



Pedagogical Section  
at the Goetheanum

# Journal



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## The Journal of the Pedagogical Section

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## Foreword

*Dear Colleagues,*

*translated by Steffi Cook*

The title page of this edition bears a picture taken in the Great Hall during the 10<sup>th</sup> world teachers' and educators' conference. Over 800 colleagues from 46 different countries spanning all the continents came to Dornach either to contribute or participate. Whole groups of colleagues of between 7 and 12 people came to Switzerland from Australia, Denmark, India, Italy and Holland. Holland was the most highly represented country with 98 colleagues.

We look back with joy and gratitude at this international conference. It was a week of encountering one another, of exchange, of learning, of looking towards the future, of facing up together to the realities of our time, and of art. Each evening we witnessed art being brought to the stage by different groups, and on three of those evenings we watched pupils perform on the stage. These evenings left deep impressions!

That all this was possible is largely thanks to all those who accepted our request to participate and to the donors who donated both large and smaller sums of money for our work. We would like to thank you once again very, very warmly for these gifts. They also enabled us to help conference participants with travel costs, discounted conference passes and much more. Thank you all very much indeed!

This edition of the journal focuses on the lectures given at the recent conference. All the morning speakers have now edited their contributions in writing. They are published in English and in German. The lecture by Michal BenShalom from Harduf is currently only in-

cluded in the English section, but the German translation will follow in the Michaelmas edition.

We also bring you an obituary, in the German section, of our colleague Lothar Steinmann who worked for many years as a colleague of the Pedagogical Section and at the Seminar for Waldorf Education in Berlin. He died suddenly on June 1<sup>st</sup> in Berlin. The English version will be published in the next edition.

The International Forum, formerly the Hague Circle, met in the South of France in May. The class teacher concept and our Upper School pedagogy are current topics for thorough study. We reviewed the document "Essential Features of Steiner Waldorf Pedagogy", and the latest version is available on the homepage of the Pedagogical Section. In order to keep colleagues worldwide up to date with the work of this group we plan to publish a report of our meeting in the Michaelmas edition.

May we use this opportunity to thank all our readers and friends of the Pedagogical Section for supporting our activities, and for your commitment to a deepening of our understanding of the pedagogy founded by Rudolf Steiner. We wish you strength and joy in equal measure for your work with the young people in early years centres, kindergartens and schools all over the world!

*Your Pedagogical Section*

## Resistance as the Origin of Pedagogical Initiative – 2016 World Teachers' Conference

*Claus-Peter Röh*

*translated by Margot Saar*

Experiencing and overcoming resistance has always been an existential aspect in the development of the international Waldorf movement. Each new school initiative knows the phenomenon and knows that the resistance they meet actually helps them pool their forces, think out new ideas and bring about transformation. We can look back to many a crisis situation and realize that the obstacles we experienced then were instrumental in helping us to muster the strength to take new steps. "Necessity is the mother of invention", as the saying goes. Rudolf Steiner saw resistance to the old, habitual ways of thinking as necessary and as a sign of the new school's orientation towards the future. *"It must oppose [traditional thinking], for otherwise it would not work in the direction of future development."*<sup>1</sup>

Today, three generations later, the Waldorf movement also faces obstacles and questions that require us to take a stance. In recent years, for instance, the media have intensely promoted the "digital revolution in the classroom." Scientists develop complex "observation systems" that collect countless data on the basis of which they promise ever more plannable and predictable lessons as well as "highly individual" ways of learning. Individual students only need to press a button for the images on the electronic blackboard to change. *"The possibility to zoom in on the Alps will drive the last vestiges of nostalgia from the classrooms."* – As Waldorf teachers

we need to penetrate the fascination with these floods of outer images and develop, out of clear insights, valuable living inner pictures that are conveyed from person to person as we teach students of various ages. One aspect of the relationship we have with the power of the technical, earthly measurability and predictability – seen in anthroposophy as ahrimanic qualities – is expressed in the green North window, at the back of the Goetheanum's main auditorium: as human beings we face this power eye-to-eye, distancing ourselves from it on the one hand, while approaching it carefully and searchingly on the other. Rudolf Steiner wrote of this window, *"And the spirit of gravity attracted contradiction which, in the will of human beings, became resistance."*<sup>2</sup>

### **Resistance is necessary for personal development**

How we, as modern human beings, gain insights and impulses for our actions, especially when we come up against resistance, is an essential theme in Goethe's Faust. In the very prologue of Part 1, God the Father explains how human beings need Mephisto and his dealings in order to develop new strengths:

**(340) The Lord:** *Man's energies all too soon  
seek the level,* 340

*He quickly desires unbroken slumber,  
So I gave him you to join the number,  
To move, and work, and pass for the devil.*

Mephisto has two kinds of influence on us:

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1 Rudolf Steiner, *The Spirit of the Waldorf School*, Anthroposophic Press 1995, tr. R. Lathe, N. Whittaker, p. 30

2 Albert Schmelzer, *Goetheanum Glass Windows*, Verlag am Goetheanum 2013, tr. M. Saar

he tries to induce us to leave our intended path and he enables us to gain knowledge of the world and knowledge of ourselves. When asked about his identity, he replies that he is (1335) "Part of the Power that would always wish Evil, and always works the Good".

Faust, tired of the old book knowledge, has made a pact with Mephisto. Mephisto then takes him on a drinking binge at Auerbach's Cellar and on to the Witches' Kitchen, where Faust sees the image of the beautiful Helen in a mirror. Mephisto then arranges a meeting between Faust and Gretchen. His experience of the world and his encounters with other human beings awaken a new awareness in Faust. He also realizes, however, that he is becoming increasingly dependent on his companion, Mephisto, and the effect the latter has on him. In the scene "Forest and Cavern" he says:

*(3240) ... You gave me,  
With this joy, that brings me nearer,  
Nearer to the gods, a companion,  
Whom I can no longer do without,  
Though he is impudent, and chilling,  
Degrades me in my own eyes, and with  
A word, a breath, makes your gifts nothing.*

The more clearly Faust sees the gulf opening within himself between the elevating divine forces and Mephisto's degrading influence, the stronger grows his will to overcome this abyss through his own human actions. This first recognition and insight are gradually transformed into clear judgment. When Mephisto drops an almost sneering remark about the infatuated Gretchen ("To that poor little ape of flesh and blood, ... and always in love", Faust replies, "You snake! ... away from me! Procurer!" (3313f.)

Later, Faust realizes that the wild excesses of the Walpurgis Night had been a cunning plan of Mephisto's to distract him from Gretchen's cruel fate. His awakening resistance grows stronger in the face of this obvious deceit, which shakes him profoundly. The scene "Gloomy Day" sees him confronting Mephisto: *"In misery! Despair! ... Locked up in prison as a criminal, ... Treacherous, worthless spirit, you hid it from me!"* With his careless reply, "She is not the first", Mephisto reveals his true colours and Faust, enraged with disappointment, realizes that it is up to him to take initiative, *"It pierces to the marrow of my bones, the misery of this one being – and you smile calmly at the fate of thousands! ... Save her, or woe to you!"*

Part 1 ends with Faust painfully realizing, on seeing Gretchen in prison, that his awakening and initiative have come too late for Gretchen. Through the ups and downs in his dealings with Mephisto, his own power of judgment and strength of initiative have grown, however, allowing him to meet Mephisto in Part 2 as a human being who has become freer and more independent. Rudolf Steiner described this kind of inner growth in the face of the opposing forces as characteristic of the modern human being. *"This swaying between Ahriman and Lucifer is necessary because, without it, our personality would not develop. Without the spirit that creates and acts through resistance, our personality could not unfold. In order to progress, it needs to feel resistance that reaches right down into the physical."*<sup>3</sup>

### **The members of our organization also offer resistance**

Looking at the effect resistance has in our pedagogical work, we find an archetypal image in

3 R. Steiner, *Faust, der strebende Mensch*, GA 272, p. 310 (Available in English as *Anthroposophy in the Light of Goethe's Faust*, SteinerBooks 2013, tr. B. Channer).

the daily waking up process. Every morning, our 'I' and astral body, which are intimately connected, must penetrate, and overcome the resistance of, the – equally closely linked – physical and etheric bodies. Because this penetration is not yet harmonious in children, Rudolf Steiner said, in the first lecture of *The Foundations of Human Experience* (formerly *The Study of Man*), that it was the foremost task of education to bring about the gradual harmonization between the spirit-soul on the one hand and the physical and life body on the other. We can depict the waking up process as the gradual interpenetration of the various levels of our being (see sketch below). In his book *Cosmosophy*<sup>4</sup> Rudolf Steiner described where we find the three soul forces of thinking, feeling and willing in relation to the four levels of our organization:

- Thinking can arise between the physical and etheric body to the same extent to which the etheric forces detach themselves from the physical forces of growth after the change of teeth.
- The will is essentially very close to the impulses of the 'I', but it is also has an affinity with the mobile astral body.
- The feeling arises in the middle of these encounters, between the movement of the astral body and the formative forces of the ether body.

When we look at child development we see that the pupils experience the resistance of their various levels of being in very individual ways. Imagine a boy who encounters strong resistance on entering into his physical body in the morning: he finds it hard to wake up, but as a result of this 'clash' with

his physical body his thinking forces wake up very early. – Or imagine a girl who has a strong astral body: she is soon awake and, spurred by her astral body, she brings a cheerful, wide-eyed, often hard to bridle, sensory joy and anticipation to each day. Because of her strong life of feeling, she easily connects with everything that has to do with movement, rhythm or music, but her astral love of movement offers resistance when she is required to concentrate on a quiet reflective activity.

As teachers we also experience various kinds of resistance within ourselves which we have to overcome in our own individual ways. This overcoming of resistance has an effect on our individual sense of freedom, on our inner mood and strength of initiative. If I decide, for instance, to change a long-cherished teaching habit with my next class, I will face the resistance of this old habit in my ether body until my new approach has established itself.

### **The other side of the 'I' in the face of outer resistance**

These kinds of inner resistance are only one side of the teacher's experience. As we meet the world and outer resistance with our senses (see arrows in the sketch below), with our interest and actions, we come across a riddle: even if we fail to see this at first, we realize increasingly how the experiences, challenges, even difficulties, we encounter at school are deeply connected with our own selves. It almost seems as if we were meeting ourselves in our external destinies. Martin Buber referred to this finding oneself anew in our encounters with others and with the world when he said "*I become an 'I' through you*".

