

VALÉRIA DIENES' MOVEMENT PEDAGOGY IN THE LIGHT OF HER GENERAL PEDAGOGY

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to review Valéria Dienes' pedagogy of movement, also known as orchestics, in the light of the foundations of her general pedagogy. I will also highlight the additional benefits of movement pedagogy, an innovative approach that integrates physical activity and pedagogy. It is based on the principles that movement-based activities play an important role in self-expression, learning, and both intellectual and emotional development. This method includes various forms of movement and exercises, including dance, rhythm games, symbolic movements, and other movement-based activities. In this theoretical-historical research, I investigate whether Valéria Dienes' method and approach, as detailed in her various writings, can serve as a basis for her general pedagogy.

Keywords: reform movements, Valéria Dienes, orchestics, movement pedagogy

1. INTRODUCTION

The present study examines the movement pedagogy of Valéria Dienes (1879–1978), one of the first Hungarian women to graduate from university and to obtain a doctorate. Her significant contributions to dance include the creation of orchestics, which merges both the art and science of movement. According to Dienes, orchestics summarizes the holistic experience of the individual, encompassing movement, reality, and related theoretical science (Boreczky & Fenyves, 2015). An extraordinarily versatile scholar, Dienes made her mark in many different fields, including mathematics, philosophy, and orchestics.

The main question of this paper is to what extent Valéria Dienes' movement pedagogy and orchestics can serve as a basis for her general pedagogical concepts, given her assertions that movement pedagogy underpins her general pedagogy. My research seeks to uncover the true meaning behind her work, and to determine whether what she envisioned has actually been achieved. To achieve this, I analysed the foundational elements of her pedagogy of movement and the events and individuals

¹The paper summarises the thesis research that was awarded second place in the Education Section at the Scientific Student Conference of the Partium Christian University in May 2024. The thesis was supervised by Dr. Brigitta Balogh, Associate Professor.

who influenced her, such as her creed, her image of man, the life reform movement, Bergsonian philosophy,² and the overarching trajectory of her career.

The aim of this research is to examine whether elements of Valéria Dienes' pedagogy of movement can be combined and interpreted as a general pedagogical principle. My research methodology to address these aims is based on documentary analysis and a deductive research strategy through which I have studied and analysed the writings of Dienes, scholarly analyses of her work, and theoretical and historical texts on education as well as dance studies of the period.

2. LIFE REFORM AND REFORM PEDAGOGY

The life reform movement emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in Europe, particularly in Germany, and is a popular and controversial topic in international literature. The term encompasses a variety of ideologies critical of modernization, which have a common thread in their search for naturalness, self-healing, and spirituality. It seeks to re-establish man's lost connection with nature, work, and God (Németh & Skiera, 2018a).

Life reform and reform pedagogy were social and educational movements that emerged as an alternative solution to the social changes of the late 19th century. According to Skiera (2004), both movements aimed at holistically renewing the life of an individual and restoring their health, while reform pedagogy sought to bring about change in education through a child-centred approach. These movements emerged in a rapidly industrialising and urbanising Europe, where people were increasingly alienated from nature, communities, and their own inner world. As a result of the industrial revolution and technological advances, modern society was changing rapidly, deepening spiritual and social divides. The life reform movements and reform pedagogy arose in response to this alienation, offering a cure for the wounds of a rapidly evolving world by restoring closeness to nature and harmony between the body and the soul.

Reform education is one of the most prominent and complex branches of the life reform movement. András Németh (2002) examines pedagogical reform movements in the context of social alienation, viewing them as part of the emergence of 'counterculture' movements. Several factors influenced the development of the reform pedagogies of the early 20th century, including the strong sense of alienation in society and the devastation of the First World War as well as the violent conflicts that preceded and followed it. In response to these burdensome challenges and their impact on the public psyche, social movements and organisations emerged that aimed at a more fulfilling and value-rich life on earth. This period saw the rise of movements such as vegetarianism, naturopathy, and various spiritual pursuits that reflected a departure from institutional religious forms and customs. These innovative ideas and movements had an impact not only on society but also on schools and pedagogy. While life reform movements aimed to make human life and the environment more beautiful and simplified, while reform pedagogies sought to reform the

² Bergsonism is an approach to life based on the philosophy of Henri Bergson (1859–1941), emphasising continuity, inner time, and the vitality of life. It contrasts with a mechanical world view and intellectual approaches.

education system by making it more child-centred. The pedagogical movement also represented new educational goals, tools, and a new psychological approach, thus bringing new perspectives to the educational arena (Németh, 2002).

