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About this Edition

Dear Colleagues,

with this edition of the Journal come our best wishes for this Michaelmas season.

Following on from the article by Christof Wiechert on the threefold nature of the main lesson, we bring you a contribution about the pedagogical practice in Waldorf Schools which is intended as a basis for ongoing discussion.

How much in our daily practice is just long term habit? How is it possible to unfold the pedagogy in day-to-day school life again and again? Where is it appropriate to cling to traditions dear to us and which we are deeply convinced of, and where is it that we realise that customs which have been tried and tested are not really covered by the Study of Man? This is another area of tasks carrying great responsibility which we meet here and which we will need to confront. Because renewing what exists is a core task of any pedagogy. This is the foundation of a living relationship between teachers and pupils.

We hope that this article too will inspire conversations among colleagues in the staffroom, on the training courses as well as in other pedagogical institutions just as the previous article has done. We received lots of feedback and are including a written contribution by Ekkehard Wacker for further conversation.

The series of articles by Uta Stolz, whose third contribution 'Art comes before Ability' leads us into the classroom in a practical way.

We would particularly like to point out to the article by Detlef Hardorp who concerns himself with the sense of thinking and with thinking itself. Even if this contribution is not directly related to pedagogical work, these fundamental considerations are significant.

Finally we would again like to mention the two major international conferences planned for 2012, the Kindergarten and the World Teachers' Conferences and have given some suggestions to prepare the theme of 'The Descent of the I'. We are already looking forward to these two gatherings of the worldwide Waldorf movement and will bring two preparatory articles in each and every edition from now on.

Wishing you all the very best for your work with the pupils and a fruitful Michaelmas period,

Yours

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The Educational Practice of the Waldorf Schools

A Stimulus for Discussion II

Preamble

In an article for the 90th Waldorf Schools' Anniversary that appeared in 'The Goetheanum', Issue 39, 25th September 2009, three tasks were pointed out at the end. The first one was to establish a new balance between the forces of form and impulse within the individual school and within the school movement. The second one, in the opinion of the author, is meant to examine and investigate the habits of teaching that have developed. What we are doing and passing on – is it (still) the right thing? The third task mentioned was schooling and practising a new awareness for the meaning and substance of Steiner's art of education. This represents a paradigm shift from all conventional educational approaches. We need this awareness in order to shape the future of this art of education.

This article should be considered as a continuation of the previous article on the division of the main lesson into three parts, which appeared in the Journal of the Pedagogical Section, Issue 38(m) Easter 2010. It is thus dedicated once more to the second of the above three tasks.

In this article various situations taken from everyday teaching will be considered. All are intended as a stimulus to debate on the question, "are we on the right track?"

A Synopsis

This article is meant to scrutinise various themes to see how meaningful they are in teaching work. We should always be mindful that whatever aspects of everyday teaching turn into habit are subject to two tendencies. The first is that people cease questioning the idea behind the habit, for "it seems to belong"; "people do it like this". The idea being put forward is to question such remarks in principle in order to reveal what the art of education is asking for in a tangible way. Why is it like this? What is the purpose? "Does it have to be like this?"

The second is the tendency for it to spread. Something that is no longer questioned spreads more rapidly in the sense of "it is apparently supposed to be this way" than when it is questioned. The spread of such customs is not held back by national borders as we know. Thus we can discover that experimental work in schools is adopted in all corners of the world, even before it has been evaluated because people do not question it.

It goes without saying that people have a need to hold on to something they can recognise by its external traits; something which ought to be recognised by its inherent nature, from the inside. And it is just in this area that we need to be wakeful: only a relatively small part of the art of education is manifested in external forms!

In this second article there will be a presentation of habits involved in writing, in the keeping of main lesson books, the application of the epochs, and then something on class plays and class projects from the viewpoint of pedagogical authenticity.

The Borders of Main Lesson Books

In Waldorf schools worldwide there is an established custom that coloured wax crayon blocks, then later on coloured wax crayons are used for the first lessons in writing.

The question of the ergonomics of the wax crayon blocks was settled a long time ago: they were never thought of as instruments of writing, but for laying on expanses of colour. Of course, you can make straight lines and bent lines with blocks too¹. However, a glance at the children's hands shows that they hold the blocks in an unnatural and cramped way. It makes sense to get their little hands used to the wax crayons that nestle better in their hands from the very outset. (Yet the question needs to be raised - and allowed - as to how it would be if people in far off countries would look around to see what the local markets offer by way of writing equipment and other implements before falling back on these particular items. This gesture of looking to see what is available in the topical culture of the country concerned, that can be connected with, is a gesture to be positively affirmed in principle).

One result of the use of the wax crayon blocks is that before use a page is framed first in coloured borders. When this occurs for a definite and appropriate purpose and it is carried out carefully, there can be no objection: it will draw attention to what is being presented. However, when it happens automatically, as you will find in nearly all schools in the world (!), and when you hear, upon enquiring, it belongs to Waldorf schools, or else it is the way it was taught in the Seminar, or else has been discovered in other main lesson books, which have been shown as exemplary, then a habit has been established once again which shoots wide of its target. For as a rule these borders are anything but beautiful. A fine, purposeful knack, the striving to shape the main lesson book aesthetically gives birth to the opposite.

The Main Lesson Book

It is important to ask the question time and again, what is the point of Steiner's invention of the main lesson book? We are familiar with the justified thought that through the main lesson book the pupil will be stimulated to put into action what he or she has learnt, to 'do' it. Nevertheless, there is a further perspective to add to it.

1 Formenzeichnen, (Form Drawing), Kranich Juenemann, Stuttgart 1985, page 38; there is only mention of wax crayons. Even with the suggestions on the first school lesson there is no word about the instruments of writing.

In an investigation in America into learning processes in the late nineties it was ascertained that more than 90% of all learning processes are carried out visually.² We know that it is no different in modern Europe with learning sheets, learning stimuli, project descriptions and school books. (The LernAktiv Schools in Germany build up almost exclusively on the visual, independent learning of the children and pupils, as independent of the spoken word of the teacher as possible.)

Waldorf schools nurture a definite culture of oral teaching, one which is often misunderstood, in which the teacher is accorded the role of imparting knowledge verbally. In other words, the ear is also important as an organ for learning. This relative one-sidedness is remedied through the use of the main lesson book as an active-visual means of engagement. Steiner's art of education carefully balances the equal demands on the eye and the ear. At this point we will leave it at that; however, the set of issues involved in the question of how the eye and ear are kept equally busy³ penetrates the human constitution very deeply.

Nonetheless, this use of the main lesson book must be in keeping with the dynamics of the child's development. For younger children the main lesson book can almost represent a threat on account of its defining character: every mistake is written permanently, is there for good, can no longer be put right. The white sheet can instil fear. In the first few years of school there should be main lesson books with removable pages or else a system consisting of loose leaves.