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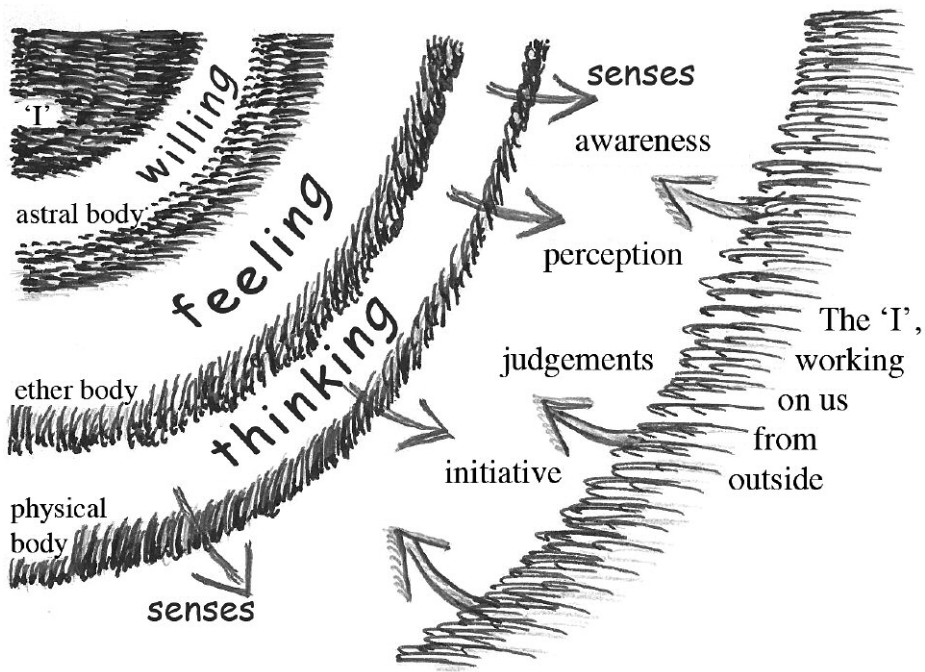
4 R. Steiner, *Anthroposophie als Kosmosophie*, GA 207, p. 47f. (Available in English as *Cosmosophy Vol. 1, Cosmic Influences on the Human Being*, SteinerBooks 1985, tr. A. Wulsin)



As Waldorf teachers in particular, we are required to practise our love of initiative by leaving old habits behind and devoting ourselves fully to the work and encounters that every new day brings. If we do this, as suggested in the *Philosophy of Freedom*, from individual intuition and conviction, we take steps towards finding ourselves in the social realm. Rudolf Steiner described this as a future stage of human evolution when he said,

*"We are heading toward a future age in which a person will say to himself: My self is out there in all those whom I meet; it is least of all within me."*<sup>5</sup>

This means that we need to add to our inner 'I', to the spiritual essence of our fourfold nature, a second level of effectiveness, one that comes to meet us outwardly, in the challenges and resistance we meet in life.



### **"Be a person of initiative"**

Learning that, as teachers, we have a direct relationship with the outer events and encounters that come towards us awakens in us a profound sense of responsibility: how can I become more attentive to everything that is going on in my lessons? Often the seemingly minor details are the most important. If we

succeed in cultivating an attitude of interest, of "devotion to the small things"<sup>6</sup>, then the characteristic qualities of each pupil become more noticeable: the girl who only begins her work when paper and pencils are neatly lined up in front of her; or the boy who has his very own way of recalling a story. Another level of attention is the attention to

5 R. Steiner, *How can Mankind Find the Christ Again?*, Anthroposophic Press 1984, p. 70, tr. F. Dawson, G. Hahn.

6 R. Steiner, *Education for Special Needs*, GA 317, Rudolf Steiner Press 2014, tr. A. Meuss

the interaction between the teacher and the pupils during the lesson: how does a class respond to being addressed in a certain way? Is there an immediate response? Do the pupils ask questions? Is there resistance rising up from the pupils' life of soul?

As teachers we are taken aback when a discrepancy arises between our intentions and what actually happens in the lessons. Required to bring about a new balance, we need to develop pedagogical initiative, either immediately or in our preparations for the next day. Something mysterious often happens in such situations: as we are taking the initiative our dismay about the discrepancy between the actual lesson and the ideal we had in mind is often transformed into new strength and confidence. In applying our will and taking action we clearly connect with the part of our 'I' that is coming towards us from the future. In Volume 3 of *Karmic Relationships* Rudolf Steiner described the biographical significance of developing initiative in the face

of resistance: "Become a person of initiative. You must find the centre of your being by taking initiative when your body or other circumstances present you with hindrances; for all joy or sorrow in life depends on your finding or not-finding this personal initiative."<sup>7</sup>

We can apply this thought to our lessons and also to the essence of Waldorf Education: In the countless cases of resistance we face, in the wider or narrower context, we find that we are again and again required to take initiative. The more we manage to take hold of the described Faustian stages of gaining awareness, knowledge and judgement, and to take initiative out of our own free will, the closer we will come, in our deepest being, to the living essence of Waldorf education.

With the theme of this World Teachers' Conference, "Overcoming Resistance – Courage for an Independent Spiritual Life" we would like to work on further developing our individual strength of initiative.

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7 R. Steiner, *Esoterische Betrachtungen karmischer Zusammenhänge* Band III., lecture 10, p. 151 (Available in English as *Karmic Relationships. Esoteric Studies*. Volume 3. Rudolf Steiner Press, 2002, tr. G. Adams, D. Osmond)

## Teaching in the interplay between power and freedom<sup>1</sup>

*Stephan Sigler*

*translated by Christian von Arnim*

A little while ago I was walking through the school, a bit tired from having tried to share something of the beauties of mathematics with a Class 8. Behind me I heard two Class 10 pupils, whom I vaguely knew, chatting together. They were talking about a subject that was being discussed in main lesson. At first I did not pay any attention but I did notice that one of them seemed to be getting quite excited about something. Suddenly this pupil called out: "Yes ... yes ... It was really cool! Honestly!" And more of that kind.

That roused my curiosity, so I turned round and asked her what had led to such a display of enthusiasm. She responded: "Mrs XY was so cool. She was just brilliant." While saying this, she took on the typical cheering pose for her age group by rolling her eyes upward and clenching her fist. So it was clear that she meant exactly what she said! Mrs XY was a teacher (!), a colleague at the school whom I knew. I was very surprised to see such a degree of enthusiasm in a Class 10(!) pupil.

Understandably this made me even more curious so that I went to the staffroom in the hope of finding Mrs XY there. Fortunately, she just happened to be present. I spoke to her and told her about my little encounter with the two pupils from Class 10. In her infinitely modest way she could at first find no explanation as to why that might be. But in the further course of the conversation she had to admit that at the start of the main lesson the day before she had had an idea

and that it had evidently worked quite well in the discussion part of the lesson today.

The day before she had spoken about a certain subject, which she had never talked about before, for about 20 minutes in this main lesson; various work projects had resulted from this and they had talked about it a little today. She could not keep on doing the same things all the time and just had to think up something new every so often. The reason for that was that she herself did not actually understand what she was teaching in very great detail but was simply incredibly interested in it. That is the gist of what she said.

I consider this event to be of such significance because evidently a very normal lesson using the apparently very simple, conventional method of frontal teaching was so successful that pupils of a Class 10, who normally have no difficulty in giving vent to their feelings of pleasure and emotion with great coolness and restraint, became so enthusiastic.

Just think:

- no loud and trendy motivational phase;
- no utilisation of a world of media images apart from a blackboard drawing;
- no sophisticated teaching materials;
- not even a teacher who as learning mentor supports the completely individualised, self-organised learning processes of the pupils and guides the pupils to

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<sup>1</sup> Text version of a lecture at the World Teachers' Conference at the Goetheanum in 2016.

evaluate the growth in their skills permanently themselves;

but instead a methodological repertoire which from today's perspective comes from the Stone Age: narration, the resulting work projects, plenary discussion. Everything presented in a very simple, almost despotic way by the teacher from the front. The educational Stone Age, as we might think – and then such enthusiasm! Or perhaps not the educational Stone Age after all, but simple good "Waldorf teaching" in the upper school?

As upper school teachers, we only have a limited number of sources where we can look for support. There are very few things Steiner said that relate in greater detail to the methodology of teaching in the upper school and which may be considered as a direct help. As upper school teachers we can therefore only rely on a small number of sources. The lecture of 14 June 1921 may be considered a key text in which Steiner develops the structure of the main lesson in the upper school in the form of conclusion, judgement and concept.

Using a small snapshot from mathematics lessons in Class 8, I would like to go through these three steps and attempt to clarify the educational possibilities and intentions, the educational direction which can be derived from them.

### **Conclusion**

The content of the teaching sequence can start with the following imagination exercise:

"Imagine a rectangle which is slightly wider than it is high. It lies straight in front of you. A diagonal line is drawn from the bottom left to the top right corner. This diagonal line divides the rectangle into two congruent right-angled triangles.

The one lies on the top left and the other on the bottom right in this rectangle. Now think of the midpoint of this diagonal and let it wander to the top right corner and back. Now draw a vertical and horizontal line through this midpoint. This creates a small rectangle in the top left section and another one in the bottom right section of the original rectangle. These should be coloured yellow. At the top right and bottom left there are another two smaller, congruent right-angled triangles on one another. Now the midpoint, that is the intersection between the vertical and horizontal lines, wanders a little along the diagonal towards the top right so that the vertical line moves right and the horizontal one upwards. The yellow top left rectangle becomes a little wider and less high; the bottom right yellow rectangle becomes higher and less flat. If this movement is continued, the top rectangle disappears into a horizontal, the lower rectangle in contrast into a vertical line."<sup>2</sup>

Now the movement of the midpoint would have to return to its starting point and then go into the bottom left corner and back again. All of this would have to be described slowly and in detail.

What happens in the pupil in such an exercise? The teacher stands at the front of the class and through their words has caused the pupils to imagine a geometrical form in a certain movement and dynamic. The latter were not emotionally prepared for what was about to happen. The experience occurs quite directly. If it goes well, the pupils' attention will be focused completely on the matter, almost as if completely given over to it. The words only form the substrate for the geometrical event that is happening in the pupils' minds.

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2 Reproduced here in abbreviated form.

As such these words take a back seat. They only serve as the tool to build up the shape in the pupils which as a tool goes otherwise unnoticed. In experimental subjects, such an experience does not, of course, require words. In physics lessons, an expressive series of experiments which can come to life in the pupils with great sensory immediacy makes such words superfluous.

In any event, the pupils put themselves in the hands of the teacher. To this extent it is an act in which power is intensively exercised. But not force: the pupils subject to that power have followed the teacher's will as if it were their own, they have affirmed the action of the teacher and internalised it. The teacher's words have found a place in their soul without any imposition of force. Here their will was not just neutralised but it has even made itself subject to the form created by the teacher.<sup>3</sup>

The geometry in the words has continued in the pupils. And it has done so in as clear-cut a way as possible without providing for any great interpretative opportunities or, indeed, individual alternative forms of action. The pupils should imagine precisely what the teacher wanted. They should have very little opportunity to imagine anything else. A corresponding experiment would take place in a completely clear and self-explanatory way so that it captures the pupil's imagination.

Steiner probably had something of this kind in mind when he spoke in the previously mentioned lecture about how a new subject was to be introduced. He speaks about the teacher who narrates things, who draws things on the blackboard, who does experiments, who

"places something" within the child "[...] by way of physical reality, through the eyes, the ears, the reason which grasps it ..."<sup>4</sup>

The teacher who "places something" within the pupil is not one who offers something from which everyone can help themselves to what they need but who ensures that something very specific is placed within the pupil. "Comprehending perception"<sup>5</sup> in an arrangement set up by the teacher – but with a high level of sensory, indeed full bodily presence and guided intentionality in which the division between subject and object is not removed completely but does appear to become more fluid – that is what this is about! The pupils wholly identify with the phenomenon; they are then associated with their whole being, but particularly with their will, with this shape.

This is therefore something completely different from a purely cognitive process in which "information" is communicated which leads to knowledge of a certain value. With a physical experiment this is even clearer. But particularly also in such an imaginative exercise, in which we give ourselves over to it in generating the phenomenon, sensory activity and sensory experience are strongly stimulated: the activation, for example, of the sense of balance in creating symmetry, or the sense of our own movement in creating the dynamic of the geometrical shape form the bodily foundation and space in which our own geometrical visualisation can resonate.

The world is brought to appearance in and through the resonant space of the body. "The whole human being"<sup>6</sup> must accommodate

3 Han 2005, p. 9 ff.

4 Steiner GA 302, p. 39.

5 Ibid., p. 43.

6 Ibid., p. 43.

himself or herself to something that is foreign, something foreign that may also be disconcerting, awkward or resistant, but which displays a clear factual contour without any ambiguity. Such absence of ambiguity is established by the pupils themselves through a creative act of comprehension which affects the unconscious<sup>7</sup> and which takes possession of the impact of the physical facts with fully awake, physical presence.