According to Németh (2002), Oelkers' (1989) analysis highlights the close connection between reform pedagogy and life reform movements. Reform pedagogy sought to critique, transform, and renew traditional educational methods and systems, aiming to increase the efficiency of learning processes and develop students' creativity, critical thinking, and autonomy. Valéria Dienes' reform pedagogy was based on a critique of traditional teaching methods and the promotion of individual development. At the heart of her work is her orchestric method, which offers an integrated pedagogical approach with the primary goal of developing the emotional, intellectual and physical development of the child in a holistic, learner-centred way. The orchestrics method seeks to create an age- and needs-appropriate, flexible, and dynamic framework that supports learners' creativity and self-development (Skiera, Németh & Mikonya, 2005).

Fenyves described Valéria Dienes as a born teacher: positive, good humoured, precise, and extremely dedicated. Winning over her students with her personal charm, her movement pedagogy was "(...) based on an individualistic, intuitive artist-teacher personality" (Dienes, 1929/30, p. 462).

3. BIOGRAPHY AND CAREER

"I created four rhapsodies in my life. Because I had four loves: music, mathematics, philosophy and orchestrics" (Borus, 1978, p. 49); Valéria Dienes, an exceptional, multifaceted figure of 20th century Hungarian intellectual life, described herself in this way late in her life. The term 'rhapsody', originating from Greek, refers to a genre of musical or literary works that are freely composed or combined. In general, a rhapsody is a free-form piece, often with varying moods and themes. Dienes embodied this sense of freedom all her life, embracing change and diverse pursuits. Her four main passions—music, mathematics, philosophy and orchestrics—all required serious reflection, study, and commitment. A pioneer of Hungarian theatre dance, Dienes also played a prominent role in the development of Hungarian dance theory. As a philosopher, translator, choreographer, movement artist, teacher, dance theorist, composer, poet, lyricist, psychologist, and mathematician, her many activities underline her multifaceted and exceptional Renaissance personality.

Valéria Dienes, née Valéria Geiger, was born on 25 May 1879 in Szekszárd to Gyula Geiger, an open-minded lawyer and journalist, and Erzsébet Benczelits, a teacher. Dienes was born premature, her weak condition prompting the midwife to baptise her immediately (Szabó, 2001). After her parents divorced she moved to Pápa and was raised by her mother, a single working woman who raised Valéria and her brother. While she began her education in Szekszárd, due to the move she continued her studies at the senior girls' school in Pápa. She went on to earn a teaching diploma from the Győr State Teacher Training College in 1897. In 1901, she also obtained a diploma as a civil schoolteacher at the Erzsébet Women's School in Budapest. As these two qualifications were not sufficient to enable a woman to be admitted to the Budapest University, she obtained a private school-leaving certificate at the Bujkovszky Street Real School in Budapest (Fenyves, 2016a).

Between 1901 and 1905, Dienes studied at the Budapest Academy of Music as a pupil of Árpád Szendi, while simultaneously earning a degree in mathematics and physics at Péter Pázmány University. She also completed a doctorate in philosophy and aesthetics with Alexander Bernát in December 1905 alongside her husband, Pal Dienes.³ “Pál Dienes became my destiny” she noted (Szabó, 2001, p. 56). It was thanks to him that she went to the University of Paris to study philosophy with Henri Bergson and dance with Raymond Duncan (Szabó, 2001). Her translations of Bergson’s works not only helped rejuvenate Hungarian philosophical language but also elevated its literary status. Her early religious beliefs, which had been shaken during her university years, were profoundly influenced by Bergson’s personality and ideas, began to gradually solidify. In this regard, Ottokár Prohászka, Bishop of Szekszárd, provided significant support back home in Hungary, helping her to develop her Catholicism both as a pastor and friend (Szabó, 2001). Dienes herself translated almost all of Bergson’s major works from French into Hungarian, and she is the author of several studies on his philosophy (Frenyó, 2015). She adopted the essence of his metaphysics, the relationship between ‘matter’ and ‘spirit’, which Bergson described as a true ‘dualism’. From this perspective, the relationship between body and soul is very complex, but can nonetheless be viewed as a true ontological monism, a philosophical view according to which there is only one essential existing entity in the universe, encompassing reality in the form of materiality and spirituality (Balogh, 2020).