If we look at the middle school classes, we see the main lesson book in an intense battle of competition with knowledge available on the internet. In these new circumstances, the keeping of the main lesson book as an aesthetic-artistic task can be reduced to the 'sticking in' of facts that more or less belong to the lesson, which have been 'googled' or downloaded from Wikipedia. The balancing between what is heard and seen becomes skewed. However, this balancing of what is heard and seen is the instrument of the flexible-musical study of man.⁴ The core of Steiner's pedagogy was not meant as an object of study, but as an application for every day teaching. The work in the main lesson books in a meaningful balance is such an application in the day to day work.

The Epochs and their Transformation

Can we talk about epochs in the first, second or third school years or in the kindergarten period? If we look at the children, if we look at the completely general nature of their being, then we will sense at this point the epoch has an entirely different significance. Doubtless, there will be a focus in which they will be main-

2 Music. Physician for Times to Come. An anthology compiled by Don Campbell, Wheaton III. 2000 in Derrick de Kerckhove, 'Oral versus literate listening'.

3 Steiner devotes a lecture to the eye and the ear, which can hardly be more fundamental, for good reason. *Meditativ Verarbeitete Menschenkunde*, lecture 3, 21st September 1920, Stuttgart, in GA 302a, available in German as a single lecture.

4 *Meditativ Erarbeitete Menschenkunde* in GA 302a, lecture 2, Stuttgart, 16th September 1920

ly occupied with the letters of the alphabet, there will be a focus, in which they will be mainly occupied with arithmetic, but speaking about an epoch on a particular subject in class one or two does not do justice to the matter.

Thus, we cannot speak, as you will frequently find, about a **painting** or a **form-drawing epoch** in this actual sense.⁵ Painting and form-drawing are activities that always take place once or more times a week. Thus, it can occur that you paint or do form-drawing every day for several weeks in the higher classes of the lower school. Indeed, we can come to the realisation that this would do a class good at the moment. However, it ought never to be the content of an epoch. (In this sense the gist of Steiner's expression is 'the first school lesson' and not the first school epoch).⁶

For children are predisposed to learn, to want to learn. And we must not let this **drive to learn** go hungry.⁷ No day ought to go by on which the youngest pupil goes home without the happy feeling he or she has learnt something. That is essential; motivation becomes a justified habit.

In the course of class three we can sense that the need for epochs that are really connected with a theme begins to grow.

At the onset of this time the study of the curriculum and the indications about the curriculum in the college meetings too are very much to be recommended. For what does happen among other things is that examples given by Rudolf Steiner are taken to be the thing itself. An obvious case in question in this context is the grounds of a lot of schools. It is well known for being full of larger and smaller constructions; small forts, brick summer houses, costly ovens, benches on a masonry structure. Some class three teachers will wonder, where shall I construct something? Must something be constructed?

Steiner introduces a 'classic' epoch of the practical skills lesson. As Stockmeyer and after him Richter portray it exactly, this lesson is orientated towards the geography of the locality and the activities associated with it, "*Now you see that you employ in a free way the material you have gathered through describing the environment, for forming your lesson on practical occupations. The child of about nine in the third class can very well gain an idea through such a lesson – I can only give instances – of preparing mortar as it is employed in house-building. The child can also have an idea of how to manure and how to plough; what rye and wheat look like. In short, in a free way, you let the child enter into his surroundings as far as he can with understanding.*"⁸

5 As, for instance, it is used still in *Formenzeichnen*, Kranich/Juenemann, Stuttgart 1985 in the chapter 'Der Umgang mit dem Geraden' (Dealing with the straight Line).

6 *Methodisch-Didaktisches*, GA 294, lecture 4, Stuttgart, 25th August, 1919.

7 See the college meeting of 26th September, in which Steiner gives the morning verse for the lower classes in which the term 'eager to learn' occurs. GA 300a.

8 First Curriculum lecture, Stuttgart, 6th September 1919, GA 295. Tobias Richter picks up the gist of this indication in an unrestricting way in 'Paedagogischer Auftrag und Unterrichtsziele vom Lehrplan der Waldorfschule', Stuttgart, 2003.

This passage from the first Curriculum Lecture makes it clear not everyone **has to** build on the school grounds! Although Helmut Eller speaks ‘Der Klassenlehrer an der Waldorfschule’ (The Class Teacher at the Waldorf School) misleadingly in his book about a ‘house-building epoch’ (which does not exist for the reason given), he gives delightful examples in the passage on the practical skills lesson in class three of how it is also possible to do it differently.⁹ Whoever’s school is on the coast can concern themselves with fishing, whoever is in the mountains with his school, where possible with quarrying, whoever has his school near a car factory, where possible with metalwork or forging. The freedom to shape it is huge, in the Richter Curriculum it is pointed out with great clarity by Tobias Richter.

Why this great detail? There are two motives behind it; firstly, because there is the danger that a class three that does not leave behind something they have built on the school grounds will easily be considered as not conforming to the curriculum. Yet, such an insinuation has no basis whatsoever.

Secondly, you cannot help wondering whether it is right that year after year pupils pass by something on the school grounds that only in the rarest cases (with a bench or a functioning oven) has some practical purpose. Steiner attached great value to the practical aspect particularly with all crafts; it should be something that makes sense.¹⁰ Even a tree house, beautifully made with the industrious participation of the parents with the pupils, is something dead for the following school year.

This should be taken account of all the more, when the child, after crossing the so-called Rubicon, where he or she actually accomplishes the separation of subject-object, develops a special sense for the **outer** picture. “*Thus between the ninth and tenth year it comes about that the child has a special sense for the graphicness of the outer world*”.¹¹ Steiner then uses this as an opportunity to introduce zoology and later botany in classes 4 and 5.

Let us summarise.

In the first article on this set of issues we spoke about borderline situations in education, when rituals come about, which are on tenterhooks with learning and freedom. Here we are dealing with a different situation. Let us consider how parents (fathers and other relatives) build, say, a wall for class three. Let us dare to ask what the educational gain is. Put another way, how much by way of ‘events’ can day to day teaching cope with? How much by way of ‘events’ is good for a school?

May the danger exist that the school measures its aura according to the number of ‘events’ instead of according to the education?

9 Helmut Eller, *Der Klassenlehrer an der Waldorfschule*, Stuttgart 1998.

10 College Meeting of 16th January, 1921, GA 300a.

11 *Die Kunst des Erziehens aus dem Erfassen der Menschenwesenheit*, GA 311, Torquay 1924, lecture 3, 14th August, 1924.

What is pedagogically more effective, parents making something on the school grounds for and with the children or the class three teacher doing the delightful lyrical drama by Paul Hindemith “We build a house”?

We will come back to this.

The Class Play

Although Caroline von Heydebrand wrote the archetype of all class plays, the St. Christopher’s Play for her class two pupils in 1925, and she compiled the first curriculum draft for the Waldorf school shortly after Steiner’s death in 1927, long before E.A. Stockmeyer did so in 1955, the mention of the class plays and of upper school theatrical performances is missing from all editions of the curriculum.