This leads initially to an elementary creation of forms and is kept at this level without necessarily already leading to the discursive availability of "a piece of knowledge". Such elementary opening up, such creative development of forms normally takes place in life completely unconsciously, automatically and at lightning speed in respect of the phenomena of the world so that we always have the impression that the reality of the world around us is already finished.

In this part of the lesson we thus descend into the unfinished part of the world and are actively involved in constructing reality. The connection to the developmental forces of the world cannot be obtained until we unfold, extend and savour this process in the way the lesson is organised. This depth dimension in experiencing reality which we strive for in the second septennium through the immersion in images must be realised in the upper school through the encounter with the physical world. This step, as elementary as it may be, is of crucial importance – but often difficult to set up. It must be guided by the teacher and not be subject to the accidental nature of pupil behaviour.

And there is something else which I consider important in starting the lesson in this way: it is not just that the division into sub-

ject and object between the pupil and the lesson content is destabilised, but the division between the pupil and teacher as two separate beings in the present is less clearly defined. The intensive, interest-led orientation of the teacher towards the subject of the lesson (and that also has to be there at every moment!) means that the pupils are enabled to immerse themselves in the teacher's flow of attentiveness. This turns it into a common one; it is enhanced and focused. The pupils structure their perceptual process within the mantle of the teacher's I. The teacher thus takes on the responsibility for the way that the pupil encounters the world.

How different the atmosphere would be in a classroom in which the pupils had to work on such an imaginative exercise with worksheets using, for example, a series of pictures. The strength and attentiveness in the person of the teacher then disappears immediately behind anonymous factual constraints coming from barren worksheets. The initiation into their content is no longer borne by personal support and responsibility so that it becomes lost in the arbitrary acquisition of pure "worksheet processing skills".

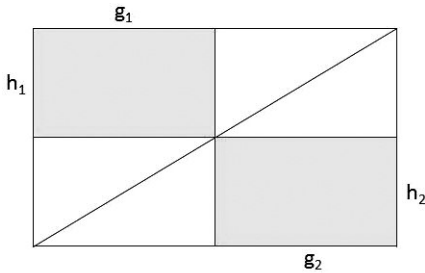
### **Judgement**

What a change, then, in the character of this next teaching phase in which, in the teaching example just cited, things are drawn, measured, the results transferred to tables and subsequently examined. In this phase the whole process is gone through once again but now with more precise judgement. The continuous movement is dissected into individual steps which in turn must be assessed in their relationship to the whole (cf. diagrams).

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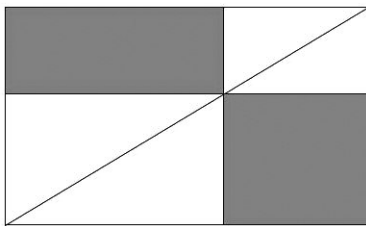
7 Schieren 2010, p. 18.

In a rectangle with the external measurements of  $g_1 = 10$  cm and  $h_1 = 6$  cm, the following



shapes can be drawn with the corresponding lengths which have to be measured out:

$g_1$	$h_1$	$g_2$	$h_2$
5 cm	3 cm	5 cm	3 cm
$A_1$	$U_1$	$A_2$	$U_2$
15 cm <sup>2</sup>	16 cm	15 cm <sup>2</sup>	16 cm



$g_1$	$h_1$	$g_2$	$h_2$
6 cm	2.4 cm	4 cm	3.6 cm
$A_1$	$U_1$	$A_2$	$U_2$
14.4 cm <sup>2</sup>	16.8 cm	14.4 cm <sup>2</sup>	15.2 cm

If this series is continued with  $g_1 = 7$  cm,  $g_1 = 8$  cm and  $g_1 = 9$  cm, we obtain the following table in which A refers to the area and U the perimeter of the rectangle. It can be seen from this that the areas of the two rectangles  $A_1$  and  $A_2$  must be the same in each drawing:

$g_1$	$h_1$	$U_1$	$A_1$	$g_2$	$h_2$	$U_2$	$A_2$
5	3	16	15	5	3	16	15
6	2.4	16.8	14.4	4	3.6	15.2	14.4
7	1.8	17.6	12.6	3	4.2	14.4	12.6
8	1.2	18.4	9.6	2	4.8	13.6	9.6

It is not difficult to imagine what happens in the class when such a task is set – there is certainly no deathly silence in which each pupil comes to the same result on their own, but a lively working together, in which the results are sometimes fiercely disputed. One pupil

obtains 1.8 cm for the length of a particular side of the rectangle while another comes up with 2 cm. Each one has made the judgement that their drawing is absolutely exact and correct. These judgements now have to be negotiated so that another judgement can be made as to which value is “more correct”.

After all, making judgements is a process which underlies the whole existence of every person. It is always a personal, individual process in which a person places themselves into a relationship with the world. The statement “my result is more correct” is an expression of such a relationship in that we assign a place to our drawing in relation to other drawings, but also in relation to ourselves. The pupil cannot remain vague, but has to come to a point of view how they see the matter. They must make a decision with real consequences.

But that is only possible if they are willing to affirm the matter about which they have to make a judgement. Each judgement must be accompanied by an affirmation. And such affirmation is a process which is crucially supported by the feelings and as a consequence is based and resonates in the middle sphere, the arms and rhythmical system.<sup>8</sup> Judgements are *our* assessments. They give security to our lives in positioning us in relation to the world.<sup>9</sup> They create order, a kind of overview, a totality, and raise what was achieved in the first part, the "conclusion", into the discursive sphere, thus putting it indirectly and in some circumstances also instrumentally at our disposal.

As a result, however, the pupils put themselves in a different relationship to this geometrical shape: they are no longer harnessed into actively consummating the coming into being of the world with their will but distance themselves from it and use their subjectivity to position themselves in relation to the world. Personal empathy, affectedness, but also our sensitivities, in other words all of our emotional development, have their rightful place here. This is, of course, also a part of our connection with our experience of new content.<sup>10</sup>

### The night

The main lesson can end on that note and there follows a caesura with regard to the arc of the content, namely the night. Now Steiner describes how the astral body and the I separate from the physical body and etheric body. The things that have been assimilated by the astral body and the I by way of the physical can be passed through once

more in a much broader and more spiritualised way, he says; something of this is then available the next day.<sup>11</sup> And this something fits in with the physical and etheric body which have been exposed to the processes on the previous day. But what is this something? Should we imagine that the pupils gain access to concepts in the spiritual world during the night with which they can comprehend and truly understand what was experienced on the previous day?

Surprisingly, however, Steiner explains this process using the example of eurhythm. What, in learning the movements of the physical body and etheric body, is imposed on the astral body and the I, and the way the latter have to adapt to "what is taught them from outside through their own physicality"<sup>12</sup> – that is taken into the night and gone through once more as described. Next morning there is a health-giving force when "spiritual substance" is carried into the human being.

I believe this example can show us that such "spiritual substance" is not some fixed content or some kind of specific idea which appears as a defined conceptual and meaningful connection. On the contrary, it is a more flexible power, a more flexible intellectual ability which is created on the first day through connecting our own will with the way the world is created and which through the effects of the night is made available to the pupils in a more universal, living and pure form; and which – this is crucial – fits with the physical entity and can be perceived as a health-giving force – an indication that the soul and spiritual entity in the human

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8 Steiner GA 302, p. 26.

9 Schieren 2010, p. 20.

10 Sommer 2010, p. 58.

11 Steiner GA 302, p. 40 f.

12 Steiner GA 302, p. 40.



being incarnates in the world in the right way, that is in accordance with the individual biography, through bodily physicality.

But this health-giving force is always missing where people cannot unite with the world through their will. The key to spiritualising concepts thus lies in the "conclusory" examination of the world. The spirit cannot be had without such an examination of the physical world. The spiritual spark of a matter can only be struck in the physical sphere and then emerges out of the night. A purely idea-based encounter with the world always leads to ossification and never to vitalisation. The teacher merely reporting about the spiritual background or the spiritual meaning of some lesson subject fits exactly into this latter category! Spiritual activity or its wellspring is precisely what is not addressed in this way. All that is left in the pupil is word husks and dead concepts.

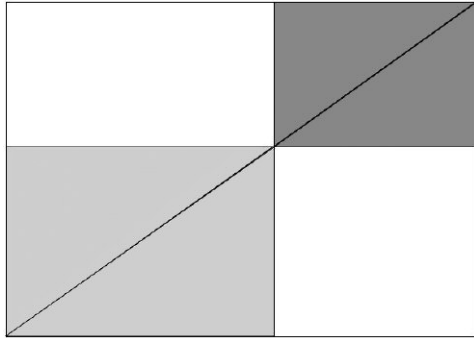
### Concept

Next morning, the main lessons starts with a phase of deepening and broadening through the thinking, that is with the so-called observational or concept part. The things which were already analysed and judged on the previous day are now infused, penetrated, generalised and broadened with concepts.

Here, a fundamental problem arises when we attempt to describe this process of the gradual acquisition of knowledge because it is a very individual one. In this situation, the teacher only provides the framework for the spiritual action we have just described to unfold. The activity comes from the pupils. The skill of the teacher here consists only of allowing the tentative, partially still very incompletely formulated thoughts of the pupils to melt into a whole through small,

cautious interventions in the joint class discussion.

To this extent we can only describe the content of what we will now discuss. Let us take up the problem of the equal size of the two rectangles.



It has to be shown in the shape above that the two rectangles have the same area. "How many triangles do you see?" might be an opening question which directs the attention in the lesson to important aspects. The pupils note that there are six: two small ones in the top right corner, two medium-sized ones in the bottom left corner and two large ones which each contain a rectangle as well as one small and one medium-sized triangle. Since in the large triangles the medium-sized and small triangles are each equal in size, the areas of the rectangles must also be equal in size because the large triangles are the same size.

The searching, qualitative motion of the discussion with the whole class turns such thoughts of the pupils into *common* thoughts. These gain in intensity if they are grappled with in "common now time"<sup>13</sup>, in which they are turned this way and that, are expressed in multiple variations in different

<sup>13</sup> Türcke 2016, p. 117.

words, and are reflected in the pupils' faces as understanding dawns. True independent understanding spreads – it actually radiates, is infectious: for the listener, but also the speaker.

But how are the thoughts, which are developed here, formed, how does such knowledge arise? We can actually only say, it sets in. The evidence expresses itself and can only be perceived. Suddenly everything becomes clear; the parts of the puzzle fall into place. We see the solution. It has become manifest. There really is no other way to describe it. The thinking has taken the form of perception. It is like the consolidation of the thinking gaze which illuminates the phenomenon and makes the connections, that is the spiritual links, visible *in* the phenomenon.

Everyone can see it because they already saw and lived through the phenomenon on the day before. No theory or model is required to explain the phenomenon in any way; neither are any thoughts required with which to think *about* the phenomenon. In this cognitive act the theory is congruent with the phenomenon. Essence and appearance together form the reality. It is here that Steiner's basic epistemological position of conceptual realism is honoured, namely that the idea as operative idea, as operative agent, lives in the things of the world.

### **Truth**

This places main lesson teaching, structured in this way, into sharp contrast to the constructivistic approach of learning theory common today, in which it is assumed that an insight is only a simulation taking place in the head of the learner, which in this sense has no reality content. The category of truth is thus completely useless because it can

never be examined whether the simulation corresponds to the original or not. That has to be so because any thinking about whether the simulation has any connection with reality can in turn, only be thought of as a simulation. In contrast, the approach presented here aims for a different attitude to truth. We will elucidate it with an image.