Another Bergsonian influence on Valéria Dienes’ thinking is the concept of memory as the inability to forget the past, according to which everything one has ever experienced remains preserved in memory. This approach prompts reflection on the way memory sorts through the vast amount of information it encounters, recalling certain details even decades later while allowing others to be forgotten. According to Bergson’s psychology of movement, we remember those events and ideas that continue to influence and serve a purpose in our actions in the present (Balogh, 2020).

Dienes’ pioneering work in the orchestric movements continued, and in 1912 she began to hold Greek/Spartan gymnastics sessions for her friends and relatives in her own home. The first course started in 1914 with Vera Bertalan and Ilona Révész, featuring a lecture by Dienes on the Spartan gymnastic system of Raymond Duncan which was due to its popularity. Vera Bertalan, a pupil of Dienes, later became the director of the institution. During this time, Dienes had ample time to perfect her system of movement pedagogy. Three years later, in 1917, she took over the school from Vera Bertalan, renaming it to the School of Orchestics (Boreczky & Fenyves, 2015). By the 1917/18 school year, the school was able to offer a full system of movement pedagogy, including three classes on plastique, one on rhythm and one on mimicry⁴. In 1917, she and her students presented their movement art to the public for the first time at the Uránia Theatre.

³ The couple had two children, Zoltán and Gedeon, who both continued the work of their parents. Zoltán became a world-renowned mathematician and mathematics didacticist. Their second son, Gedeon, became a linguist, critic, and dance historian. Following in his mother’s footsteps, he ensured that orchestics and the movement pedagogy developed by his mother did not fade into obscurity (Fenyves, 2016a).

⁴ Valéria Dienes refers to the training groups as a (school) class, which were differentiated by ability levels, ranging from beginner to advanced.

Apart from Henri Bergson, the most influential influence on the birth of orchestics was Raymond Duncan, whom Valéria Dienes also had the opportunity to meet during her studies in Paris. Bergson's theory of the psychology of movement and the contributions of Isadora and Raymond Duncan in the movement arts increased her interest in dance and inspired her to develop his own system of movement, which she called orchestics (Németh & Skiera, 2018b).

Dienes' reforms had a profound impact on the development of movement pedagogy in Hungary. From the mid-1920s onwards, she created large-scale movement plays staged in Budapest, mainly centred on Christian themes (Boreczky & Fenyves, 2015).

The Orchestics School had its own detailed curriculum based on the rhythmic system developed by Dienes. Its aim was to integrate new knowledge with existing information and movements. In the rhythm class, the curriculum focused extensively on the practice of classical verse feet and the learning of rhythmic structures. These were organically linked to the movements practised and mastered in the plastique class, with movements imbued with multiple meanings (Markos, 1917/18).

During the years Dienes spent in Vienna (1920–1922), the Budapest Orchestics School continued to operate under the leadership of Mária Mirkovszky and Szilárd Detre, although the constant relocations and financial difficulties presented the institution with constant challenges. After moving back home to Pápa, professional criticism and disagreements, partly related to Olga Szentpál and Mária Mirkovszky and professional criticism, eventually led to Lászlóné Domokos (1885–1966) offering Dienes a job at the New School. This institution became a new site for the further development of the Orchestics School, where Dienes could continue the work she had started before her years in Vienna (Boreczky & Fenyves, 2017).

In the summer of 1928, an pivotal moment in the history of orchestics took place when Valéria Dienes met a journalist from Munich. This meeting gave her the opportunity to showcase her system of orchestics movements in Munich, with the aim of founding a new school of movement in Germany. Although she began to work and deliver lectures, the rise of Nazism hindered the establishment of an orchestics school. Dienes continued her work on stage and pursued the founding of the school, initially using a building on the corner of Alkotás Street and Nagyenyed Street. She then rented a room for her classes on Városmajor Street and later converted part of her apartment on Krisztina boulevard into a dance studio. It was here that her first theoretical classes started, delivering lectures on philosophy, psychology, and pedagogy to her students (Jakabffy, 2018, p. 41). During this period, she also choreographed movements to the poems of Mihály Babits', which became known as poetry dances. According to Dienes, in the years following her emigration, she had not planned to restart her work at the school of orchestics; however, orchestics continued to thrive on its own thanks to its popularity (Dienes, 1996).