This fact has already been pointed out at an earlier time.¹²

The question is, why is this the case? When Steiner speaks at the Shakespeare Festival in Stratford-upon-Avon about drama in relation to education, when he reports 14 year old pupils had recited Julius Caesar in the English lesson and would like to perform it, he nonetheless gives no indication that people could perform or should do so at this or the other age.¹³

Subsequently, after the conference in England, Steiner returns to the continent and calls a college meeting in Stuttgart, which is very informative for the play question and offers an explanation for his great **caution** in this affair.¹⁴

It begins with the class 8 teacher reporting he had read Faust with his pupils, to which Steiner replies, he would not read the ‘Gretchen-tragedy’ yet at this age. The class 9 teacher reports he had given his class essays on Faust’s character, to which Steiner replies this goes beyond the pupils’ horizon, one could rather give essays with subjects like ‘what is beauty in nature?’, ‘what is beauty in the soul?’. At the same time, however, he says to the class eight teacher, Macbeth could be *read. Just read, that’s all*. In this whole college meeting he does not get round to stating one could *play* this or that. Why this reserve?

For some colleagues Steiner’s statement that with the activity of the intellect the sense of drama awakens, that is, from the 14th year, is the key experience for the ‘role of drama in Waldorf education.’¹⁵

That may well be, but it hides the fact that Steiner always wanted the occupation with drama to be understood explicitly as *reading* it. For Steiner had investigated how it looks with the *soul reality* in plays performed on the stage. Here are some statements by him as illustrations. “*There is something else that matters and that we should develop in detail. Sophocles and Aeschylus characters, like*

12 Elisabeth Weissert, ‘Spielmoeglichkeiten fuer das Schuelertheater’ in *Erziehungskunst*, 1962 (*this is part of a series of articles in this year*).

13 Das Drama mit Bezug auf die Erziehung. Stratford-upon-Avon, 19th April 1922 in GA 304.

14 College Meeting, 28th April, 1922 Stuttgart GA 300b.

15 Kurt Kehrwieler, Die Rolle des Dramatischen in der Waldorfpädagogik. *Erziehungskunst*, No. 10, October 1994

*Prometheus, live in the astral plane. That is also true of Homer's characters, the figure of Odysseus. The Roman poets are not alive in that way. The French poets, Corneille and Racine, they melt away like dew and simply exist no more. Hauptmann's figures are stiff like wood. Goethe's Iphigenia is a problem, not a living character, something true of Tasso, also. Seen from the astral plane, Schiller's characters, Thekla and Wallenstein are like sacks stuffed with straw, through Demetrius is more alive. Had Schiller worked on the Maltese, it would have become a living drama. Such characters as the Maid of Orleans and Mary Stewart are simply horrible on the astral plane. All of which, of course, says nothing about their effect in the physical plane. In contrast, even Shakespeare's most incidental figures are all alive because they arose out of a true desire of the theater. Things that imitate reality no longer live upon the astral plane. Only what arises from emotions and not from the intellect. Vulgarly comical things come to life immediately on the astral plane as they are not created in order to imitate reality.*¹⁶

What is it saying? Steiner is looking for living drama. (nowadays, we would say, for example, that a Pirandello, a Harold Pinter probably have this too). In other words, is what is being performed a soul reality for the pupils? Then, have the adolescents the strength in their souls to carry it, if they not only *read* these dramatic texts but *perform* as well? Is reality created or does it remain in the abstract psychological space? In this matter in the first Waldorf school, purely on the basis of its newness, there was no experience to go on. (The school grew to 10 classes in April 1922).

Steiner could not gauge how a dramatic work that was *performed* instead of being *read* would affect the pupils of the upper school. The examples also show how carefully he viewed the soul space of the upper school pupils in the throes of individualisation.

It is indeed indicative that this was no issue for the lower school. In the really early days Caroline von Heydebrandt wrote her renowned class play for class two, the St. Christopher's Play, then the house-building play for class three.¹⁷ If you look at a still current series of articles on Waldorf education, published by the Section and the Pedagogical research Centre at the (Federal) Association of independent Waldorf Schools, then we will see at the end of this publication a long list of existing class plays, which are printed completely without any commentary at all and which you could order. From these gestures we can tell that from very early on the class plays for the lower school belonged to school practice.¹⁸

16 From the college meeting of 28th April 1922, GA 300b.

17 "Der Winter weicht, Caroline von Heydebrandt, Pionierin der Waldorfpädagogik", (Winter is going, Caroline von Heydebrandt, Pioneer of Waldorf Education), Margrit Juenemann, Stuttgart, 2003. In this biography the house-building play is included, unfortunately no indications on the other plays of any kind. In 1931 C.v.H. takes leave of her class with a Parzival play.

18 Aus der Unterrichtspraxis an Waldorf-/Rudolf Steiner Schulen, Verlag am Goetheanum, Dornach 1996.

Let this be said in advance so as now to consider three sets of issues that are connected with the habit life at Waldorf schools which is to be reviewed.

The first issue deals with the *when*, the second with the *what*, the third with the *how*.

The When

All relevant literature right through to the special issue of *Erziehungskunst* on the subject of drama appears to have long since answered the question of when, namely at the end of class eight and at the end of class twelve. The funny phrase, end of year play, has become established.¹⁹ Thus Helmut Eller writes, “*in the course of this last year there are special highlights, which everyone who was permitted to teach a class eight, in retrospect would definitely not have wanted to have missed, even though they involve a lot of work in some cases. One of these is the so-called end of year play, which in general is first chosen, worked through and structured in the German lesson.*”²⁰

We can say it is naturally possible to end the period of class teaching with a final play. *However, it does not have to be.* A class play only in class eight, as experience shows, has always exaggerated pretensions right through to the producers, who are called in from outside to make the stage performance an achievement; often this is no longer in keeping with their souls’ ability to carry it because people have lost sight of what is psychologically appropriate. However, the expectations spiral on upwards. It has to be more perfect and more professional than in the previous year (in which it was already good). You can perform a play in class seven just as well, often in a much more relaxed way, also because the pupils are more open. Anyhow, the class teacher can decide for him- or herself how often he or she rehearses the class plays with the class, plays which *only* fulfill pedagogical requirements. Every year? Every second year or just three times in eight years? Everything in accordance with what is educationally relevant. A small class play with only a few decorations, but that stimulate the imagination can have an enormous effect. (A charming little play about a captain: he has to climb up into the crow’s nest and keep lookout. He climbs on a chair and another child holds a washing basket in front of it. Done! The effect is stunningly ingenious and stimulating. – seen at the Waldorf school in Oldenburg).

