

The Legacy of a Method

Author: Philippe Campignon

Mrs Godelieve Denys-Struyf bequeathed us a method, the fruit of long researches, great observation skills and a limitless inquiring mind into all matters pertaining to the human. Her manner of approaching physiotherapy has shaken the life of many amongst us. Once exposed to her teachings, one can never attend a patient in the same way anymore. Even beyond this professional context, our approach to what is around us, to the others and to life has changed.

More than a method, she handed down to us a life project.

But after all, what is a "method"?

The "Petit Robert" gives a first definition of the term:

"A set of steps taken by the mind in order to discover and demonstrate the truth"

The "Petit Larousse" gives us another definition:

"A rational process of the mind in order to reach the knowledge or the demonstration of a truth"

Furthermore, according to the "Petit Robert", a scientific method calls upon *logic*, which means that the method must satisfy the norms of the truth.

Godelieve Denys-Struyf was relentlessly reaching forward to that truth, always making sure she could prove what she had put forward.

The "Petit Larousse" introduces the notion of **experimental method** and defines it as follows:

"A procedure consisting in observing the phenomena, drawing hypotheses therefrom and having the consequences of these hypotheses verified by scientific experimentation"

Mrs Godelieve Denis-Struyf taught us to see not only what is visible, but also what lies beyond. She taught us to use both our brains: the right brain for intuition and the artist touch, the left one for reasoning and more concrete approaches.

She kept demanding to relax our PM in a bid to collect the information in all neutrality and delay the intervention of the reasoning to a latter stage. The greatest discoveries have more often been the fruit of observation (not to mention chance) rather than reasoning.

She would also prefer experiential learning to theory; in support of my statement, I shall quote her here:

"Abstract notions emanate from the actual experiences. When these experiences are intense and repeated, concepts emerge and assume shape in tasty words that have substance and meaning."

"What the body experiences, the mind can conceive".

And still according to the "Petit Robert":

"A method has recourse to analysis and synthesis."

The amount of tests and analyses contained in the method shows the extent to which Godelieve Denis-Struyf could push the analysis. To be successful, any quest for truth must provide a detailed analysis, of course, with the proviso that there is a return to globality in the synthesizing process. As far as I am concerned, it is Godelieve Denis-Struyf's incredible synthetic mind that impressed me most. All new information was immediately integrated into its recurring theme.

Is it not what we are relentlessly attempting to do in the teaching of such a rich subject as the GDS Method?

In the field of biomechanics and contrary to certain ideas that circulate here and there, I remain convinced that a precise knowledge of anatomy and physiology forms an ineluctable base not only for the understanding of pathologies, but for the refinement of our therapeutic deeds.

For all that this anatomy should be integrated and not simply acquired by rote with the risk of being forgotten.

Mrs Godelieve Denys-Struyf rapidly became aware of this deficiency among many practitioners and students. She kept on finding new stratagems in order to refine the awareness of our own body: for some the sensations, for others the right images, or again dramatization, drawing, modelling...

I have just experienced something that would have pleased her: I recently made a presentation of the GDS Method in an Arab country. At one point, I supported my words by a dramatization of the osseous pelvis. One of the participants, who had been teaching anatomy for over fifteen years, told me that this presentation had opened his eyes, that he could in the future never teach anatomy again in the old way and that he had understood why students never retained what they had learnt.

Le "Petit Robert" gives a second definition of the word "method":

"A set of rules or normative principles underlying the teaching or the practice of an art."

The GDS Method rests upon a set of rules and principles stemming from observation and experimentation. These rules and principles do define the originality of the method. Its author would define the method as follows:

"A global method of physiotherapy and behavioural approach, of prevention, treatment and maintenance, based on the understanding of predisposing susceptibility."

Godelieve Denys-Struyf's teachings do reflect the two aspects of her identity:

The physiotherapist's approach analyzes anatomy, physiology and their related pathology in a bid to understand better the pathologies of the locomotor system, but without ever losing the notion of globality according to which the different systems interact.

She suggests a wide variety of tools for an improved adaptability to the individual's susceptibility.

The behavioural approach proposes a restorative and strengthening work to a structure rendered more fragile through the wear and tear of life. Bodily awareness and somatic enactment are its main tools.

Another definition of the "Petit Robert" perfectly corresponds to Godelieve Denys-Struyf's idea about her method:

"Order regulating an activity and its resulting arrangement".

Mrs Godelieve Denis-Struyf used to work on what she called: **the recurring theme** of her method; she kept refining it until the last few weeks of her life.

This recurring theme is **the ciment of her method**, for it defines the concatenation of the sequences and unites them with each other. It is, so to say, the spine of her method. She bequeathed it to those who did or will take over, with the purpose of perpetuating these teachings. Everyone must be pervaded by that recurring theme, so as to have a global vision of the method and to be able to establish bridges between its various aspects.

Here is a third definition from the "Petit Robert":

"Sets of reasoned means to reach a goal".

The interventions according to the GDS Method are based on clinical observation and the analysis of human mechanics. The method implies that numerous pathologies often find their origin in the exacerbated susceptibility of the person, who therefore needs an individualized therapeutic intervention.

The GDS Method is a therapy that restructures the locomotor apparatus according to the individual's predisposing susceptibility. The method proposes various treatment strategies for a better adaptation to the various cases encountered. In Mrs Godelieve Denys-Struyf's own words:

"All techniques are good under the condition that they are adapted to the individual's susceptibility."

The method rehabilitates massage as well as many other techniques often neglected by physiotherapists and give back to them a place of choice in the assortment of techniques. What is suitable to one does not necessarily suit the other.

The strategy of the star provides the key to penta-coordination between the chains and guides us in a task of neuromuscular reprogramming.

The strategy of the lemniscate reminds us that tension circulates in the chains according to a given order. It guides us in the task of sorting out the stretches in a circuit.

The strategy of the wave gives us the basics for the task of psychomotor restructuring with the body as a starting point.

What Godelieve Denys-Struyf passed on to us is a method, a rigorous method that is fastidious to learn...The method may sometimes repel by virtue of the complexity of its message; it is, however, a method that opens our eyes, open doors, establishes connections...In the rat race that characterizes modern living, we must remain loyal to our commitment to resist the temptation to serve "recipes" as they are preferred by many. To attend patients is not simple, but it cannot be done without providing the patients with the means to care for themselves. A therapist cannot only be the one who knows and acts on the other's behalf; he or she must also be the person who conveys his or her knowledge to open the others to the awareness of their bodies, of their differences...

Godelieve Denys-Struyf used to say: **"we must be conveyors"**.

The onus is on us and on our successors to pursue this task of **"human ecology"** as she used to say herself. In any case, a great word of thanks, Godelieve!