In 1949, orchestics was banned, resulting in the closure of the institution. The communist dictatorship suppressed artistic movements that diverged from its preferred artistic and political paradigm (Fenyves & Pethő, 2017). Orchestics' modernist and individualistic forms and expressions stood in opposition to the collective ideals championed by the communist dictatorship. Those who joined the newly established, centrally managed dance professional organisations could continue their work, but those who did not wish to join them were denied the

opportunity to continue practising their profession. This forced many artists to abandon their vocation and seek other livelihoods. Some opted for classical ballet or sports, while new genres of rhythmic gymnastics, jazz ballet, and artistic gymnastics also began to emerge (Bolvári-Takács, 2012).

Dienes' greatest sorrow was having to develop and refine the system of movement that she had created, without being able to implement it out in schools or on stage. Despite these limitations, orchestics not only survived the period of prohibition but also maintained a distinct identity without merging with other disciplines or losing its traditional practices (Fenyves, 2016a).

Dienes maintained her intellectual vigour until the end of her life, delivering her last public lecture at the age of 96 in 1974, at the International Congress of Semiotics in Tihany (Fenyves, 2016a). However, orchestics did not end with her passing; her son, Gedeon Dienes (1914–2005), also played an important role in preserving its legacy. Since 1991, research led by István Pálosi (1971–) and Márk Fenyves (1973–2018) resulted in the establishment of the Orchestral Foundation and its 1 More Movement Theatre in 1995, which later evolved into MOHA-Movement Arts House,⁵ a multifunctional space functioning as an artistic, pedagogical, and methodological hub as well as a museum, host institution, and community space. The Hungarian Movement Arts Society was also established as a centre for the performing arts. Together, these organisations continue to preserve and continue the traditions, artistic values, and pedagogical ideas of orchestics, adapting them to meet the needs of the present (Fenyves, 2016a).

4. ORCHESTICS AS MOVEMENT PEDAGOGY

According to Balogh (2020), Dienes's pedagogy is based on the ideas of Henri Bergson and Raymond Duncan. From Bergson, she adopted the metaphysical concept of matter and spirit, emphasising the interaction between body and soul. From Duncan, she incorporated his system and pedagogy of movement into her own pedagogical system, in which the dancer moves freely, independently of the music, to their own rhythm.

The orchestics developed by Dienes emerged as a new 'Duncan-Dienes' style movement system which represented both the art and science of movement, establishing itself as a philosophical system in its own right (Fenyves, 2016b). Orchestics evolved from its roots in Duncan free dance from the turn of the century and eventually became Dienes' own creative method (Fenyves, 2016a).

From Greek gymnastics and Raymond Duncan, Dienes adopted principles of everyday and natural movements, emphasising the inherent capability of the body to move with its natural gait. She incorporated these approaches into her pedagogy, structuring the curriculum into four interdependent units: plasticity, rhythm, symbolism, and dynamics. Each of these four units serves a specific role in the holistic understanding and mastery of orchestics. These units build on each other in a step-by-step teaching process, with each new piece of knowledge building upon the last (Markos, 1917/18). In her pedagogical approach, Dienes did not enforce strictly prescribed movement forms or dance structures at the Orchestics School, but rather

⁵ It has been operating under this name since 2005.

encouraged her students to creatively apply different movements, rhythms, and postures, and to achieve deeper self-expression through these techniques. Natural human movement was placed at the heart of her choreography and teaching.