In fact, something comparable applies to the upper school too. It does not have to be that you perform in the theatre that was totally overfilled last year, you can do something completely different. Besides, experienced teacher-producers know that it is class eleven in particular, that has a special affinity to drama, more than class twelve, which is somehow more detached. In the upper school college meeting you can perfectly well make a plan covering several

19 This is the case in Helmut Neuffer’s Compendium ‘Zum Unterricht des Klassenlehrers an der Waldorfschule’, Stuttgart 1997; with all (!) authors in a special issue of *Erziehungskunst* including the editor’s introduction. Stuttgart, October 1994.

20 Helmut Eller, *Der Klassenlehrer an der Waldorfschule*, Stuttgart 1998.

years. For example, this year will perform in classes 9 and 11, the other one will perform in classes 10 and 12. Then you can also weigh up how the theatre and the musical complement each other. It does the whole school organism good, if the highlights of a school year are always determined afresh and flexibly out of the actual situation and not the need for regularity.

We just have to say goodbye to the idea that class play would be ‘better’ in class 11 than in class 10. If the appropriate play is found, then every year is a good year for performing. This touches on the question of *what*. What do we perform when?

The What

If we look at the drama education scene, then we will experience how lively it is on the most varied levels, between kindergarten and business, between grammar school and youth work in socially critical areas.²¹ On various occasions the profession of drama pedagogue is defined and described as to what areas of competence he or she needs to develop.²² However, when you have gained areas an overview of the available literature, you will look in vain for a key qualification: When do you perform what?²³

The answering of this question leads us to the *enhanced* value of the Waldorf school. And this is the question which, in my view, made Steiner so hesitant in relation to play performances, as portrayed above.

There is a great abundance of plays to be played in the lower school. Every teacher feels that he or she has to judge what he performs when. Is the Magic flute suitable as an operatic performance in class 6? From what point onward do you perform drama? The charming musical ‘Fiddler on the Roof’ (Anatevka) has a strong dramatic content and an ending in a minor mood. When can that be performed? What is the relationship like between *enthusiasm for performing* and pressure to perform? It has been discovered that enthusiasm for performing itself represents an important educational and community-building *force* so that people are concerned that the right balance is found in the *relationship of the moods* involved between *rehearsals* and *performance*: Is the acting enthusiasm present during the rehearsals? Its presence makes up a considerable proportion of the educational achievement.

However, in the middle and upper school we come to the question, what is appropriate at a particular age? What benefits the pupils’ development, what does not? To put it in a nutshell, when is the developing soul being overtaxed, when is it being nourished and when is it not being stretched enough? These

21 See Deutscher Buehnenverein (Bundesverband fuer Theater und Orchester or the Federal Theatre and Orchestra Association) on its website for drama education.

22 According to definition the drama pedagogue should have the following areas of competence: leadership, artistic, organisational, communication and theoretical skills. Nothing about the psychology of different age groups. In Woerterbuch der Theaterpaedagogik, Marianne Streisand (Ed.), Berlin 2003.

23 Tanja Bidlo, Theaterpaedagogik, Oldib Verlag Essen, 2006.

questions are fundamental. We can put them aside, but, I believe, in Waldorf schools we are striving to enhance the value of education.

How young is the soul, how open is the soul of an upper school pupil? The following exercise may be helpful. Just watch and listen to a mixed choir, consisting of adults, which is practising some work or other for a performance. You listen, you see the effort on their faces. You try to form an impression; then you experience the same situation with an existing upper school choir that is practising some work for a performance. Here too, you try to form an impression. And it quickly becomes apparent; the sound and the facial expressions make a much *younger impression* than we expected (“after all, they are almost adult”). Everything is young, as if the sound is quite untouched by the soul, but it is also in the facial expression; even today we are facing a miracle, so to speak.²⁴ Sometimes the face of an adolescent engaged in musical activity will appear to you as if the actual individuality is shining through.

Let this interjection be permitted here so that the reader can develop a sense of what is at stake, when we do drama with upper school pupils. From the fourteenth year on, the dramatic element in plays can be approached step by step. Thus, for example, you can use the drama in Dickens’ ‘Christmas Carol’ really excellently for a class eight, for not only is there a happy ending, but the drama is romantic-close to life, as it is with Dickens, and generates enthusiasm for acting of its own accord. The same goes for several works by Nestroy. Thus, you can offer the ‘fairy-tale-like’ Shakespeare works such as ‘A Midsummer Night’s Dream’, ‘The Tempest’ and ‘As You Like It’ really well.

Once again, it is necessary to point out how significant the difference between reading and acting is. Thus, in reply to a question, Steiner affirms that one can read Macbeth in class eight. However, he adds, “*One only needs to re-shape the things which you cannot give the children*”. I assume that he would never have done that for a performance.²⁵

What may we not give them? How do we deal with roles in plays where the role dictates that the protagonist loses their mind, goes crazy? (E.g. the museum director in ‘Peer Gynt’). May we ask this of young people who are not established personalities but still developing? Can we perform pieces which are only negative? (Blood Wedding)

In brief, there needs to be a discussion of how the educational task of drama looks in the upper school, when we remain in a Waldorf school context and when it is not meant to be an event.

24 In one of his most impressive lectures, the last that Steiner held in Stuttgart in front of more than 1,700 listeners, he describes in infinitely sensitive language this secret of the way that musical and speech activity form the soul and the ego; something that comes to expression in the appearance of the developing human being. This lecture seems to me to be compulsory reading for anyone who is doing drama in the upper school. ‘Die Methodik des Lehrens und die Lebensbedingungen des Erziehens’, GA 308, lecture of 9.4.1924).

25 GA 300b, 28.04.1922

The How

Is it pedagogically justifiable to put the whole timetable out of action for a class play in the lower school or the middle school? Is that pedagogical? How does it relate to the ethos of learning? When scarcely any lessons take place for weeks, whereby necessarily there will always have to be pupils getting bored because they are not 'on' at the moment, and learning as an attitude towards work is interrupted so that rehearsals can place?

Can we not attempt to put the necessary rehearsals outside school time, in breaks or directly after lessons or else to reserve lessons in the timetable for rehearsals? We can feel the necessity to keep within the framework of things, avoiding overflowing completely as well as being frantically busy. Here too proper breathing is called for, pulsating that makes sense.²⁶

Why this thought? If the way a performance happens is within the 'learning habit body', what is threatening will not easily occur, namely that the Waldorf school identifies with the events which happen in it; then, however, learning is the same as everywhere.

Something comparable applies to the year projects.

When lived to the full, they represent a highlight of school life, nobody will want to miss them. However, if they are part of the habit body of the school, for which the capacities are not available in order to shape it in the same way again every year, or if it has its justification as a kind of crowning of school life; in this case, the college of teachers should ask themselves whether they are to re-enliven this habit or to leave it aside for a time and put something new in its place. Here again, it is the principle that the class twelve project is *no* characteristic that identifies the art of education.²⁷

It must be possible to stop this 'habit' and start another project, for example a social project that could be done by the whole class. We have seen this type of project in our own schools, but also on behalf of other schools in other countries.