If we have two intersecting straight lines and move them gradually so that they become parallel, their point of intersection disappears along the line of the two straight lines into infinity. If we try to observe the intersection point of these two straight lines in our mind during this movement and, above all, observe the moment at which the point disappears, we will be forced to conclude that we cannot do so. Because for as long as the point is in movement and we can imagine it, it will not "arrive" at infinity. It lies precisely in the nature of the infinite that the process of movement has no end. No matter where the point is, there is still another point after it, the process continues.

But if we turn the straight lines so that they are parallel, the intersection point has disappeared into infinity. Despite its disappearance, the matter does not end up as something arbitrary: the direction of the parallel straight lines are a guide which lets us share in infinity. In terms of perspective we are aligned in a very specific way towards infinity and in this sense share in it. Just as I share in infinity, I share in truth, in something that is universal, as part of the cognitive process. Steiner says each simple thought already contains intuition. But:

"Intuition is the conscious experience of a purely spiritual content which takes place in the purely spiritual sphere."<sup>14</sup>

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14 Steiner GA 4, S. 146.

The life of our thoughts is woven from the substance of truth, although there are many ways in which we can be in error. But in our whole existence as human beings our orientation is towards the truth, it is the intention of our cognitive life – always! The truth tends to lie in the process of striving in a certain direction. It does not lie in the fulfilment of that striving. Because in the completion of the process the intersection of the two straight lines disappears just as the truth disappears when we believe that we possess it completely. In a letter to Vincenz Knauer in 1893, Steiner put it as follows:

“I too am of the opinion that a last word cannot be spoken either in an intellectual or ethical respect and that all scientific striving is a developmental process.”<sup>15</sup>

The key thus lies in the developmental process! This is what must be inspired in the young person! They must develop the feeling that a force lives in them, a force which finds access to the world in a way which is cognitively optimistic and which fundamentally is capable of understanding the world. The soul and spiritual entity of the young person can thus incarnate in the world through their body – not in a world which has been completed but in a world which is in the process of becoming. They are the actor, they become the fellow creator of the world process.

### Learning

If we look once more at the origin of such cognition, I tried to set out that this lies in the first part of the lesson when the will converges with the essential will of the world. Thus this phase of the encounter – the experience of things – is not just a trigger for understanding which supplies sensory data of one sort or another, but already an initial

form of cognition within which everything actually already has its foundation in embryonic form. The things which lie in this encounter then take on the form of knowledge in the further course of the lesson.

So the things which actually lie in the life of the pupil's will are illuminated in the consciousness, become transparent and clear. The will itself becomes bright. The thoughts are born out of the life of the will which is ignited on the world. If the pupil grasps reality in this sense, an educational process is realised which in its character is self-education in the real sense. The pupils themselves structure the life of their will from the inside. This gives such an approach a transformational character. In learning, the soul and spiritual entity of the pupil is transformed through itself, it becomes something that is truly different, it becomes richer because it links up with the world through their body.

It would, in my view, be a gross misunderstanding if such a concept of learning were to be understood as indicating that learning facts, dates, arithmetical techniques, grammatical structures and so on runs counter to this. Occasionally it is said in polemical pointedness that these things are indeed completely superfluous or indeed damaging because they bring about illness. The only important thing – put polemically – was the encounter between the pupil and the teacher who in an “artistic” and “living” way have joint experiences in which the pupils feel themselves perceived, valued and individually supported by the teacher. Such an attitude is particularly popular with regard to extra-curricular activities and events such as class trips, work placements, class plays, etc. All the things with which Waldorf schools like to highlight their specific profile.

<sup>15</sup> Steiner GA 39, S. 188.

These are, of course, educationally important things, but only if lessons remain the intellectual focus of the school. And in these lessons something naturally has to be learnt, something which is available for use later on, such as facts, arithmetical techniques, etc. But such knowledge has to be formed out of the living examination of the world, just as some sedimentary rocks are formed from the skeletons of living creatures. These sediments form the solidified substrate for new life. Without such a firm substrate, progress is not possible. Every step forward requires solid ground.

Lessons in which the teacher imparts knowledge in the classic sense, or in which such communication of information is put into the form of methodologically cleverly organised materials with the help of which the pupils then acquire the knowledge by themselves, inhibit real intellectual activity in these young people with which they would want to penetrate into the depths of the world.

Those lessons go no further than the development of concepts in which the world appears in the pupil as an ordered image. These images can then be cleverly combined and regrouped. In this way new theories *about* the world are developed, but they are theories which are concepts about the way the world *could* be; or concepts which other, much cleverer people – that is academics or specialists – have already thought about and validated on the basis of their authority as experts. Such concepts are conceptual corpses which are always based on something that has already been thought. In this way they are linked to something from the past and are guided by what has already come about. This links the pupil solely to the forces from before birth.<sup>16</sup>

### **Destiny**

The link to what lies in the future as the potential of the young person can only succeed if they can spiritually incarnate in the world through their body as described; or put another way, if they can individualise the world in their abilities which lie in the spirit, if the world becomes capable of experience as part of their self. That is then the location where ideals are formed, ideals which have not arisen from subjective "desires", that is our wants, but which lie in the needs of the world.

Lessons thus become an individualisation process in which the tasks which arise from our biography can be found in the world as the place where the future is located and do not insert themselves into the world and social circumstances egotistically only as they relate to ourselves.

But how does it become possible for us to find our own respective tasks in the world? In what way must the soul be disposed so that we can find the tasks in the world which belong only to ourselves and then to take them up? That can only succeed if the situations in the world come very close to us, if they become part of us, if we make them our own. The encounter with the world enacted and enjoyed in the "conclusion" lesson phase is the source of such an acquisition process in which the young person is initially subjected to the power of the world.

Such an encounter with the world receives its spiritual spark from the sphere of the night in combination with the higher hierarchies. This spiritual spark as the power of the imagination can be used in such a way that the reality of the world, which initially appears to be indifferent, is shaped into a question to the young person. A kind of natural

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<sup>16</sup> Steiner GA 293, 2. Vortrag.

imagination can form, which, in turn, sets the situations of the world in motion in such a way that they form into a question. A situation turns into our own situation and thus into a unique shape of destiny which is then connected indivisibly with ourselves. What does the situation demand of me? Not in general, but of me very personally.

Only when my imagination has managed to do this, does an initially peripheral-seeming outer situation acquire the necessary challenging character which does not, however come as something mandatory from the outside but can freely be grasped inwardly. The challenge does not then remain as something coming from outside but it is like something of myself which I encounter externally. I encounter myself in the world. Being-in-the-world thus turns into being-with-myself. The main lesson is the daily exercise to achieve this.

This leads to a completely different concept of education in which the purpose of the lessons in the upper school is not to socialise young people to become part of a social order or, indeed, domesticate them to become part of it. Lessons are intended to develop a disposition of soul which experiences the world as our own world; which experiences our individual place on earth as belonging to our I for which we have to take responsibility and which desires to be changed and transformed. It is only through myself, through my cognitive optimism, through my own deeds that community is formed, that social connections are formed, that the future of this world is formed.

In his book entitled *trotzdem Ja zum Leben sagen* (Engl. translation: *Man's Search for*

*Meaning*), Victor Frankl, the famous Austrian psychologist who survived Buchenwald, calls for a Copernican revolution regarding the attitude of people to the world: it did not really matter what we expected from life, but rather what life expected from us. The key thing for us as human beings was that we should give the right answer to the tasks through right action and right conduct.<sup>17</sup> Here the decisions must be taken in freedom. These decisions are open, highly risky and existential because, Frankl continues, human beings:

"are the beings that always decide what they are. They are the beings who invented the gas chambers; but at the same time they are the beings who went into the gas chambers, upright and with a prayer on their lips."<sup>17</sup>

If we want to bring the upper school pupils to the point where they feel that they are beings who at every moment decide what they are, we as the Waldorf school movement also need a Copernican revolution: we have to engage through research we have to have a much more intensive, critical look at the *concrete* questions of teaching in the various subjects. But ultimately these are questions asked of us upper school teachers which concern our own understanding of the world, an understanding which forms the basis for any subject work. It will be a long and sometimes arduous path – but there is no alternative: our thinking about upper school teaching in general must take on a concrete form in the lesson. With such an orientation, we have to regain our trust in the spiritual power of lessons framed by the subject.

<sup>17</sup> Frankl 1996, p. 125.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 139.

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## The Value of Learning to Know – The Challenge to Education in a Digital Society. 10<sup>th</sup> World Teachers' Conference

*Constanza Kaliks*

*translated by Matthew Barton*

When we speak of education we are speaking of course of responsible action. We are speaking of what society owes to its newly joining members, those new arrivals who keep surprising us with what they introduce into what is already here. In education we speak of our responsibility for these new arrivals in the world, and for meeting their desire to be welcomed by us. It is them we must thank for the fact that there is a future, as well as a past and a present.

As teachers, therefore we are implicated in future destiny, in the destiny of these new arrivals, by our role in welcoming them. Responsible action is the locus where we as a society find ourselves in relation to those who need this society, need to be introduced into it, so that they can then shape it and change it.

Those who decide to participate actively in education, resolve to act responsibly. Today this is a radical decision, for it presupposes that we know our times, understand their phenomena, that we recognize and intuitively accompany the development of the child as a contemporary of ours and as a self-realizing being, and thus enable his individual intention to be realized within the whole context of reality.

As teachers we move towards a far, uncertain horizon in which the sensory realities surrounding us are losing their clarity and status as criterion for decisions. We have to try to make decisions for an unpredictable future and a changing present. This faces us with a

very difficult task, which has important consequences. Do we have sufficient criteria to make such decisions? On what basis can we make them?

One region of this broad horizon is knowledge itself. For education this area has decisive importance: knowledge is the basis of our actions as teachers, and also a key instrument in the educational context itself. And over the past 20 or 30 years, let alone the past 100 years, this area has perhaps changed like no other. Here I'd like to mention two radical ruptures that have profoundly marked our culture.

1. The first is the reality, as we have witnessed it, that knowledge does not necessarily lead to responsible action worthy of humanity. Over the last century, the most inhuman way of relating to other people has lived hand-in-glove with what the Enlightenment regarded as the highest good: thinking sustained by reason. It became clear that culture alone did not inevitably lead to ethical behaviour. And thus people could no longer experience knowledge as a guarantee of humanity. The 20<sup>th</sup> century showed us this danger – that knowledge and ethics can exist separately, side by side. In the history of that century, therefore, the assumption that knowledge and science would be a pledge of our humanity became invalid. This fact, one likely to be generally acknowledged today, has made deep inroads into previous assumptions, from the Renaissance onwards, that knowledge was a sure foundation for human life.

2. The second rupture is that the content of knowledge and the act of cognition are no longer experienced as directly connected. Content increasingly becomes information, data.

We are quickly getting used to this; and it has a dramatic impact on the foundations of education: knowledge as an instrument of self-realization and our connection with the world is here put in doubt. Do we need knowledge to experience a connection with the world?

Today, simply by owning a mobile phone, we are in possession of far more data than we are able to assimilate. It has become part of our awareness that the content of knowledge is unsurveyable in its scope.

'I know that I know nothing' was how Socrates defined the perspective granted him by self-knowledge, an assertion about the self. Nowadays we might say, 'I know that I could know'; and the feeling this gives us is that 'I know all knowledge is mutable and subject to context. I use information as and when I need it.' What is the value of knowledge in a society whose wealth of information exceeds all capacity to adopt a position about it?

'We discover what we have invented.'<sup>1</sup> This statement by Vilém Flusser seems apt for our modern, questioning stance – in a digital world in which we increasingly, and also unknowingly, live.

We are preoccupied with '... discovering what we have invented': In all areas of life, from medicine to agriculture, from sociology to education, we are preoccupied with the

changes, the impact, the consequences, the possibilities and the open questions of digital reality. And we also discover ourselves in what we have invented. We discover our humanity by coming up against something it cannot penetrate.