In order to understand Dienes' pedagogy of movement, it is important to first clarify her definition of movement. From her perspective, movement is a general concept that refers to significant changes of objects over time. This can include physical displacement, such as the movement of a body part or object, as well as abstract movement, represented through thoughts, emotions, or expressions. Dienes saw movement as being closely linked to space and time, serving as a powerful tool for expression. Movement can be deliberate or reflexive, that is, consciously directed or instinctive. Gestures play a crucial role in human communication, expressing emotions, intentions, and states. In the arts, including dance and drama, movement is an expressive tool that enriches and deepens artistic expression. The interpretation and meaning of movement can vary between different cultures and contexts, showing that the perception and symbolic meaning of movement can be subjective. As movement can vary in interpretation from individual to individual and from culture to culture, it is related in many ways to various perspectives on human life (Dienes, 1925/30). Dienes' description, "Movement. Bridge between body and soul" (1925/30, p. 219), is a succinct yet extremely profound and multilayered expression, illustrating the profound connection between the physical and the spiritual, with an emphasis on the role of movement. Movement as a dynamic physical activity, a bodily action, can refer to simple everyday activities, sports, or even artistic forms of expression. In Dienes' interpretation, movement is both a reaction of the body and a vehicle for change and development, reflecting various states of the body. As highlighted in the quote above, movement is thus a link between the physical and spiritual dimensions. The connection between body and mind can be interpreted in different ways: both as a manifestation of health and emotional well-being as well as a means to support mental health. This metaphor of a bridge suggests that movement can be the means by which the gateway between the body and soul is opened, allowing us to gain a deeper sense of self.

The fundamental aim of Dienes' movement pedagogy is to cultivate a culture of movement; this is intertwined with her general pedagogical goals, focusing specifically on the importance of human life. This approach is deeply rooted in her adoption of Bergsonism, which encourages children to express their experiences through improvised, ordered movements. Her philosophy extends to formal education as well, with a focus on guiding children to recognise and experience the temporal and spatial expression of force through movement. This process, structured around the principles of orchestics, aims to enhance the child's awareness of the possibilities of self-expression (Balogh, 2020). Her methodology is based on two principles. The first principle is that effective work cannot exist without rules, as structure and discipline are essential for achieving pedagogical goals. The second methodological principle advocates for a progressive learning approach, in which the teacher starts with easy-to-master movements and gradually advancing to those that are more complex (Dienes, 1929/30).

According to Fenyves (2016b), one of the main elements of Dienes' movement pedagogy is dance education, which educates and develops children as across

several domains: visual, creative, kinetic, (i.e. movement-based), and acoustic. A fundamental aim of her movement pedagogy is to shape student's personalities through self-awareness. It is also important that learning is experiential, as this is the best way to develop creativity. Dance and movement have a positive effect on the senses, contribute to the development of body awareness, and help to enhance communication skills. This approach to movement pedagogy not only educates, but also develops critical skills such as coordination, logical thinking, understanding cause and effect, will, and awareness. Furthermore, the reciprocal nature of music and movement can also cultivate communication and social skills, including conflict management, cooperation, and empathy. Unlike performance-based systems, Dienes' pedagogical framework is rather based on freedom, possibility, creativity, and above all, experience.

A further aim of Dienes' movement pedagogy is to enhance natural expressiveness and develop gestures, enabling students to overcome their inhibitions. Dienes emphasised the importance of the teacher's approach, advocating for a consistently firm demeanour that pays special attention to volume, tone, and emphasis. She believed that teachers should immerse themselves in their role, prioritising the needs of the students over their own. Dienes also noted a common mistake among movement teachers: initiating movements at the wrong time, which can distract the students. Maintaining student attention throughout the lesson is crucial; they should always feel that the positive impact of the exercise. To achieve this, teachers should strive to make each movement interesting. In addition, teachers should not neglect criticism when evaluating, providing students with constructive feedback through which they can learn and improve. Moreover, Dienes stressed that teachers must love their job and maintain a passion for it throughout their careers, constantly seeking to develop and educate themselves. She measured a teacher's success by whether their pupils themselves are interested in the movements and their ability to create new ones (Dienes, 1929/30).

For Dienes, teaching was also both a profession and a way of life. Her interpretation of centrolgy⁶ suggests that teachers' personal perspectives, revealed through movement, become media for transmitting worldviews to students (Fenyves & Balogh, 2018). Central to her movement pedagogy is a human-centred approach which aims to educate and to create harmony between the physical and the mental. This resonates with Bergson's metaphysics, underscoring the interconnectedness of reason and intuition. It is through the lived, experienced, and cognized reality that individuals develop, and from which a holistic, fulfilled personality can emerge (Dienes, 1929/30, p. 462).