A remark should be inserted here. The Final Projects were originally meant logically to be done at the end of the school time. The students were asked to demonstrate what multi-disciplinary tasks they were able to perform. There are quite a lot of former students for whom this was a highlight in their career at school. We always have to ask ourselves as the faculty of a school: Are we able to make such a highlight happen for our students in their last year? Can we look at that critically?

For example, working on this topic we can ask ourselves: What is the pedagogical relevance, the pedagogical common sense, of placing to ask for such

26 See "The three-fold structure of the Main Lesson" in Journal no. 38 of the Pedagogical Section.

27 Tobias Richter gives in 'Pädagogischer Auftrag und Unterrichtsziele' (Stuttgart 2003) an exact description of the final projects in class 12. He makes precisely clear why this makes sense for the last year in the school and not for class 8. (page 512)

projects at the end of class eight? The question is then: What is the relationship between learning and an event? What are the educational benefits of a final project for an eighth grader who is not yet in the situation of a final multi-disciplinary learning moment, who has just learned all the different subjects from a general point of view which is a general point of view and not a specialised one? How did this idea of doing it at the end of class eight come to be? Was it a result of the general tendency to do what was meant for later too soon?

Here, as well, non-reflected habits which are waiting for pedagogical self reflection from a faculty of teachers, occur. Do we witness a growing self-reliance, do we see real original work, or do we face a copy of Vikipaedia knowledge?

In this contribution the attention was drawn to tendencies that necessarily exist after ninety years of educational practice.

This contribution was written in the conviction that the colleagues will not misunderstand the article, just as the previous one.

Criticism is not next to my heart. But I would like to contribute ideas for impulses by reflecting what was originally given in the art of education.

In the previous contribution we saw how the polarity between tiring and refreshing provides for the real rhythm in education.

This contribution attempts to portray these extraordinary moments, not as isolated events, distant from the flow of educational reality, but rather as a part of the educational process.

This moments should be judged for their pedagogical relevance from the point of view of the the new anthropology that Steiner gave us.

Christof Wiechert
translated by John Weedon

Thinking and sense of thinking: How do we perceive thoughts?

Concepts, thoughts can only be perceived where they actually occur, where they are brought forth; otherwise they are not present. And that is through current thinking by a human being.

Dietrich Rapp¹

How does reality arise?

Reality is supposed to exist somewhere beyond the realm of human cognition. We are said to take cognizance of this reality through sense perception only. Our cognition is said merely to mirror this sense world.

Since modern times, the tendency developed to view cognition in this way. How do human cognition and reality relate for Rudolf Steiner? Of what significance is this for us today?

In his foundational works, Rudolf Steiner intensively pursued the question of how *reality arises in the process of cognition*. Rather than devising erudite academic theories, he breached a willed pathway into thinking, from which he sensitively *observed* the activity of cognition, exploring the role of thinking in the process of cognition through introspective (soul) observation with unsurpassed radicality.

He describes the process of *acquiring concepts through intuitive thinking* in his “Philosophy of Freedom” from increasingly comprehensive vantage points, only to concede *one* exception on the next to last page of the last chapter, in which we “bring concepts over into our own spirit in a pure form”, *unmixed* with conceptual content won through intuition.

Before taking a closer look at this exception, we should turn our attention to the regular process of cognition. How does the human being apprehend the world? What role does perception play therein, what role mental representation and what role conceptual thinking? How does reality arise? Based on introspective (soul) observation, Steiner describes the relationship between cognition and reality in a remark of 1924 to an early epistemological work from the year 1886 as follows²:

Within the inner life of the soul a content arises which craves external perception as the hungry organism craves food; and in the external world there is a perceptual content which does not bear its essential being in itself but mani-

1 From the essay by Dietrich Rapp „Begriffssinn – Vorstellungssinn – Denksinn. Über die Hüllen seiner Entbindung“ (“Sense of concept – Sense of mental representation – Sense of thinking. Concerning the sheaths of its uncovering”), in „Die Drei“ (11/1986).

2 Rudolf Steiner: “A Theory Of Knowledge Based On Goethe’s World Conception”, from the first note to the new edition of 1924. Retranslated by the author, with some segments taken from the translation of Olin D. Wannamaker, Anthroposophic Press, 1968.

festes this only when it is united with the soul content through the process of cognition. Thus the process of cognition becomes part of the formation of the reality of the world. The human being participates in the formation of this world-reality through the act of cognition. If a plant-root is unthinkable without the fulfilment of its predisposition in the fruit, so likewise not only the human being but the world itself remains unfinished without the act of cognition. In the act of cognition, the human being does not create something just for himself, but he creatively participates together with the world in making reality manifest. What shows in the human being is ideal appearance; what shows in the perceptible world is sense appearance; only the cognizant interworking of both brings reality into being.

There is no reality to be *found* through cognition, “because it must first be created as reality through cognition”. This realisation remained pivotal for Steiner throughout his life.

What is sense perception, what is mental representation?

Now the human being is met by the world of “sense manifestation” fractured into different fields of sense perceptions. The human soul constantly permeates these sense perceptions with concepts, arising from the soul as “manifestation of the idea”. In accord with these concepts, the human being, exercising judgement, brings the different percepts together. Only thus does one-ness come about in our experience of the world. Shortly before the first Waldorf school opened in 1919, Steiner remarked to the future teachers:

And now you can understand exercising judgement as a living process in your own body, which comes about through the fact that the senses confront you with the world analysed into fragments. The world confronts you with twelve different fragments in what you experience, and through exercising judgement, you bring the elements together, because what is apart does not want to remain apart.⁴

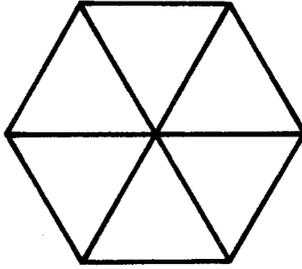
The human being thus constantly merges sense perceptions into mental representations, which are then experienced as coherent objects in the world.⁵

Forming these mental representations requires an activity of the will. This becomes particularly evident when we picture space forms, as the following figure can exemplify:

3 Ibid

4 At the end of Rudolf Steiner’s lecture from 29 August 1919 in “The Universal Human as a Foundation for Education” (less aptly known as “The Study of Man”). Passage translated by the author.

5 Also compare Detlef Hardorp: „Die Welt hinter dem Fenster. Wird Raumentiefe wahrgenommen?“ (“The world behind the window. How is spacial depth perceived?”), in „Die Drei“, January 1989



This can be seen as a three-dimensional cube. Suddenly, however, it can turn into a *different* cube! If we are attentive to the moment when the switch takes place, we notice that it is us who, by the power of our will, engrave the three-dimensionality into the two-dimensional picture.

