

Notes: MATTS 2 and 3 May 2024

Revise “semi-flex” (Monkey)

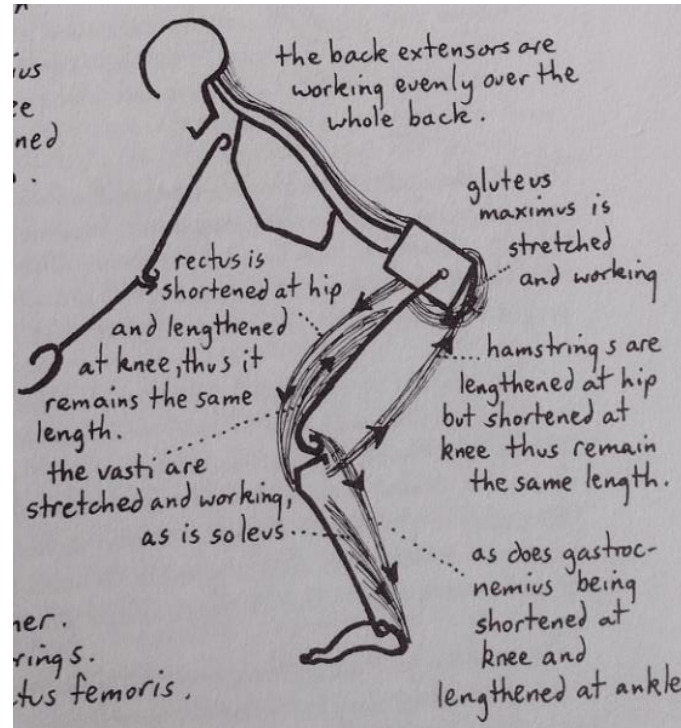
We reminded ourselves of the “Door Exercise (Standing)” (*Articles and Lecture*, pp. 104-105).

Standing at full stature, check that you are not locking your knees and send your hips (pelvis) back to meet the wall so that you incline forward from the hips – “angle of 25 to 30 degrees”. As you do so, observe how the knees release forward (from the hips) and away (from each other), not by pulling them apart but by remembering not to pull them together. The direction is more-or-less over the big toes.

We discussed “antagonistic muscular pulls” and what this means. Alexander mentions “The Doctrines of Antagonistic Action and Mechanical Advantage” in an early version of his 1908 pamphlet, *Re-Education of the Kinaesthetic Systems*, included in *MSI* (see Mouritz edition, p. 218). Curiously, he hardly ever mentions it again though it is obviously something that informs his thinking. He repeatedly talks about “muscular pulls” in the Bedford Physical Training College Lecture (1934).

The best explanation I have is from David Gorman’s *The Body Movable, Volume III* (1981).

“The bi-articular muscles – i.e. long muscles that cross over two joints – thus maintain their full efficiency because they remain at virtually their resting length. The rectus [femoris] is shortened by hip flexion but lengthened by knee flexion; the hamstrings lengthened by hip flexion but shortened by knee flexion; gastrocnemius is shortened by knee flexion but lengthened by ankle dorsi-flexion” (p. 169).



The next day we looked again at going into “monkey”. The sequence I use is:

“Come to full stature, check I’m not locking my knees and come forward from the hips (allowing the knees to release).”

The hips, knees and ankles work as an “ensemble”.

Elisabeth Walker showed me a very nice way to stand up when you come off the table. Sit or “perch” on the very edge of the table with just the front (balls) of your feet touching the floor. Observing, come forward from the hips, staying in contact with the table. Gently, as you incline forward you come to a point of balance over your feet where you can let your heels lengthen to the floor. With your balance now on your feet (but pelvis still touching the table’s edge) you can stand upright.

Having spent the previous term reading “An Illustration” (hands on the back of a chair) in *Constructive Conscious Control*, we began the next chapter, Alexander’s take on the ‘Respiratory Mechanisms’.

In Sydney (1900-1904), with the help of his friend, Dr Stewart McKay, he gained a reputation as “the breathing man” who could improve your breathing. He repeats his objection to “deep breathing” exercises before general coordination has been improved.

“[All] “physical tension tends to cause thoracic (chest) rigidity and breathlessness (lack of respiratory control.” (Mouritz, p. 127)

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