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⁶ Valéria Dienes' interpretation of centrolgy is inspired by Aristotle's interpretation of the centre-periphery in natural philosophy. She applied this in two respects, starting from the moving human body and its interaction with the surrounding space. Firstly, Dienes focuses on the immediate environment of movement and the organisation of space, while the second aspect examines the central principle of evolutionary processes (for more details see Balogh & Fenyves, 2018, pp. 48–53).

5. PEDAGOGICAL NOTE

In a pedagogical note (1925/26a), Dienes comments on the futuristic topos of her time: the likening of the body to a machine. According to her, living beings cannot be treated like machines; unlike machines living beings have the innate ability to continuously improve themselves. Living things have a past, and nature is in a state of perpetual rebirth, a capacity which machines lack. She also contrasts the spiritual origins of life with the material origin of machines. While machines repetitively execute tasks, living beings are capable of recreating themselves. Dienes considered this metaphor as one of the leitmotifs of reform pedagogy (Boreczky, 2021, p. 149).

Dienes' note also characterises pedagogy as the science of education, and is tasked with transmitting spiritual and moral values that purposefully shape and educate both the human body and soul (Dienes, 1925/26a). She speaks of three types of education which play an important role in pedagogy: evolutionary, individual, and movement education. According to Dienes, artistic education is not a separate form of education, but rather a means of advancing all three of the above educational processes.

The objectives of Dienes' educational procedures are as follows:

- “1. Organ building, education, and development.
2. To develop one's knowledge and thinking.
3. the development of man's moral being, the building up of a consciousness of right and wrong and the influencing of action.” (Dienes, 1925/26a, p. 434)

Dienes' note highlights the importance of these goals, noting that the 'organ' in this context refers to the indispensable functions necessary for the proper working of the body, arguing that a healthy body and mind are crucial for successful learning. The second goal focuses on enabling individuals to interpret and evaluate their environment, which can foster critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The last goal underscores the significance of moral standards and values in defining one's identity. Dienes argues that it is through these values that one can live a truly quality life, as they shape everyday behaviour and decisions (Dienes, 1925/26a).

Education in movement is unique as it encompasses all forms of artistic expression (e.g., sculpture, fine arts, and painting). The musical aspect is particularly important in Dienes' approach, where movement and rhythm are closely linked, allowing for an expressive and emotional artistic performance. The art of movement holistically engages the body, imparting an aesthetic quality through its expressive power (Dienes, 1925/26a).

Through examining Dienes' educational principles, we can see how they reflect the primacy of movement and artistic education. Believing that the leitmotif of evolutionary education is attention individual development, Dienes stresses the importance of putting the pupil in the focus. She also stresses the importance of teachers being aware of the distinct needs and capabilities of their pupils, noting significant differences in the abilities of a child under ten and a child over fifteen. According to Dienes, individuals are constantly learning, forming and changing from minute to minute. Each person can be viewed as is a forward-facing reality that looks ahead and shapes itself. Dienes believed that human development can be divided into different stages, and that the ultimate goal of evolutionary development is to craft oneself into a moral work of art (Dienes, 1925/26a).

According to Dienes, individual education is based on the differentiation of individuals. She notes that individuals can develop at varying rates and in different ways. An energetic person may progress differently compared to someone who struggles to find motivation. She emphasises that since everyone develops at a different pace, all learners can be significantly impacted by the different means and methods chosen by the instructor, and that applying certain educational methods without this knowledge can cause irreparable damage. Dienes also points out in her notes that people react differently to the same stimuli. She describes how, just as no two people can experience the same moment in the same way, no two individuals are the same. This inherent individuality is not only the result of the unique life that a person lives, but also unique attribute present at birth. Such differences include physical endowments and mental readiness, and can lead to the development of different interests and the pursuit of different vocations and passions (Dienes, 1925/26a). Recognising these aspects, individual education gives the teacher the opportunity to tailor their approaches to the unique abilities, interests, and expressive capacities of each student. Movement arts in particular offer versatile means of supporting students' individual development and learning. In Dienes' view, teachers who take this into account and prepare their lessons in this way will be more successful: by completing tasks using the skills that they have already acquired, students can gain a sense of achievement. In the context of individual education, Dienes discusses the importance of the ancient Greek personality types (i.e., sanguine, melancholic, choleric, and phlegmatic), asserting that awareness of these can enhance one's understanding of individuals, specifically in regard to the ways that different personality types react to life's challenges and the events around them (Dienes, 1925/26a).