Clearly outlined objects as well as black lines against a white background prompt us to follow the contours with our eyes. Each movement we do, including the movement of our eyes, is perceived through our sense of movement. Due to their spherical shape, the eyes are very special limbs: they move independent of the force of gravity.⁶ Now all movements performed by our limbs are acts of will, however only the movements of the eyes are acts of will performed in a weightless realm. And it is exactly the perception of *these* acts of will which are most likely to animate us to develop the activity of the will in the weightless realm of *mental representations*.

The sense perception of the two-dimensional picture can prompt us *to will* the three-dimensional representation of the cube. If people's experience were restricted to the sense world, a cube drawn on a sheet of paper would never be seen. That we can see it nonetheless is due to the fact that people divide the world into space-filling objects by forming *mental representations* and experiencing these *self-formed* mental representations in the world. *These mental representations are only mistaken for sense perception to the extent that our own thinking and representing activity are not sufficiently observed.*

When merging the different elements of sense perception into mental representations, the human being is active beyond this realm of sense perception. And here, in this realm of actively formed mental representations that reach beyond sense perception, concepts can emanate; they are "abstracted" out of the mental representations.⁷ Such concepts may well be *tied* to the sense world. That does not mean, however, that the concepts themselves are *content* of a sense perception. They simply are *formed in accord with sense perception*.

6 Eye movements in situations lacking the influence of the force of gravity require an identical amount of force as in situations with gravity.

7 Scientific concepts are generally formed in this way. Concepts can also be "condensed" or "individualised" to mental representations through sense perception. In particular, ethical and moral representations are formed in this way. Cf. Rudolf Steiner: *The Philosophy of Freedom*

Where do thoughts come from?

In 1909, Rudolf Steiner for the first time sketched the foundations of a comprehensive overview of the fields of sense perception to members of what was then the Theosophical Society. The title of the lectures⁸ was simply *Anthroposophy: Anthroposophy* as the link between *Anthropology* and *Theosophy*, as described at the beginning of the first lecture. Steiner then proceeds to describe the ten basic senses of the human being, the last of which he calls the *sense of concept* or the *sense of mental representation* (later he also calls it the *sense of thinking* or *sense of thought*). This sense does not empower us to perceive our *own* thoughts but *the thoughts expressed by our fellow human beings*.

Could it nonetheless be possible that this sense allows us to perceive other thoughts *beyond the thoughts expressed by other people*? Could it be that we grasp the concepts of outer world objects through a sense of concept as Steiner understood this sense?

What first weighs against this idea is that then the anthroposophical approach to sense perception would diametrically oppose the epistemological foundations of anthroposophy itself: Concepts arise from *within* the soul, whereas all sense manifestation streams in from the *outside*, engaging the soul. In his “Philosophy of Freedom” of 1894, Rudolf Steiner calls the arising of concepts within your soul “intuition”. There, the sense of concept is not mentioned. Did Steiner discover the sense of concept later on, with the consequence that his earlier, radical epistemological approach grew more moderate by allowing some concepts of outer world objects to *nonetheless* be perceived by the senses? Under which circumstances is a thought a perception of the concept or thought sense, under which circumstances does it originate in one’s own thinking or memory?

Some curious ideas seem to be rampantly spreading a fair measure of confusion about this issue within anthroposophical circles. I’ll give two concrete examples of this in the second part of my essay. First I’d like to focus on the questions I’ve just raised and, in particular, attempt to contribute toward the understanding of concept-, thinking- or thought sense.

When are concepts not acquired through intuition?

In the fourth of the five Anthroposophy lectures about the senses, a few days after mentioning the sense of concept or thought for the first time, Rudolf Steiner spoke extensively about the relationship between the outer world and the thoughts by which people grasp the objects of the outer world conceptually. He starts as follows:

⁸ The first four were published in „*Anthroposophie, Psychosophie, Pneumatosophie*“ (translated as “Wisdom of Man, of the Soul, and of the Spirit”), the fifth lecture in „*Kunst und Kunsterkenntnis*“ (translated as “The Nature and Origin of the Arts”). The content of these lectures were meant to appear as a written book; Steiner only managed to write a fragment (which was first published in 1951 under the title „*Anthroposophie. Ein Fragment aus dem Jahre 1910*“, published in English in 1996).

The human being must indeed think within himself. Objects don't think for us; they don't show us the thoughts from without, but rather we must bring the thoughts toward the objects. That is the great secret, one is inclined to say, of the relation of human thought to the outer world. No thoughts approach the human being through sense organs. If the sense organs themselves have irregularities, sensory illusions can easily occur. Whereas in normal life, the senses do not err, the mind, which cannot put itself in relationship to objects, can err. It is the first member of the human being that can err, because its activity is dammed up within the brain and this activity cannot reach out. What follows from this? It follows that it is quite impossible for people to have thoughts about the outer world that are right if we do not have an *inner* disposition which allows right thoughts to arise within us. Never – as can be seen from this – could the outer world provide people with right thoughts if the right thoughts would not well up inside us. It can provide them with right sense perception. Yet sense perceptions cannot think. A thought, however, is prone to error and the human being must have the inner strength for the veracity of the thought.⁹

In how far is it then justified to speak of a sense of thought or concept at all?

Cognition occurs when the right concept arises within us and unites with the percept. There is only one exception to this, when concepts cannot arise within ourselves: that is when we perceive our fellow human being, whose I, in its uniqueness, gives birth to freely begotten thoughts in the sense realm. I cannot grasp, in my *own* thinking, the germinating moment of *these* freely begotten thoughts of other people, because I am not you. I must silence my own thinking in order to sufficiently become you.

Toward the end of the last chapter of his “Philosophy of Freedom” of 1894, Rudolf Steiner already described the necessity of the sense of concept for the emergence of freedom within humanity:

Cognition consists in linking a concept with a percept through thinking. For all other objects, the observer must penetrate to the concept by means of his or her own intuition. Understanding a free individuality is exclusively a question of bringing over into our own spirit in a pure form (unmixed with our

9 Translated by the author. A translation of „Anthroposophie, Psychosophie, Pneumatosophie“ (Vol. 115 in the Bibliographic Survey, 1961) was made by Samuel and Loni Lockwood from the original German edition published in 1931, which was later drastically revised when better stenographs of the first set of lectures turned up. The translation was supposedly “carefully checked against the later edition of 1965, published by the Rudolf Steiner Nachlassverwaltung, in which complementary material derived from additional transcripts located since 1931 was incorporated” and “minor alterations in keeping with the new material” were made to the Lockwood translation “where necessary”, as noted in the 1971 Anthroposophic Press edition of this translation. The passage cited in this essay was, however, not an accurate translation of the text in the later edition.

own conceptual content) those concepts by which the individuality determines itself. People who immediately mix their own concepts into any judgment of others can never attain understanding of an individuality.¹⁰

In the sense world, it becomes possible to think freely begotten thoughts. This would split humanity, people would become increasingly isolated from one another in the sense world if the sense of concept or thought wouldn't make it possible to reconnect thoughts *directly, from one person to the other*.