These questions are ones we can pose as teachers in relationship to our pupils. And we can also ask how we ourselves should shape our relationship with knowing, with cognition, so that it corresponds to the task of education. To put this more specifically, the question here is this: What relationship can we, and do we want to, develop with knowledge today, above all in respect of our task as teachers and in our resolve to act responsibly?

The thesis proposed here is that our relationship to knowledge will come to play an ever more important role in establishing conditions worthy of human dignity and in allowing individual expression.

And yet, what kind of knowledge will be relevant in this context? What kind of thinking enables it to live, and cultivates its development? How can I form an image of the human being, the child, conceive of the future, so that my thinking does not limit and constrain this image?

To do this, thinking would need to fulfil certain conditions, three of which I will refer to here by way of example, since to me they seem key to responsible action, to the decisions we will need to make as teachers, and repeatedly face us with the uncertainty that challenges us to develop inner strength and warm assurance:

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1 Flusser, Vilém. Apud BURCKHARDT, Martin, HOEFER, Dirk: *Alles und Nichts. Ein Pandämonium der digitalen Weltvernichtung*. Berlin: Matthes&Seitz, 2015, p. 139



### 1. The topology of knowledge – autonomy and empowerment in the homogenous information context

Information as data does not offer us any distinctions, any differences of relevance: it forms something like a landscape without features or topology. Ranking, or assignment of a piece of information in the overall information context is a decision that falls to the thinking, perceiving, seeking – that is, the intending – self. If the self withdraws from this task, randomness or another's decision, or chance, become the governing criterion for ranking information contents.

What will tell me what information is of more importance for a complex of knowledge, what has relevance, and what is secondary? Experience is an important element in determining this. Life itself, our experience – also our experience of knowing things – is an important element in distinguishing between things of primary and secondary importance. In other words, experience is a conspicuous element in a topology of knowledge content. And experience is always singular. How I meet reality and it meets me, and how I help shape it in my perception, is a unique creative, engendering act, an unrepeatable moment of conception. That doesn't mean that it is random or 'purely subjective': it is always an interaction between the two elements that constitute reality: between what I am and what comes towards me. My individual view of reality will be decisive in shaping a topology of the landscape of knowledge.

In the book Rudolf Steiner wrote in 1907, *The Education of the Child in the Light of Spiritual Science*, he writes about the education of the three soul faculties that develop dif-

ferently over the course of childhood and adolescence. He says there that a person is only ready to start developing powers of judgement at puberty:

[...] At puberty the time has arrived when a person is also ready to form his own view of things he has learned previously. You can do nothing worse to a person than awaken his own judgement too early. We can only judge once we have stored up within ourselves the content that helps us do so through comparison. This foundation is lacking if we form our own judgements prematurely. [...] To develop maturity of thinking we have to have acquired respect for what others have thought. [...] You see, every judgement that is not built on the proper foundations of the soul's riches, casts stones of hindrance on a person's life path. Once we have formed a judgement about something, this will always influence us: we no longer absorb an experience as we would have done if we had not formed a judgement connected with it. In young people a sense must live of first learning and then judging.<sup>2</sup>

In the digital world, in which breadth, depth and nuance cannot immediately be derived from the sea of information, judgement by a self-determining person who can make decisions based on a proper foundation of judgement and experience, thus shaping the landscape of knowledge, will assume ever greater importance. Particularly in the digital world, judgement is decisive for knowledge, and acquires still more of a key role.

Alongside this – parallel to the faculty of judgement which enables us to differentiate

2 STEINER, Rudolf, *Die Erziehung des Kindes vom Gesichtspunkte der Geisteswissenschaft*. GA 33. Dornach, Rudolf Steiner Verlag 1988, p. 38, 39, 40 and 41.

within a field of knowable things – the open question plays an important role in the quest for knowledge, and can emerge as an experiential expectation.

In his work, *On the Pursuit of Wisdom*, Nicolaus Cusanus describes how a person does not seek what is entirely unknown to him but what he intuits – something of which he has a *pregustatio*, a foretaste. He then follows this hint like someone, seeking a rose, who smells its fragrance; or like someone hunting a prey whose presence he intimates and whose footprints he sees. Such a *pregustatio* would be one condition for knowledge that is experiential and sympathetic. This intimating sense could help determine the topology of knowledge in our autonomous search for insight, making content or information into opportunities for a self-governing cognition.

## 2. Connection.

### The I experiences itself in the world

The 20<sup>th</sup> century destroyed faith in the sublimity of reason in respect of ethics, of responsible action. Experience of man's inhumanity to man clearly showed that knowledge does not necessarily engender morality. And yet the 20<sup>th</sup> century also saw the discovery of the 'I' in its primary quality, its inherent connection with the other and the world.

In differing ways, and from different perspectives, Rudolf Steiner, Martin Buber, Viktor Frankl, Emmanuel Lévinas and others describe this new element, this really shattering knowledge: the I does not first exist and subsequently connect its 'existence' with others and the world, but it is connection: connection itself is what constitutes the I.

Writing in 1911, Rudolf Steiner states that we should not see the I as dwelling within our bodily organism, and the impressions we receive entering us from without. Instead we should picture

the I as placing itself into the pattern and lawfulness of things and finding in our bodily organism, as in a mirror, only what is reflected back there from the I's activity outside the body in the transcendent realm to the I of our organic, corporeal activity.<sup>3</sup>

From a different perspective we find Emmanuel Lévinas writing of the certainty of the self that can only be assured by the other:

No *cogito* can any longer guarantee the certainty of what I am, and scarcely even the certainty *that* I am. This existence, dependent on acknowledgement by the other, without which it regards itself as insignificant, as unreal reality, becomes entirely phenomenal.<sup>4</sup>

But when the I meets itself in the 'pattern of things', the connection to this pattern, these laws, become a decisive experience, a fundamental and constitutive I experience. With new urgency the question then arises as to how my connection with the other and the world unfolds. In this context, knowledge acquires a central role as our possibility of connecting with, and being engaged in, the world. Here, rather than discoursing at more length on this idea, I would like to cite a passage from a lecture by Steiner at the worker's educational institute in Berlin, where he speaks about Nicolaus Cusanus:

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3 STEINER, Rudolf, *Das gespiegelte Ich. Der Bologna-Vortrag – die philosophischen Grundlagen der Anthroposophie*. Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag 2010, p. 53, 54.

4 LEVINAS, Emmanuel, *Zwischen uns. Versuche über das Denken an den Anderen*. Munich, Karl Hanser Verlag 1995, p. 37.

[...] When someone becomes aware of the thought that brings the law into being in things, and feels this as his own law springing within him, then the inherent reality of things resounds in his soul: he becomes intimate with things, as a friend becomes intimate. [...] This is the resounding echo of the nature of things in the human being's own soul. There he feels united with the power of God. This is to hear the harmony of the spheres, of the creating law of the world; this is to be interwoven with existence so that things themselves speak to us, so that they speak out of us through the language of our soul. Then we have reached a sphere which Cusanus says no words can express.<sup>5</sup>

We have become habituated to a kind of knowledge which veils from us the reality of life, the abundance of life. The mathematization of the world, science's great modern attribute, which enables it to measure and articulate all phenomena through a unified language, has increasingly distanced us from the full abundance of phenomena themselves.

One-sided pursuit of competencies cannot be a valid selection criterion for a thinking that allows life entry. Such a thinking must be mobile, must develop the power to form and shape, to remain in movement, and *exist* in shaping activity.

### **3. Nurturing and protecting the invisible**

Thus our connection to the will arises: As an adult, can I develop a thinking so imbued with will that it can itself shape, configure, bring forth world?

Rudolf Steiner describes this relationship between thinking and will in relation to meditation. In the 'Pedagogical Youth Course' he speaks as follows of the nature of thinking that leads to spiritual-scientific knowledge:

All spiritual science must prompt us to [this kind of] inner activity; that is, it must lead all our reflections to the point where we no longer have any support from external, sensory perception, and where instead there must be a free play of inner powers. [...] The foundation for all anthroposophic spiritual science, therefore, is our inner activity, the invoking of inner activity, an appeal to what can still be active in us when all the senses fall silent and only our thinking activity is at work. [...]

Assume, therefore, that you could have a pure flow of thoughts. Then the moment will begin for you when you have led thinking to a point when it no longer has to be called thinking at all. [...] This thinking, rightly called 'pure thinking', has become pure will: it is will through and through. If you have advanced inwardly to the point of freeing thinking from external perception, then it has at the same time become pure will. [...] This pure flow of thoughts has become a flow of will. But this means that thinking, and even the exertion made to practise it, begins not only to be a thinking exercise but a will exercise, and indeed one that reaches to, and encompasses, our human centre. [...] But now you feel inwardly that you no longer think so high up but are beginning to think with your chest. You do in fact interweave your thinking with the breathing process. Here you are stimulating something that the

5 STEINER, Rudolf, *Über Philosophie, Geschichte und Literatur. Darstellungen an der Arbeiterbildungsschule und der Freien Hochschule in Berlin*. Dornach, Rudolf Steiner Verlag 1983, GA 51. Lecture of 12 November 1904, p. 214, 215.

yoga exercises have sought to do artificially. As thinking increasingly becomes an activity of will, you notice that it is first released from the human chest and then from the whole human body. [...] A new, inner human being has been born within you, and can unfold will out of the spirit.<sup>6</sup>

In our quest to know and perceive, this connection between thinking and will as the foundation of meditation can facilitate cognition that allows us – albeit only tentatively to begin with – to see the other also in what can only be intimated. This would be a kind of knowing that opens the teacher to a connection with the other, his otherness affirmed in responsible action through a broader perspective on reality.

Here we arrive at the third basic condition for this responsible action, for decisions which we must make as teachers. Edgar Morin ends his text, *Enseigner à Vivre*,<sup>7</sup> published in 2014, by asserting that it will become vital for education to cultivate and protect something that does not directly manifest in the human being. This points, as a core educational concern, to a pedagogical aspect that can open up to the teacher in the daily encounter with pupils.

As teachers we must use our intuition: we intuit the person who stands before us, we intimate the future. What kind of knowledge can intimation allow and cultivate of what is not manifest and apparent?

The developing I engages the realm of the will: the will 'brightens' when a person can participate in truth in his process of cogni-

tion. Where we enable a pupil to grow active in his will through the process of cognition, we 'cultivate' what is not visible in him.

And from this realm of the deeply indwelling will, the impulse to be active in the world also arises: to change it, to act responsibly oneself. This is the locus where perceiving possible meanings and needs in differing situations can be learned. This meaningfulness opens up through a connection with the other and the world. Victor Frankl was able to articulate this very precisely:

Here we encounter a phenomenon that I see as fundamentally anthropological: the self-transcendence of human existence! What I wish to characterize here is the fact that being human points beyond itself to something it is not – to something or someone: a meaning that must be fulfilled, or to the life of another human being which we lovingly encounter. We fulfil ourselves by serving a cause or loving a person. We become more human, more ourselves, the more we dedicate ourselves to, and merge with, our task, the more devoted we are to our partner. We can only realize ourselves to the degree that we forget and overlook ourselves.<sup>8</sup>

All who work in education face the challenge of facilitating a form of knowledge that masters a digital world, and equally makes life and human qualities its point of departure and goal. This is a form of knowing that continually seeks to become more human, making possible the kinds of decisions that support and affirm the uniqueness of the individual and his social significance.

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6 STEINER, Rudolf, *Pädagogischer Jugendkurs*, GA 217, Lecture 10. Stuttgart 12.10.1922. Dornach, Rudolf Steiner Verlag 1988, p. 148–149.