In her pedagogical note, Dienes also explores the psychological risks presented by educational practices that can affect the mental stability of students. She offers her approach to movement education as a solution to this, positing that movement is crucial for addressing various psychological states and disorders. Dienes incorporates a psychopathological approach, arguing that trauma can influence a person's personality and lead to the development of mental disorders. This applies not only to those who are diagnosed with a mental illness or those whose behaviour remains within normal bounds, but also in cases where no specific illness is identified, yet one's behaviour negatively affects others. She stresses that everyone has a duty to be self-aware for the sake of their own individual development (Dienes, 1925/26a).

Dienes advocated for the therapeutic potential of the expressive and mechanical movements featured in her pedagogical approach, believing that these could help people with mental illness to increase their self-esteem, develop emotional balance, and improve awareness. She discusses mechanical movement, which through repetition can become reflexive and provide those suffering from mental illness with ready-made movements, and expressive movements, which help to reconnect individuals more profoundly with the outside world. Dienes emphasised that movement-based therapy should be personalised to tailor to individual needs, particularly for children with health problems, to aid in their social integration and daily functioning. According to Dienesian pedagogy, movement-based therapy offers students the opportunity to release physical energy and thus calm their nervous

system, with regular exercise also helping to support emotional regulation and provide balance. Dienes posits that those with mental illness often suffer from self-esteem issues, which can also be mitigated through exercise, which fosters a better understanding of the functioning of the body and cultivates a positive relationship between the individual and their bodily awareness (Dienes, 1925/26a).

6. MOVEMENT PEDAGOGY AND GENERAL PEDAGOGY BY VALÉRIA DIENES

Dienes' pedagogical approach is critical of the traditional role of the teacher: she challenges the stereotype of teachers as boring, ignorant, and condescending. This critique aligns with the reformist trends in pedagogy at the turn of the century, which also called for a radical rethinking of pedagogical methods and roles. It criticises a one-size-fits-all approach in which teachers apply the same principles to all learners, as if the learning process were governed by a set of rigid, predetermined rules. Dienes also questions the idea that general pedagogical principles can be flawlessly applied to all cases, asserting that a good teacher must choose the most appropriate method for the given circumstances. She compares learning to play, but stresses that the aim of learning is to acquire knowledge, while the aim of play is enjoyment. Her goal with movement taxonomy is not to transform learning into play, but to make the learning process enjoyable and engaging. She advises teachers to avoid presenting material that is too difficult or too easy, as the former can lead to frustration while the latter can cause learners to disengage. Instead, Dienes encourages teachers to find the golden mean in teaching so that learning becomes both enjoyable and effective (Dienes, 1929/30).

Boreczky (2021, p. 148) highlights that in Dienes' approach, movement is considered 'universal', with this universality serving as a means to better understand the actual role of movement in pedagogy. Movement is not only a momentary bodily action, but also a means of individual expression. Each person's specific movements carry both inherent importance and convey expressive content and messages. The practice of movement can be a source of enjoyment as well as a means of self-expression, self-awareness, and self-acceptance. The significance of this becomes apparent in movement-centred pedagogy. Movement is viewed as an essential expressive tool of the psyche which is integral to both teaching and pedagogy. Dienes emphasises that the uniformity of movement is not only an aesthetic matter, but also a general pedagogical duty that has a place in everyday life, not only on the stage. According to Dienes movement can be embraced in everyday activities and should be accessible to all, regardless of age or background (Boreczky, 2021).

In her notes, Dienes underscores pedagogy's impact on the ideational factors that shape personality. Referring to her discussions with Bergson, she concludes that just as the past is a fundamental determinant of personality, motor readiness can also be greatly influenced. This, according to Boreczky (2021), presents movement arts as a way to help organise and systematise a child's functioning address disorders listed in her pedagogical notes (e.g., reflex dysfunction). The exercises developed by Dienes can mitigate shyness, optimise mental states, and deeply bring repressed memories and inhibiting subconscious thoughts to the surface.