What is perceived via the sense of thought?

We can best become aware of the necessity of the sense of thought when perceiving the *freely begotten* thoughts of the other human being, but of course this sense doesn't perceive only *those* thoughts. Through the sense of thought (or sense of concept or mental representation or thinking), I can perceive, while listening without interference of my own concepts and my own judgement, how the other person forms thoughts into personal, individualised mental representations.

Everybody's thoughts are initially imbued with his or her own mental representations. Each thought has its own shading, its own nuance of feeling, its own degree of sparkling intensity, according to how its author mentally represents the thought. Now the more *strength for the accuracy of thought* is brought forth, the deeper thinking breaks through to the *universality* of concept. As we universalise the personal content of our thoughts, the universal strength of thought becomes individualised. The way in which thought content becomes universal increasingly bears the signature of the I.

In order to be able to perceive, in its immediacy, *the way in which* a thought is coined by a human being incarnated in the sense world – be it the coining of every day thoughts or be it the coining of nascent individualised free thoughts – his fellow human being needs the sense of thinking, thought or concept.¹¹ This sense in fact allows people developing between birth and death to grow into the body of the social organism. It is not the concepts of the objects of the outer world that penetrate the human being through his sense of concept, but the concepts which live in the *inner world* of the other person that manifest themselves through this sense.

Concepts are only sense-perceptible to the extent that other people bring them to manifestation. This is why children put their never-ending questions to everyone around them. The child itself must also meld sense perception with the corresponding concepts out of *its own* discerning thinking activity. The child doesn't begin by bringing forth concepts out of its own thinking, it first devel-

10 Cf. Rudolf Steiner: "Intuitive Thinking as a Spiritual Path – A Philosophy of Freedom", Centennial Edition, Anthroposophic Press 1995, p. 229, translation by Michael Lipson.

11 Cf. the essay by Dietrich Rapp „Begriffssinn – Vorstellungssinn – Denksinn. Über die Hüllen seiner Entbindung“ in „Die Drei“ (11/1986), p. 848.

ops its own thinking through the concepts taken in from the people around it.¹² It is an innate gift of the child to be able to take in concepts in their immediacy through the sense of concept. The young child cannot but immerse itself in its human surroundings with love and devotion.

The stronger the *personal* discerning power of thinking develops, the more problematic it becomes for the sense of thinking. Personal thinking awakens one's self to self-awareness; this self-awareness is at first egocentric. The thinking of the egocentric self, however, does not tolerate the self-less devotion that is prerequisite for the sense of thinking. Therefore this sense only functions when the egocentric self falls into deep sleep, thus not impairing perceptual ability. The only reason we don't take notice of *our* thinking's deep sleep is simply that our consciousness is completely filled with the *other* person's thoughts. While listening, my own thinking intermittently wakes up slightly from its immersion in the thoughts of the other in order to mentally incorporate the other being's thoughts into *my* thought organism. To the extent that the mind awakens, the perception of the sense of thinking recedes. These moments of "blackout" regarding the thinking gestures of the other person, which are due to our own thinking activity, are sometimes experienced as gaps in consciousness during a conversation: you just manage to notice that the other has just said something, without, however, perceiving any of his thoughts (because you yourself were engaged in thinking). At best you bridge the gap by trying to bring the last spoken words to consciousness out of the lingering resonance of word-recollection, in order to quickly make sense of them out of your *own* thinking.

What occurs when listening?

Rudolf Steiner's most precise description of how it is possible to "bring over" concepts (unmixed with our own conceptual content) via the sense of concept is found in the first appendix to the second edition (1918) of his "Philosophy of Freedom": During the act of perception through the sense of thinking, the other person's thinking is momentarily taken over into my spirit as if it were my own. While perceiving another personality, I am compelled, as a thinking being, "to extinguish my own thinking as long as I am under its influence, and to put *its* thinking in the place of mine. I then grasp *its* thinking in my thinking as an experience like my own. I have really perceived another person's thinking."¹³

It is then primarily the *individualised* way of coining or forming of concepts by the other person that I experience.¹⁴ Steiner continues:

12 More precisely: Thinking develops in conjunction with progress in the development of kinaesthesia (self-movement). Kinaesthetical ability gets "nourishment that pours forth from within" through the sense of concept (cf. the lecture by Rudolf Steiner "Human Spirit and Animal Spirit" of 17.11.1910).

13 Translation of this and the following quote by Michael Wilson, p.221.

14 A concept is individualised by the way it gets mentally represented. As already mentioned, when Rudolf Steiner spoke about the sense of thinking or concept the first time, he also called it *sense of mental representation* ("Vorstellungssinn", cf. the lecture of October 26, 1909 in the "Anthroposophy" lectures).

“(...) it is a process lying wholly within my consciousness and consisting in this, that the other person’s thinking takes the place of mine. Through the self-extinction of the [outer, bodily] sense appearance [of the other person], the separation between the two spheres of consciousness is actually eliminated^{15, 16}. This expresses itself in my consciousness through the fact that while experiencing the content of another person’s consciousness I experience my own consciousness as little as I experience it in dreamless sleep. Just as in dreamless sleep my waking consciousness is eliminated, so in my perceiving of the content of another person’s consciousness the content of my own is eliminated. The illusion that it is not so only comes about because in perceiving the other person, firstly, the extinction of the content of one’s own consciousness gives place not to unconsciousness, as it does in sleep, but to the content of the other person’s consciousness, and secondly, the alternations between extinguishing and lighting up again of my own self-consciousness follow too rapidly to be generally noticed.”¹⁷

Eight years earlier, Steiner had phrased it as follows in the fragment of his book “Anthroposophy”: “What we can experience within our own soul as a concept, we can also receive as revealed from an external being. (...) With the concept that lives within another human being, we perceive what lives, soul-like, within ourselves.”¹⁸ It lives soul-like within ourselves because the thinking of the other is of the same nature as our own thinking and because it is “brought over into our own spirit in a pure form” in the moment of thought perception, “unmixed with our own conceptual content”.¹⁹

15 Michael Wilson here uses the word „overcome“ (Michael Lipson the word “suspend” in his translation). We have translated the German „aufgehoben“ with “eliminated”.

16 In the eighth lecture of *The Universal Human as a Foundation for Education* (often called “Study of Man”) on August 29, 1919, Rudolf Steiner describes the “vibration of the soul” between “abandon to the other” and “inner defence” as basic gestures of the sense of ‘I’ and refers to his characterisation of this sense in the new edition of his “Philosophy of Freedom”. In fact, he there mainly describes the “vibration of the soul” as basic gesture of the *sense of thinking*. The sense of thinking and the sense of ‘I’ are obviously different aspects of *one sense continuum* with the same alternating basic gesture. It can be viewed as one sense realm, but also as two. The statement that “the separation between the two spheres of consciousness is actually eliminated” clearly refers to the sense of ‘I’, which borders on the sense of thinking and resonates within it. Insofar as thoughts are presently being begotten by a thinker, it is always possible to direct the attention more toward the *begotten thoughts* or toward the *begetting thinker*. There is thus a gradual transition from the sense of thinking to the sense of ‘I’. – The basic gesture of oscillation between sympathy and antipathy can have very different qualities, even up to the point that the realm of ‘I’ and the realm of the other amalgamate into a common realm, reaching beyond sympathy and antipathy.