7 Cf. MORIN, Edgar, *Enseigner à Vivre. Manifeste pour changer l'éducation*. Actes Sud 2014, p. 122.

8 FRANKL, Victor, *Der Mensch vor der Frage nach dem Sinn*, Munich, Piper 2011, p. 147. Published in English as *Man's Search for Meaning*.

## Between Rigidity and Arbitrariness

Christof Wiechert

translated by Margot M. Saar

### Summary of a talk given at the 2016 World Teachers Conference

In his remarkable publication *The Beautiful Risk of Education* Gert Biesta describes the ideal of a modern education system according to the Anglo-Saxon concept. It is strong, safe, predictable and free from any risks. Biesta uses this as the basis for his own presentation, which is supported by a number of education philosophers, explaining that this approach would, in fact, be the end of teaching and could at best result in programming. Concerns about the "trivialization" or "infantilization" of teachers and educators have also been expressed. School as the loss of meaning: what is all-important now, instead of the contents that need to be taught and learned, is the most efficient way of finishing education and passing exams.

If we look at how our times is being perceived – for instance in sociology – we find a number of very diverse views. The Brazilian sociologist Sigiswald Baumann, for example, describes our time as "fluid modernism": nothing is fixed, everything is possible. The Franco-Chinese philosopher François Cheng speaks of the "in between". Relationships, he points out, arise between the 'I' and the 'You'. Adding to this the wonderfully precise description by Peter Sloterdijk (in his book "You Must Change Your Life") of how our inner reality mirrors all that is essential, we arrive at an entirely different picture.

These polar opposite perceptions of reality are characteristic of our time. Shortly before the birth of Waldorf Education, Rudolf

Steiner gave a series of lectures on pedagogical questions ("Education as a Force for Social Change" GA 296), predicting the polarity just described in quite a remarkable way. He said that the soul forces would become emancipated from each other. If we did not manage to hold them together through our identity, or 'I', the soul forces "would go their own ways", they would "disintegrate". The thinking, once it has separated itself, becomes mechanized; the feeling life will no longer mirror what we feel as we meet the outside world, but begin to focus on itself (Steiner speaks of the soul "becoming sleepy and vegetative"). The will, when left to itself, will no longer express itself through the initiative we take in the world, but through violence ("animalization of the body").

The conclusion that suggests itself is that it is the mission of the art of education to keep the identity, or 'I', and the soul forces together and to strengthen them so that we can retain our humanity and human dignity.

Is this disintegration noticeable in schools today? Let's start with the thinking. Whenever we look in the world, teaching is being subjected to an incredible and increasing need for structure: rules, procedures, strategies and all kinds of stipulations (penalty scales!). No teaching goals, and not even the teaching methods, are safe from this urge for rationalization. Like the claws of a dragon, it threatens to stifle the freedom of choice in the way teachers shape their lessons. And there are, of course, always good reasons, such as the need for quality assurance.

The soul life is impotent in the face of this overwhelming wish to have everything under control. The will is beginning to show signs of paralyzation. We also find these tendencies in Waldorf schools. It is time for us to ask about the relationship between impulse and form.

Rudolf Steiner refers to this problem in the very first chapters of "How to Know Higher Worlds", a book written as an educational tool for humankind: Spirit needs form if it is to become effective in the world.

The question is: does the spirit (or impulse) seek a suitable form, or are the forms, or structures, that have been made available devoid of spirit?

It may sound theoretical, but this difference is very important for what happens in a school's organism.

If form, structure, order and procedures determine the processes in a school, the thinking will inevitably become mechanized, and the teaching goals will also change. They will focus on results and achievements while the content will only be of minor interest.

The education sciences are examining how education can help to keep young people safe from radicalization.

It is obvious: if the life of a school is informed by structures rather than by contents and spiritual impulses, the environment that is created will encourage radicalization. Radicalization, in this sense, is the logical consequence of mechanized thinking – not even computers are needed for this to happen.

The German teacher and politician Kurt Edler, a member of the German Society for Democ-

atic Education (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Demokratiepädagogik*) has compiled a list of non-desirable versus desirable effects of education:

1. Blind obedience to structures  
– *self-finding*
2. Subordination to the (school) system  
– *being able to be oneself*
3. Being suspicious of everything  
– *trust*
4. Silence, "inward immigration"  
– *openness*
5. Keeping a distance, not connecting  
– *commitment*
6. friend/foe mentality  
– *diversification in looking at the world*
7. Dualistic view of the world: evil – good  
– *diverse, individual images of the world*

Not only schools are responsible, however, for this tearing apart of the soul forces that results in the 'I' no longer being able to take hold of the organization. This loss of the 'I' turns young people into small wheels in a big machine and mere objects of the intentions of others.

But radicalization is not only a political process. A young person who is defencelessly exposed to social media also becomes radicalized – in that he or she no longer experiences the world as real but as virtual.

It is significant that mainstream research be increasingly interested in family socialization, with good cause. Researchers are asking about the experiences children and adolescents are having:

1. Do young people have a basic sense of life security?
2. Have they experienced violence and traumatization in their homes?
3. Have they displayed signs of perpetrator identification as a result (imitation)?
4. Are the values conveyed to them false or unethical?
5. Is violence perceived as fascinating or is it being glorified?
6. Do the children or pupils experience very different and mutually exclusive parallel worlds, home and school, for instance, or school and friends?
7. Have the children suffered at school or been excluded, for instance because they failed to achieve?

It would be wrong to think that things "are different in our schools". There are voices that accuse Waldorf Schools of serving only the 'educated' classes. That may be. Yet we notice a loss of pedagogical values and actions at all levels of society, whatever we may call them.

The post-modern lifestyle is not exactly child-friendly. Children are often seen as a burden. That bringing up children could ask certain denials or even sacrifices of us, is something that is alien to our lifestyle.

This analysis is not meant to encourage a pessimistic outlook; it wants to show what education needs to achieve today. The aim of education today goes far beyond the acquisition of knowledge and skills that can be tested in exams.

If we look at the powerful impulse that Waldorf Education has given us, we are struck by the realization that its immense richness is just what our time needs. This Art of Education must be seen as a living being, however, which needs to be constantly renewed, refreshed and kept alive in the teacher or educator.

Let us pick some elements from the catalogue of preventative measures aimed at protecting young people from the lures of extremism and radicalization.

Teachers today are advised to develop three new qualities:

1. A lively interest in the student's personality
2. A new attitude of friendliness towards pupils
3. Time for the children or pupils

What makes these recommendations so striking is that they were not given in the context of Waldorf education. We are all aware of the potential impact of this advice: if it is heeded it will lead to the growing of school communities. For it is obvious: the first recommendation is about seizing the many opportunities we have to come to a real understanding of the child or pupil. It is a spiritual approach.

The second, a new "friendly attitude towards pupils" – is that not the same as the self-education of the soul? Can I rise above myself and become a place where the child's soul likes to be because it is safe and reliable? How easily we are tempted to say, 'This does not apply to me ...'

The increasing structuring of life (in schools, for instance) is resulting in people having less and less time. No one has time, certainly

not for important things: time to listen to pupils, a chat in the playground or, for older pupils, the offer to make time in the afternoon ("How about a short meeting this afternoon? Why don't you come to the teachers' room, I'm sure we'll find the time ...")

In the various situations we encounter in the life of the school we realize that there is

hardly a culture of conversation that goes beyond school-related topics.

If we combine these three qualities with the seven virtues of the teacher that Rudolf Steiner presented in 1919, we can get an idea of how powerful Waldorf education can be – an education created not for the past, but for the present and the future.



## Upstream – a Journey Toward Authenticity

*Michal Ben Shalom*

Dear Friends from all over the world, dear colleagues, good morning,

To be honest, the last few days' contributions were so very rich and full – what else can I add? Perhaps a good story ... a nature story.

I'll tell you the story of a great wanderer, one of the great wanderers in nature – the salmon.

They are born in freshwater streamlets, up in the mountains, high up, and as little ones, fingerlings, they stay in these remote places for some **three** years. A time? a place, rather? they will never forget. A childhood place they are bound to remember, made to remember, to the end of their lives.

When ready, they leave, they swim great distances down the big rivers, sliding down the waterfalls, riding, as it were, on the waves of the powerfully flowing waters down, down towards the ocean. After this youthful, playful journey, they stop at the mouth of the rivers, stop for a short while, in order to adapt their body systems to salty water. They transform what is needed – and off they go! They will spend the next five years in the deep, cold, sometimes very stormy ocean, with whales and seals, with seagulls and sea-eagles, with the "big ones".

**But**, when they are ready to lay their eggs, when they are to reproduce, that is, to form the future, the **Big Salmon Run** begins. Thousands upon thousands of salmon make their way from the open bays to the rivers of Canada, Alaska, to make their way back home. Remembering their exact place of

birth, they arrive at the mouth of the river they left five years ago, and they get ready, adapting – yet again – this time from saltwater to freshwater. Research tells us each fish remembers. Their body knows for sure how to navigate back to the stream where they belong! They smell their way **back to their place of origin**. Perhaps they take some magnetic help, but their sense of smell seems to be a major astrolabe in their navigation.

Now, when they gather at the mouth of the river, getting ready, perform this miracle – salt – fresh – a second time – they risk a lot! In fact, they risk everything! Life! It is a very vulnerable time. They fall prey to bears, just waiting for them, to the flocks of seagulls and white-tailed eagles, to fishermen, lots and lots of them ... And they are rather old by then, their health declines, their bodies are covered with deep scars, from the battle with predators in the open sea. They carry signs of age ... yet off they go, forced on their way by an old call of nature, of existence, of life itself, and thus they perform one of the greatest wonders in nature – The Big Salmon Run.

Against all odds, they start up, against the current! Upstream! Against gushing water, wild, powerful streams, against high waterfalls. Some will struggle a journey of 20 km to the source of their river, and some, at the Yukon River, for instance, will make a journey of 2,000 km upstream, with many waterfalls to overcome. They risk all this way up to protect the next generation, i.e. the future. They risk everything, only to lay their thousands of eggs where they know the chances of survival of the young ones are better.

They swim against the enormous power of water, escaping predators, avoiding fishermen. They push themselves up the stream, and when they arrive at a waterfall, they circle underneath it for a time, and finding the right spot, **they perform the unbelievable** – they fly ...! They jump up, nearly vertically, to the top of the waterfall; and sometimes they make it, sometimes they fail, they get carried down the stream, try again, fail better again, ... and so on.

It is hard to believe that any creature could swim against powerful water, let alone jump skyward several metres each time – but they do! Determined, they carry on, following a deep impulse of both **survival and renewal**.

No wonder so many people, adults and children, come every year to witness this moving event. It must reflect a deep picture for the human soul, some secrets of life.

While taking this daring journey, the salmon **feed** the bears and the birds waiting to hunt. Only 2 of 6 salmon will reach the journey's goal. The rest feed all the inhabitants of the forest and the tundra. Research shows, that the vegetation and animals, flora and fauna, around the sources of the great rivers, where salmon lay their eggs in the gravel are **surprisingly rich** in minerals one can find **only** in the depths of the ocean!

So, you see, the migration of salmon, their incredible endurance, serves as a messenger, delivering substances, knowledge, from the depths – to the heights, from dark places to the open light. They enable the cycle of life through their determination and perseverance – against all odds.

There is not much to say now, is there?

It is a masterpiece of nature, is it not? Perseverance, endurance, responsibility, trust, over-

coming resistance, clear memory of one's origin, and courage, so much courage.

The top list of values and virtues one can wish for! Only ... that with us, things are a **little** different.

Salmon have to! – We are free ...

Salmon are compelled – we can choose ...

Salmon are made to remember – we are free to forget!

