Keywords and phrases: eurythmy, Waldorf pedagogy, scientific reliability, method effectiveness.

Introduction

The relevance of the topic of this article is defined by the permanent increase in the requirements for the quality and effectiveness of the amount of methods that are applied to the individual in the course of one's education, socialization education at the present stage. We are talking about a very large conglomerate of technologies, methods, specific techniques and exercises for psychophysical development and health protection. Due to the specifics of the organization of thinking in developed and developing societies, one of the most important criteria for the admissibility and effectiveness of a particular method is the scientific validity of its content and the reliability of the results of its application.

The fact of insufficient scientific substantiation and reliability can, in particular cases, become in public perception similar to a "stigma", at least indicating the futility of the practice under study, at the maximum, making it perceived as a fraud.

In this regard, eurythmy – the art of the artistic movement, as one of the most important parts of Waldorf pedagogy, but also used more and more often in educational practices that are not related to this system, is regularly criticized as a kind



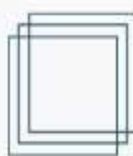
of activity that should contribute to a harmonious psychophysical (intellectual, emotional, physical, etc.) personal development.

It would be more correct to say that such criticism falls not only on eurythmy, but on the entire Waldorf pedagogy, which is often perceived as a kind of theosophy and anthroposophy - philosophical doctrines, axiomatics of which, in the most appropriate expression, is extremely different from the axiomatics of modern science. Accordingly, the contradiction between real pedagogical practice, in which the popularity of eurythmy is constantly growing in Europe, the USA and Russia, and the attitude towards it from the scientific community determines the purpose of this article - to explain this contradiction and determine the ways in which criticism of eurythmy would not become a way of its denial, but its improvement.

First of all, it is necessary to define the concept of "eurythmy". According to the definition of B.M. Bim-Bad, it should be understood as "the art of movements developed in the first third of the XX century on the basis of the anthroposophy of R. Steiner. It gives a visible figurative form to the sound of speech and music and can act in combination with other arts (for example, in M.A. Chekhov's "Technique of the Actor")" [3, p. 322].

The term itself is of Greek origin. In the era of Antiquity, they called it the quality of an object, which later started to be denoted by another word - "harmony". In other words, eurythmy was understood as the proportionality and orderliness of the elements. At the beginning of the XX century, the creator of Waldorf pedagogy, a philosopher who practiced occultism, a mystic, but at the same time a very extraordinary teacher, Rudolf Steiner started defining the word as the type of activity he created for the psycho-emotional and physical development of children, which was a synthesis of poetic word, movement, light and music. In other words, we are talking about a syncretic type of activity. However, R. Steiner himself called this activity as the art or a type of creativity. «The question is - what is actually depicted in this case? You will understand what is depicted in eurythmy only when you consider that eurythmy wants to be a visible language. This is the case, after all, with speech itself: when we express speech mimetically, we take ordinary speech as a model, but when we express speech itself, then it has no model. The person reflects it as an independent work. There is nowhere in nature what is revealed in speech - is revealed by it. In the same way, eurythmy should be something that represents some kind of primary creativity" [6, p. 6].

Indeed, syncretism is one of the most important features of primitive kinds of activity, which can be attributed to proto-art, a kind of "primary creativity." However, for this type of activity, the matter of almost paradoxical combinations of extremely rigid regulation of action and improvisation are quite possible and characteristic. Actually, a similar combination can be found in eurythmy. There are well-defined standards of movements (for example, round dances, and various other fixed positions of dance



participants, accompanied by various speech sounds and music) in this so called "art", but at the same time, eurythmy is impossible without improvisation, and is, indeed, composed for almost any text.

«There is a frequent usage practice of poetic rhythms (iambic, trochee, anapaest, dactyl, etc.) to poems by various poets during "eurythmy classes". Rhythms are played in motion through a step, or accompanied by hand gestures. There is also a possibility of using balls or sticks. The exercises are performed both individually and jointly with other participants. An important aspect is the interaction of arms and legs, which develops coordination of movements. Using various rhythms, one can have a calming or activating effect» writes M.A. Grachev [4, p. 134].