Dienes believed that ‘ranges of movement’⁷ play an important role in education, and that education itself can be understood as such a range. She draws on the example of the ancient Greeks, who integrated walking and learning, illustrating how movement had an explicit role in the process of communal learning. Dienes’ pedagogy highlights empathy as an important element in community destiny and in the experiential education process. She argues that the experiential aspects of movement and life are lacking in modern civilisation, emphasising the need to return to its original experiential immediacy. Dienes’ educational philosophy also contains critical elements of the life reform movements which emphasise that thinking is not simply a formal-discursive activity, but rather a process of creating something new. This is illustrated by a practical pedagogical example, in which Dienes suggests that instead of giving a student a map from A to B, allowing them the freedom to choose the route fosters increased interest and thus more responsibility in the student. This approach contrasts with pre-planned routes that do not encapsulate the lived experience the journey. In its essence, the act of thinking only takes place through the creation of something new (Fenyves & Balogh, 2018, p. 47).

7. CONCLUSION

In this paper, I examined the oeuvre of Valéria Dienes, focusing on orchestrics and her pedagogy of movement in light of her general pedagogy. Dienes led a life marked by significant achievements; her ambitious dreams and innovative ideas had a great impact on the Hungarian reform pedagogical movements of the 20th century. According to Vitányi (1966), the fulfilment of Dienes’ life’s work is most evident in her movement theory and pedagogical work. The a system she created showcases her philosophical knowledge, viewing movement not only as a bridge between body and mind, but something much deeper, an embodiment of life events and developmental processes.

Dienes drew attention to critical phenomena in pedagogy, such as mental illnesses, affirming the role of movement in human development. She considers the human body a stage for emotions, a reservoir of will, and a medium for expressing thoughts. In her view, movement is a primary defence against physical, biological, or psychological challenges, for example, to avoid a frightening scene in the movie, one might simply close their eyes or turn away. Similarly, the actions of searching for food when hungry, pouring a glass of water when thirsty, or taking a painkiller for a headache all represent such movements. The deliberate evocation of abstract memory also involves corresponding movements, such as when trying to recall the lyrics of a song by mentally revisiting when, where, or with whom one was with when they heard the song, thus linking it with a lyric, a place, a person, a smell, or a feeling. According to Dienes, every intentional action and spontaneous intervention that inherently shapes one’s external or internal world is essentially a kind of movement (Dienes, 1925/26b).

According to Boreczky (2021), the key words of Valéria Dienes’ pedagogy are “discovery, creation, creation and action” (p. 147). These elements highlight the essential role of movement in any approach, whether discussing movement systems, movement pedagogy, or movement theory. From this, it can be concluded that Dienes’ movement

⁷ The ‘ranges of movement’ here refers to interactive and dynamic learning processes that include not only the learning domain but also the active, experiential aspects of learning.

pedagogy forms the basis for her general views on pedagogy, since her philosophy of education is strongly influenced by the conviction that the understanding of the soul and the learning process cannot be addressed through simple principles and laws (Dienes, 1925/26c). According to her philosophy of education, movement is the basis of everything.

Dienes was most influenced by her teacher, Henri Bergson. With a deep understanding of Bergsonism and its intricacies, she not only translated his ideas into Hungarian, but also disseminated them and infused them into her own philosophy. Inspired by Bergson's ideas on intuition, metaphysics, and movement psychology, Dienes did not confine these concepts to theoretical discussions, but rather embedded them in her own work, with Bergson's theories influencing her orchestics, pedagogy, and movement art. In particular, the relationship between matter and spirit, as well as between memory and movement, can be seen in Dienes' dance and pedagogical work (Szabó, 2001).

Valéria Dienes was an outstanding teacher, philosopher, mathematician, and scientist whose influence is still felt today. Throughout her vibrant life and career, she was an exceptional figure among Hungarian intellectuals. As one of the first women to graduate from university, she demonstrated her dedication and perseverance in an era when it was not easy for woman to assert themselves academically and professionally. Despite these challenges, she developed innovations, including a unique system, orchestics, that helps us to better understand the importance and relevance of movement pedagogy.

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