An old Jewish legend tells us, that just before we are born, an angel puts his finger right here, softly, above our upper lip, and says: "Now you must forget ...", therefore, when we arrive here, we remember nothing of what had been "over there", on the other side of the threshold, (and we all have a beautiful mark above our upper lip!)

Despite the fact that we are so different from the salmon, it is a powerful picture, it is not for nothing that we are drawn to it, it speaks to us because we know something of it from within.

Our time confronts us with strong and challenging impulses, and resistance comes in many shapes and forms, from all directions: from without and from within.

One form of resistance, no doubt, is the impulse of acceleration. Time, the very being of time, is being forced to behave faster, quicker, shorter, thinner – staccato! We constantly lack time, run out of time and we even say to our children, "you are wasting time!" or "losing time" – this is **NONSENSE!** You cannot waste time, you cannot lose time, can you? Definitely not a child! Childhood is timeless, a hidden treasure of time, a sphere of golden time, the "golden age".

Acceleration also means, that things are expected or done in the wrong time, earlier

than they should. With early academics, early decision-making, early consciousness, early bodily maturity, etc., culture pushes us to accelerate learning, to do a lot more in a lot less time, to lose touch with the healthy beat of time. Children **need time** to grow, they **take time** to grow, and they keep to very beautiful cycles of growth, where, if things are allowed to happen in their own time, they ripen **when their time has come**.

As we keep our direction against the current, we should cherish time, and treat time in a spiritual way, thus making Waldorf Education a **slow education** – not a fast education, but a **slow one**. If we want to do this, we need to become slow educators: both in our inner life and in our professional life. **We shall not be able to know children, unless we slow down.**

First and foremost is keeping nice rhythms. Working artistically with rhythms, in an open, playful way. Not pedantic repetition, but breathing, developing rhythms, where children can happily experience a new mood, a new element, the new hope of a new day. Pedantic repetition kills time, whereas living rhythms bring new moods, richness and soul colours.

Then, for the sake of slow education, we should practice nice long main lesson blocks, of four weeks or more, where time allows one to have full rich experiences, individualizing, gaining skills, etc.

However, when we teach in short blocks of 2-3 weeks each –

Because we still have a lot to teach ...

Because there are so many blocks to squeeze in ...

Or because of academic pressure ...

... Then we allow **fast education – acceleration** – to take a "seat of honour" in our

schools. It is a form of "swimming downstream".

Another practical aspect of time would be sincerely following time rhythms that have to do with learning and forgetting, the ingenious arrangement of doing and not-doing. When introducing practice lessons in numbers, in the younger classes, or daily worksheets – because the children have to do it daily, because they "don't know enough", or "are not up to standards" – then we follow mechanistic learning ideas: "the more you practice, the better ..." – then this is not our art of education. This is drifting down the stream with neither direction nor courage. It is a deep secret of time: learning – and forgetting. It means developing a different relationship to time, based on the Knowledge of Man.

All forms of resistance, like time pressure, early academic achievements, acceleration – are a wake-up call for us, it is an invitation to clear identity, a reminder of our spiritual responsibility for the children, for the future.

Resistance pushes you to know your **Why**, capital-W "Why". And if one has a strong **Why**, then one can survive any 'How'.

This is perhaps the most famous statement of Victor Frankl, who seems to be a source of inspiration for many of us here – being mentioned for the 4<sup>th</sup> time without the speakers knowing of one another! After having survived the Buchenwald concentration camp, he says in his book "Man's Search for Meaning", – If you have a clear goal, purpose, reason – you will find your way ... or, in Viktor Frankl's words:

"Those who have a 'why' to live, can bear with almost any 'how'."

Resistance will make you ask questions,  
Resistance will make you invent, try, alter,

Resistance will make you search  
Resistance will keep you fresh, striving, flexible, agile;  
In other words, resistance will keep you happily active and actively happy.  
Because then you have this feeling – "I'm living my true life". You cannot get sour this way.

In a faraway town, so goes a Sufi story, there was a preacher who always prayed at great length and with much enthusiasm for the thieves and cruel robbers in the community.

O Lord, he prayed, Have mercy on them.  
He did not pray for the good people, but for the evildoers.  
His congregation asked him, "But why, why is that?"

Because, said he, whenever I see them, I am reminded that what they want is not what I want! They keep me on my spiritual path, on the right track, that's why!  
Resistance is a reminder, you see. It can keep us on the right track.

In the face of resistance, we need courage. Courage for the truth, for the true knowledge of Man. In Hebrew, that is a very ancient language, courage and effort are derived from the same root.

Courage – OMETZ, and effort – MA'AMATZ.  
It suggests perhaps, that courage has to do with an effort, that it is an activity of the will, which requires constant effort. In the face of fear, danger, threat or pain, you constantly have to practice courage. You equally have to practice courage in the face of untruth, injustice, wrongdoing and lies.

Physical courage or moral courage, both involve effort, will. Courage, says Steiner in his lecture series "Metamorphoses of the Soul", could be the end result of loving authority in

childhood, between 7 and 14. If a child was fortunate enough to have teachers who stood beside him with loving authority and words of truth – that is to say, to protect his etheric body and even enhance it, making it "bigger" and "better" – that may appear later in life, between ages 28 – 35, the 5<sup>th</sup> 7-year cycle, corresponding with the 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle as courage and initiative. So interesting – courage and initiative belong to one another, and are both born and blossom out of the same flowerbed – the etheric sphere.

As teachers, we are a nation of doers. Doing is our second name, is it not? Constantly preparing, meeting, talking, consulting, explaining, running around. Sometimes, it feels like a merry-go-round of tasks and duties, commitments and deeds. If we do not wish to get carried away and get lost in the stream, it is vital that we take the initiative for inner dialogue and reflection, for inner space to balance out the enormous flow of deeds. Doers must have moments of Dreaming.

Go into an inner space, reflect on the day. A full day of actions leaves no room in the soul. A good quiet recall of the day that has been, not only brings fresh air into the soul and helps to untie the day's tangled knots, but also helps to make new space. It slows you down. It is a very clear experience. When you **Do** a lot, you have to **Un-do**. A recall is an undoing. New room. Space for new love, for new ideas.

You all know it – you have a problem in your class, you keep talking to this boy, you change his seat, you call the parents, you consult colleagues ... yet all this leads to a dead end. But taking your encounters with this boy into your evening recall – that is something that opens up new ways, creative ways.

I was teaching many years ago as a subject teacher in Class 2, and one of the boys there gave me a hard time. Constant noise, teasing, these were part of his daily repertoire, and it went from bad to worse.

Until I realised what my task was – I started taking him with me in my evening recall. Who is this boy, what is he asking for ... I got interested. I continued thus for several weeks, and ... nothing changed. One afternoon I met the boy and his father having a walk and after greeting one another, the father asked me: "And how is my boy in your lessons?" He was very excited about his boy and about school. "Your boy", I started, not knowing what is to come next – and then I had a very clear experience that something is talking through me. I heard myself as if from outside, saying: "Your boy is a wonderful pupil." Amazed at myself, I heard myself carry on: "He sings and recites so beautifully, listens and joins in with every activity. Just wonderful!" I could half notice the boy's black eyes, while I was speaking. They got bigger and deeper. He was beaming at me. That was it. From the next day onward, he behaved exactly as I had described to his father.

This inner dialogue with the child is a spring of creativity, a never-ending spring of creative ideas. And as it is an effort done out of one's own free will and initiative, it takes one closer to one's true self, to one's "I". When one thinks one's own thoughts, even for a few moments, one stops the endless flow of data-news-ideas coming from outside. One gets nearer to one's authentic, real being. In our time, the head opens the way to the heart.

Authenticity – in Greek – stands for "itself", distinguished. In our words – "individualized". Authenticity – normally, we relate this term with artists. A certain style, a way of

dealing with light, or of holding the brush. When we see a work of Chagall, we know it! It is authentic, there is no-one like him. The blue hues that always dominate his paintings with their gravity-free reality. When listening to Beethoven, one immediately recognizes his undoubtedly Promethean style. For us teachers, being authentic means finding the tone, colour, that is ours. This inner dialogue takes us there, helps us to strike our unique note, to find our colour, to hold our own brush and pallet.

Rumi said, "there are thousands of ways to kneel and kiss the ground ..."

There are thousands of ways to teach, to be a teacher ... we all want to find this unique way of how to "kneel and kiss the ground". Waldorf education is not about uniformity, not about repeating one another's main lessons, not about fixed methods. It is about becoming myself – through teaching, through the effort of loving children.

Amongst Martin Buber's Chassidic Legends, there is a story about Rabbi Bunim of Peshis'cha that goes as follows:

Once, Rabbi Bunim of Peshis'cha gathered his pupils around him and said to them, "When I am dead, and face the heavenly court to be judged, God shall not ask me, 'Well, Rabbi Bunim, why were you not like Rabbi Moses?' God shall ask me, 'Rabbi Bunim, why were you not Rabbi Bunim?'"

I have a friend, a wonderful teacher, who once asked me, at the end of a long school day:

Do you know who the teacher's best friend is? He looked quite lonely to me ... I tried one or two answers, and he said, victoriously: "The teacher's best friend is Helplessness!"

We all experience helplessness, as teachers, as men and women of our time. Helplessness, not knowing, is a sign of our time. If we don't experience it, it means that we rely on old forms and cling to the past. The clear answers of a long-destroyed past do not work anymore. The old order is gone. The 20<sup>th</sup> century presented us with a major catastrophe, and the 21<sup>st</sup> century does not seem to promise sunny skies either. "Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world", says W.B. Yeats in his poem "The Second Coming":

"... The falcon cannot hear the falconer;  
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world, ..."

Our modern constitution daily reflects to us the anarchy, the "falling apart". The falcon "cannot hear the falconer", nor obeys him ... The gap between who we are and who we should be, who we should become, is a painful reality. It is a frightening gap sometimes.

Clearly, we experience ourselves as imperfect beings. This is the way we are. Imperfection – is the new human perfection. Perfection is inhuman – it does not allow a change. The good news is that imperfection is the gate to Becoming ...

Being human is allowing imperfection. That is how it should be now.

So, as teachers, allow my friend's best friend, Helplessness, to walk beside you. Do not ignore him, he is there anyway. Be friendly to him, to your constant companion, for denying him would be the worst thing to do.

Besides, his friendship can be of great help – "not knowing" is an open space for creativity, for authenticity, for **becoming**.

Thomas Tranströmer, a Swedish poet, who won the 2011 Nobel Prize for poetry, de-

scribed this new human situation in a consoling, poetic way in his poem "Romanesque Arches":

Romanesque Arches

Tourists have crowded into the half-dark of the enormous

Romanesque church.

Vault opening behind vault and no perspective.

A few candle flames flickered.

An angel whose face I could not see embraced me

and his whisper went all through my body:

"Don't be ashamed to be a human being, be proud!

Inside you one vault after another opens endlessly.

You'll never be complete, and that's as it should be."

Tears blinded me

as we were herded out into the fiercely sunlit piazza,

together with Mr. and Mrs. Jones, Herr Tanaka and Signora Sabatini;

within each of them vault after vault opened endlessly.

(Translated from Swedish by Robert Bly)

I started with a world wanderer, and I conclude with a world artist, a man in becoming. On 18<sup>th</sup> November 1995, Itzhak Perlman, the outstanding violinist, came on stage to give a concert at Lincoln Center, New York City.

If you have ever been to a Perlman concert, you know that getting on stage is no small achievement for him. He was stricken by polio as a child, in Tel Aviv, and so has braces on both legs and walks with the aid of crutches.

To see him walk across the stage one step at a time, painfully and slowly, is a powerful sight. It fills you with awe.

He walks painfully, yet so majestically until he reaches his chair.

It takes TIME.