Eurythmy, according to R. Steiner, is the possibility of connecting **body, soul and mind** - into a harmonious unity triad.

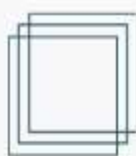
The use of syncretic artistic activity in teaching aimed at the creative development of the child is a widespread practice. Indeed, the teaching of folk art to children of preschool and primary school age, which is so popular in the countries of the post-Soviet space, represents an introduction to the type of syncretic activity. Its great advantage in the context of the goals and objectives of the educational process is the complexity of the impact, the formation of a very wide range of sensorimotor skills implemented using different modes of thinking in complex coordination.

In the modern categorical and conceptual apparatus of pedagogy, there are no statements about the need to develop the triad (mind, soul, body) as a whole, however, when it comes to the theoretical justifications for teaching children folk art, in particular, the art of dance, one can find statements that such a practice contributes to the harmonious development of psycho-emotional, physical and communicative personalities.

But it is eurythmy that incurs extremely strong criticism from the scientific community, and also from the ones considering themselves to be in support of the scientific community, as well as the notorious "traditional values" of segments of society. D. Dugan in his "Skeptical Encyclopedia of Pseudoscience" considered eurythmy practically as a ritual act, as a quasi-religious practice, certainly affecting the psycho-emotional sphere of the personality, but hardly having a confirmed health-saving effect [7, p. 31]

An attempt to create a holistic faculty, in which, as a scientific discipline, the anthroposophical direction of healing approach developed by R. Steiner at the University of Aberdeen (Scotland) in 2012 led to a grandiose scandal. Many prominent representatives of the scientific community called it incomprehensible that at present, practices based on mystical thinking can be developed and learned in a scientific institution as equal to other scientific disciplines [9].

In the countries of the post-Soviet space, the part of society which is close to conservative religious cults, in particular, to the Russian Orthodox Church, are

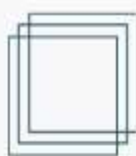


especially active in actions: «Steiner's teaching itself is a syncretic combination of Western and Eastern religious and occult teachings, in which elements of Gnosticism, Pythagorean mysticism of numbers can be distinguished, Kabbalistics, occultly interpreted Christianity ... A whole system of initiation levels was developed with initiation rites like Masonic ones. The first steps included dancing, development of eurythmy, as well as, staging theatrical mysteries. Special secret courses were read for the initiates. A person, according to the teachings of Steiner, in accordance with the traditions of ancient occultism, forms a microcosm in the composition of the physical, etheric and astral bodies, and the etheric body descends into a person with the eruption of molars (about 6 years), and the rest - with the achievement of puberty ... Attempts separating the methods of the Waldorf schools from their occult soil ... are clearly meaningless. Russia is the country in which even non-religious phenomena acquire a religious meaning - this is the way the famous Russian priest, deacon Andrey Kuraev defines Waldorf pedagogy and, in particular, eurythmy [8].

On the perspective of conservative religious organizations, such "attacks" seem quite understandable. There is also a competition for the right of ideological influence, and the fact of how young and pioneer the eurythmy actually is - should not be forgotten. Conservative social institutions simply have not had time to get used to it yet. After all, the Russian Orthodox Church does not subject the same sharp criticism to the practice of teaching Russian folk art to children in schools, which in the conditions of modern society has turned out to be completely separable from its pagan soil.

The criticism of eurythmy and Waldorf pedagogy by the scientific community has to be drawn of more attention. In the process of preparing this article, we were unable to find critical judgments that would be aimed at criticizing the practices themselves. In the overwhelming majority of cases, there is a talk about a theoretical and methodological justification about mystical thinking that is completely unacceptable for science, which resulted in the emergence of these practices.

