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RAYMOND DART

Raymond Dart (1893 – 1988) made a major contribution to understanding human developmental and evolutionary movement pathways. He was an Australian-born South African physician anthropologist and paleontologist whose discoveries of fossil hominids led to significant insights into the evolutionary origins of humans. For many years Dart was the dean of the medical school at Witwatersrand University in Johannesburg, South Africa, where he also taught anatomy until his retirement in 1958. His best known work, *Adventures With the Missing Link*, describes his discovery and interpretation of the skull of a child now known as the first *Australopithecus Africanus*, ancestor of modern humans. His theory that human evolution has not been a single progressive sequence and that bipedalism preceded brain expansion has since been well corroborated, but at the time he was especially vilified for proposing that the human species originated in Africa.

Dart began working with developmental and evolutionary movement sequences by himself and with his son Galen, who suffered motor damage at birth, in 1941. He studied the Alexander Technique between 1943 and 1958, and wrote many articles about the evolution and maintenance of bipedalism, about the movement sequences he developed for himself, and about what he felt was the great significance of the Alexander Technique. These writings are collected in *Skill and Poise* (STAT Books, 1996). Two Alexander teachers, Joan and Alexander Murray, read his writings and developed the procedures independently in order to further their understanding of the Alexander Technique. They began communicating with him in 1967, eventually meeting him and collaborating further on the “Dart Procedures.” They continued a lively dialogue until the early 1980s.

“These articles explain and explore the intrinsic link which exists between skill and poise. They show that the delicate erect balance of human beings is of paramount importance for success in learning, and for the acquisition and successful exercise of skill and, by extension, for the achievement of the individuals potential and well-being.”

Information links for the influence of Dart on the Alexander Technique:

Direction Journal on Dart’s contributions to the Alexander Technique:

<http://www.directionjournal.com/Main/Order/Products/DJs/dj13.html>

Joan and Alex Murray:

[http://www.atcu.us/Alexander Technique Center Urbana/Welcome.html](http://www.atcu.us/Alexander%20Technique%20Center%20Urbana/Welcome.html)

Dance and the Alexander Technique:

<http://dancealexandertechnique.com/DAT/Home.html>