Then he sits down, slowly, puts his crutches on the floor, undoes the clasps on his legs, tucks one foot back and extends the other foot forward, which again takes TIME ... then he bends down, picks up his violin, puts it under his chin, nods to the conductor, and ... starts playing.

By now, the audience is used to the ritual. Everybody sits quietly while he makes his way across the stage to his chair. Everybody remains reverently silent, while he undoes the clasps, and everyone waits until he is ready to play. – But this time, on the 18<sup>th</sup> of November, something went wrong. Just as he finished playing the first few bars, one of the strings of his violin broke. Everybody heard it snap. The sound went off like a gunshot across the hall. There was no mistaking what that sound meant. He would have to get up, put on the clasps again, pick up the crutches and limp his way off stage – either to find another violin, or else to find another string for this one. But HE DID NOT. He did neither this nor that.

Instead, he waited for a moment, closed his eyes, and then made a sign to the conductor to begin again. The orchestra began, and he played from where he had left off.

And he played as never before, with such passion, such spirit, and such purity.

Of course, everyone knows that it is impossible to play a symphonic work, a concerto, with only three strings. Impossible!

Even not being a violinist, I know it – but that night, Itzhak Perlman refused to know it!

You could see him modulating, changing, composing the piece in his head. At one point, it sounded like he was de-tuning the strings to get new sounds from them, sounds they had never made before. Think about that ...

When he finished, there was total silence, awe, in the auditorium. And then ... people rose and cheered. There was an extraordinary outburst of applause from every corner. Everybody was on their feet, shouting, cheering, doing everything they could to show how much appreciation they had for what he had done. He smiled, wiped his perspiration and raised his bow to quiet the audience, and then, in a modest way, he said: "You know, I think sometimes it is the artist's task to find out how much music you can still make **with what you are left with.**"

As for us, teachers, we should also go on, make music, write, and rewrite our own music, strike our authentic note, find ways, find new ways, become the best of teachers with what we are left with.

## Courage, Initiative and the New We

Florian Osswald

Translated by Karin Smith

### **The Three Hermits**

I would like to start with a short story of the three Hermits in the version of Leo Tolstoy.

*Once, three Russian monks lived alone on an island. One day, their bishop came to visit them. He noticed that the monks were not able to say the Lord's Prayer. So, he spent quite some time teaching them this important prayer and it was fairly hard work, indeed. At last, the monks had memorized the prayer and the bishop was well pleased with himself. He went back to his boat and began his homeward journey. However, when the bishop's boat was out in the open sea, he saw the three monks running after the boat across the water and calling out, "Father, we have forgotten the words of the Lord's Prayer." The bishop was overwhelmed by what he saw and asked, "Dear brothers, how do you usually pray?" They answered, "We just say: "We are three. You are three. So may it be." The bishop was touched by the monks' holiness and humbleness and he only said, "Go back to your island in peace."*

At conferences we have a tendency to accumulate knowledge. We all know the joys and pitfalls to be found in knowledge. In our kindergartens and schools we want to enable young people to learn in such a way that their knowledge becomes personalised, becomes part of their being.

### **The Prism and Silence**

If you want to remember the conference in the next few weeks or months, just take the prism which you have carried around with

you this past week. Look through the glass. Depending on how and in which light you are holding it, you will see colours. Colours appear through the interplay of light with the glass. The glass is a kind of obstacle for the light, and this obstacle makes the colour appear. Has your world also become a little more colourful at this conference? Did you also have to overcome some obstacles during the conference and has this also given you new courage?

I suggest you do a simple exercise within the next few days or weeks: Find a quiet place inside yourself and let the events of this week pass before you. Perhaps you'll see the week in a new light, in new colours. Maybe the first, loud impressions move to the background and the quiet, seemingly insignificant events light up. Experiences change in retrospect and over time. Usually, we don't know at first what kind of power lives in them. With this small exercise we free ourselves from the first impression of an experience and increasingly approach its true meaning.

### **We**

This week, a question has lived in all the workshops and lectures: How do we develop the courage for a free spiritual life or how do we create a healthy We?

The culture of the We deserves our attention. The We enables a lot, even troublesome things. What kind of We lives in our teaching, in the work with our colleagues, in the school community or even in society? Are we aware of the process of how the We is born?



Rudolf Steiner gave the trainee teachers a kind of mental picture or mantra<sup>1</sup> for the creation of the We and thus set down the foundations of cooperation. On the eve of the first teachers' seminar he indicated the significance of cooperation:

*We can create a replacement for the supervision of the School Board as we form this preparatory course, and, through the work, receive what unifies the school. We can achieve that sense of unity through this course if we work with all diligence.*

*The course will be held as a continuing discussion of general pedagogical questions, as a discussion of the special methods concerning the most important areas of instruction, and as a seminar to practice teaching. We will practice teaching and critique it through discourse.<sup>2</sup>*

The skills needed for this type of school management are developed on two levels:

1. Leadership or management must be based on creating "a sense of unity" and this can be achieved by working through the course "with all diligence". (The course which Steiner refers to has been

published in three separate volumes: *The Foundations of Human Experience, Practical Advice to Teachers and Discussions with Teachers*. GA 293, 294 and 295)

2. The mantra describes what is meant by "working with all diligence": It is to study *The Foundations of Human Experience* and to connect the content with the spiritual world. The fruit of our labour is not meant for us but for others, for the children and the colleagues.

I would now like to show you the three steps of the mantra in a picture.

### A Chair

Imagine you are sitting on a chair, you sit there all alone and start to plan your lesson. You remind yourself that the child's individuality wants to show itself in the present and that you are its servant. Essentially, this is about the human being, it is about knowledge and relationships. As a teacher you are responsible for the atmosphere in which the child learns. As teachers we play with time and atmosphere like artists; we do it for the children and we should do it for ourselves, too.

1 Steiner called this mental picture "a kind of prayer". The exact words were not taken down in shorthand. Two participants of the course, Caroline von Heydebrand (1886 – 1938) and Herbert Hahn (1890 – 1970) have put their memories of Steiner's words in writing. The following words were written by Caroline von Heydebrand:

"We wish to form our thoughts in such a way that we may have consciousness: Behind each one of us stands his Angel, gently laying his hands on the head of each. This Angel gives you the strength which you need.

Above your heads there hover the circling Archangels. They carry from one to the other what each has to give to the other. They unite your souls. Thereby you are given the courage of which you stand in need. Out of this courage the Archangels form a chalice.

The light of wisdom is given us by the exalted beings of the Archai, who are not limited to the circling movements, but who, coming forth from primal distances (*Urfernen*). They reveal themselves only in the form of a drop (of light) in this place.

Into the chalice of courage there falls a drop of light, enlightening our times (*Zeitenlicht*), bestowed by the ruling Spirit of our Age.'

2 Steiner, R. (1996) *The Foundations of Human Experience*. Anthroposophic Press. p. 30 Opening Address given on the Eve of the Teachers' Seminar.

Unfortunately, we do not give the preparation for lesson planning much attention. Try to get into the right mood, connect yourself with the children or teenagers you are planning the lesson for. Study *The Foundations of Human Experience* for a moment. Then, follow it up by studying the content of your lesson. Connect the various elements of what you want to teach and then ask yourself: What does all this have to do with me as a human being? What do an engine, an elephant or silica have to do with me? Please pay attention to your relationship to the world. Does the world have a place within yourself or do you feel separated from it? On the one hand, there is the little human being who faces the world, planting his or her feet firmly on the ground. But there is also the large, cosmic human being who encompasses everything. We are both, the large and the little individual or the day person and the night person. We are teaching for both of them. Whatever has been absorbed during the day will be digested in the night. Real learning happens at night. The large human being who lives at night embraces the spiritual world and in particular the world of the angels. Together with the angels we prepare the next day because the night leaves an impression in us.

### Another Chair



What happens when we add another chair and face a partner? In 2010, Marina Abramović sat on a chair at the MoMA in New York and did nothing other than look

into the eyes of the people who sat opposite her. She did this for 90 days, six days a week, for seven hours at a time, without taking a break, without any food or drink, without talking. She called her piece: *The Artist is Present*.

Abramović focused on the other, on the person sitting in the chair opposite. Something happened between those two people. The deepest mystery of mankind is to be found in the In-Between. Many have tried to put it into words, for example the Bible, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them." or Martin Buber, "I require a Thou to become; becoming I, I say Thou."

The crucial element here is, what one can give to the other. This is the source of trust, friendship, You, love and courage.

### And Another Chair

Let us now place yet another chair here. We have only just got used to the person opposite and so a further chair causes a small tremor. The cosy duo is properly shaken up by the addition of a third person. Triads are challenging. We have two relationships and in one of them we are a mere observer. This is where the interplay of the group starts.

A group of three is somewhat manageable, however, its complexity increases with the addition of each new member. Suddenly, we are faced with the challenges of community and the question arises, which kind of closeness is created by the group.

In a college of teachers we are faced with a lot of different people. And, against our better judgement, a few assumptions never die. For example, we presume that the well-being of the community is more important than

the well-being of the individual. At the moment, politics is experiencing a revival of nationalistic feelings of We, which have mainly to do with the integration into a group and the exclusion of the so-called "foreign". The longing for identity, which everybody has, can easily lead to the misunderstanding that the individual is unimportant and that only the group counts. If individuals sacrifice their own needs for the group, they weaken their power for self-responsible action.

The awareness of a healthy We leads to a different set of criteria. The American Anthropologist Margaret Mead said, "Human diversity is a resource, not a handicap." This is an important statement which values diversity as a positive factor. The individual is the basis of the group. Steiner's view of community is also based thereupon.

*In a true teachers' republic we will not have the comfort of receiving directions from the Board of Education. Rather, we must bring to our work what gives each of us the possibility and the full responsibility for what we have to do. Each one of us must be completely responsible.*

This is a strenuous activity. It would be easier for us to fade into the anonymity of the group. To maintain a cosy feeling, we put up with submission and accept whatever happens even if we are not sure who is holding the reins. Steiner foresaw this danger:

*My dear friends, we can accomplish our work only if we do not see it as simply a matter of intellect or feeling, but, in the highest sense, as a moral spiritual task.*

No doubt, only a deep trust in ourselves and our fellow beings can be the foundation of community. This trust encourages us to step towards diversity. We have to solve the ques-

tion of how to be united in our heterogeneity. It is common to be afraid of our fellow human beings. However, our feet lead us towards the others. If we do not stop our feet, we create room for encounters, thus we allow life to meet us, we welcome diversity. We try to cope with the differences, even to accept them as creative tension.

A new community can only be lived in the reality of daily life. It contains the potential to provide orientation for the individual. The new community does not demand sacrifices but it is important that each individual overcomes the fear of their own courage.

What Steiner described as "unity" can only appear if we create a We. It is a gift. We prepare ourselves, we get ready by creating a We.

The main entrepreneurial risk for any Waldorf institution today and tomorrow is to create a We in which the individual's strength and courage to meet another human being lives. This We recreates itself again and again and is the source of leadership. This is a truly modern concept of leadership. It was created one hundred years ago and has been tried and tested in many places all over the world. Its particular quality is the conscious attention to the connection with the spiritual world. If we are thus prepared to include the help of the spiritual world in our work, we will receive its gifts. The three monks practiced just that. They included the spiritual world completely in their work.

*We are three. You are three. So may it be.*

## Agenda

*2016*

September 9 – 11

Conference Study of Man, Lecture 14  
(only in German)

October 23 – 26

Conference for Educational Support Teachers  
(German and English)

*2017*

February 17 – 19

Practical Meditative Work  
(only in German)

May 9 – 11

Conference for Religion Teachers  
(German and English)

May 11 – 15

Training for Religion Teachers  
(only in German)