When it comes to analysis of aforementioned practices without referencing them to occult ideologemes - their assessment, in particular, the assessment of eurythmy, as a rule, is positive. M.A. Gracheva, whose quotation from the article "The Art of the Eurythmic Movement as an Element of Healing in the Educational Process" was given above proves the viability of this type of activity in great detail and convincingly as developing the child's psycho-emotional sphere, communication skills (in particular, teamwork skills) and ultimately having a healing effect: "Eurythmic movements help the child in self-expression. Children learn to show their own individuality through art on the basis of an artistic image and they understand that each person is unique ... Breath training is also an obligatory and important element of eurythmic exercises. But this is not only about inhalation or exhalation through the lungs (although this aspect can gradually improve too), but about two polar movements expressed in us,



such as contraction and expansion, concentration and relaxation, heaviness and lightness, isolation and a feeling of straightness. etc." [4, p. 134].

E.D. Piradova, in her study on eurythmy as an educational practice, points out that «The formation of a eurythmy gesture as a projection, as a process and result of understanding and generating meanings, consists in the conscious development of the so-called compound states that have arisen, for example, on the basis of a musical or literary work and their visualization which, under the influence of its own semantic forms (symbolic forms) with pronounced new signs of synesthesia, affects the viewer with its specific means of expression" [5, p. 17].

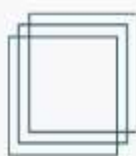
The abovementioned judgments are largely proved by the pedagogical activity of the author of this article. The work that she has been implementing for several years now with children of different age categories, including children with disabilities of various types, gives grounds for conducting in the foreseeable future a full-fledged, with a claim to complete reproducibility, experimental research in which eurythmy practices would become independent variable, while children's communication skills, as well as their objectively measured parameters of their creative imagination and emotional sphere, are the dependent variable.

The problem is that from the author's point of view, many useful practices, as the historical process convincingly demonstrates us, do not immediately receive a comprehensive and consistent theoretical and methodological basis. For example, the healing effect of music has been known since the ancient times. However, in spite of the fact that a wide range of mechanisms of perception and psycho-emotional response to musical narration was discovered only in modern times, this did not prevent the use of music to correct the psychophysical state of a person either in Antiquity, or in the Middle Ages, or in modern times.

Such a collision can be formulated as follows: what works well does not always need to have an explanation.

Summing up all of the above, we note that scientific knowledge, among other mental systems for mastering reality, differs, perhaps, by the most effective "fuse" from turning into a set of ideologemes that are not subject to the critical analysis - epistemology. At the same time, the reliability of epistemology does not mean that it is ideal – this would simply contradict the very essence of scientific knowledge. And the risk of turning knowledge into dogma remains even in the case of science. The risk arises, among other things, under the influence of various directions in the value judgments of public opinion, due to which the phenomenon and its description often is not particularly differentiated.

It seems quite obvious that from the standpoint of strict scientific knowledge, the categorical-conceptual apparatus of eurythmy does not withstand absolutely any criticism. Filled with concepts from metaphysical (sometimes even occult) teachings, it is something like a "red canvas" for the "angry bull" of public opinion, or rather that



part of it that is superficially familiar with only a limited number of criteria for scientific judgment, unconsciously turning them into dogmatics.

However, with a high degree of probability, based on all of the abovementioned theories, it can be assumed, that while developing eurythmy, R. Steiner as a result created something that works effectively, but at the same time was described not in scientific categories, but in categories close to the worldview paradigm of its creator. And in this case, the main attention of the science of pedagogy in this segment of educational technologies should be focused, first of all, on identifying, confirming (or refuting) the effectiveness of eurythmy practices themselves, outside the description, the rationale that is offered to it by the apologists of Waldorf pedagogy and theosophy. Focusing on the dynamics of the objective parameters of the student's personality, as well as, having one's body undergoing the influence of eurythmy is the true goal of the scientific study of this issue. And if the effectiveness of these practices as developing and health-saving educational technologies is confirmed by the number of experiments (which is justified by reasons), then the question of creating a new, scientific theory of eurythmy will eventually become relevant.

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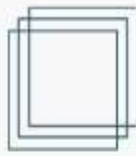
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