17 Rudolf Steiner, first appendix of 1918 to the *Philosophy of Freedom*.

18 Cf. Rudolf Steiner: “Anthroposophy (A Fragment)”, 1996, p. 94f.

19 From the previously cited last chapter of Steiner’s “Philosophy of Freedom”, written 24 years before the just cited in-depth remarks from the first appendix to the new edition of 1918. Steiner’s discovery of the sense of concept became a life-long theme of research.

The quality of social discourse now depends decisively on how a person “awakens” from this “bringing over”, this “deep-sleep” listening activity.²⁰ Because the child acquires its self-consciousness through the development of its self-centred personality, the waking-up moment is connected with an aggressive self-assertion. When it slackens, the child again “falls asleep”, as it were, into the thoughts of the other being. Insofar as a person does not take his social development consciously in hand, this will remain so into adulthood.

Through self-observation in adulthood, however, we can become conscious of the inherent anti-social nature of this waking-up of our personality to its own thinking. If, out of this awareness, you dampen your own personality, a foggy state of mind ensues, excluding yourself from playing an active role in any social setting. At the threshold of awakening one stands *unavoidably* between deep sleep of devoted listening and the antisocial nature of thinking.

How does listening interact with thinking?

It can happen that when listening intently to another person, one experiences and fully understands the lively depiction of this other person’s thoughts in all their richness and depth. However, shortly thereafter one may remember the richness, the depth, the vitality of the lively depiction of the thoughts, but may find oneself hard put to reproduce their content. An autonomous understanding is something quite different from the immediacy of understanding while perceiving with the sense of thinking. During the latter, thoughts blossom between speaker and listener, momentarily living into the listener’s organism of concept²¹, *still carried by the speaker’s power of thought*: the *other’s* thinking is active instead of one’s *own*. Whether or not we are then able to reproduce the other’s thoughts out of our *own* power of thinking depends on our ability to think the thoughts independently.

After abandoning oneself to the *other* person’s thinking for a while, the effect of the thought perception on your own life organism, this rooting of foreign thoughts in your organism of concept, can increasingly be felt as an intrusion, arousing one’s *own* thinking in defence. When consequently one expresses one’s own thinking activity through words or gestures, the whole process begins anew, now with reversed roles. This is how a rapid alternation between extinguishing and relighting of your own self-consciousness comes about.

This alternation can come to life in a variety of ways, in particular by training my thinking, *while awakening*, to be less influenced by my personality. The more universal my thinking, the longer it can remain devoted to the foreign thought, *out of which* it then unfolds its own strength while awakening. Immediately, though, we are liable to revel in the strength of our own thinking, there-

20 Regarding social discourse, compare Steiner’s lectures of December 6 and 12, 1918 in “Social and Anti-Social Forces in the Human Being” and the first lecture to the delegates conference on February 27, 1923 in “Awakening to Community”

21 Cf. Chapter 7 of Steiner’s 1910 fragment “Anthroposophy”.

fore unable to properly “fall asleep” into the other thinking again. A proper rhythm must develop between one’s own thinking activity and devout, dedicated listening. When that happens, the conversation can rise into a shared realm of spiritual and soul intimacy. This kind of conversation nourishes souls. It constitutes the building material out of which social art arises.

It is, however, possible that the development of our self-centred thinking (our intellectuality) weans us so radically from the surrounding world that we are no longer able to assimilate foreign thoughts through the sense of thought. It is not surprising that, in an age of “cool” self-centredness, the willingness to “fall asleep” into the thoughts of another person, to think them as if they were your own, declines considerably. Here a certain unreflectedness still protects the child, as it can’t do otherwise than experience the thoughts around it most intently, long before it is able to think them independently. The adult, in particular after having undergone an intellectual training (and who has not in this day and age?), is in danger of shutting himself up in his *own* thoughts to the degree that his disposition as a truly social being wanes. He then constantly expresses his own thoughts; when he doesn’t express them, he thinks them. He is no longer capable of truly listening. When strengthening your own thinking, it is likewise necessary to strengthen the other pole: devotion toward what is not I. Only then can the antisocial nature of exercising judgement be integrated into the social organism. Devotion towards the other being is in particular nurtured by deliberately silencing your own thinking, no matter how wise it may be; otherwise it is like light reflecting on the surface of water, impeding sight to penetrate into the water’s depths.

We develop full individuality by lucidly and wilfully strengthening our thinking. Consciously caring for developing devotion towards other people builds community. These two poles are interdependent: the deeper we penetrate one, the deeper we can enter into the other. Neglecting one weakens both: If we spin ourselves into the cocoon of self-referential thinking, the sense of thought becomes obscured and can no longer take in foreign thoughts.

How do we perceive concepts while reading?

Under which circumstances is a thought a perception of the concept-or-thought-sense, under which circumstances does it originate in one’s own thinking or memory? This question was asked and dealt with in the first part of this essay regarding the nature of *listening*. Is *reading* different from listening in this regard? How do we perceive concepts while reading?

We can speak of *sense* perception “whenever cognition comes about without involvement of reason, memory, and so forth”²². Rudolf Steiner proposes precisely this necessary condition to delineate sense perception when introducing the sense realm beyond the sense of hearing in the fragment of his book “Anthroposophy”.

22 Cf. Rudolf Steiner: “Anthroposophy (A Fragment)”, 1996, p. 92.

Now while reading, I am constantly dependent on my reasoning mind; without it, I would experience mere words and not understand the weaving of thoughts behind them. It is only through the power of my own thinking and mental representations that I can perceive thoughts when reading. To be sure, I form these thoughts *based on* the sense perception of what is written, however this does not mean that the thoughts are contained, sense perceptibly, in what is written. When reading a book, I can only work myself through to thoughts by means of a lucid mind that is capable of thinking. Here the perception of thoughts is *supersensible*.

Exactly the opposite is the case when perceiving via the sense of concept (or sense of thought or thinking): I can perceive nothing through this sense while my reasoning mind stays awake. In order to perceive the thoughts of my fellow human beings in their immediacy, my own reasoning mind must be willing to fall asleep, so that during the act of perception via this sense I can live devotedly within the thinking power of *the other*. Rudolf Steiner once characterised the field of perception of the sense of thinking as follows:

(...) when I perceive a word I do not as intimately connect with the object or with the external being as when I perceive the thought through the word. At this stage, most people cease to make any distinctions. But there is a distinction between perceiving the word, the meaningful sound, and the veritable perception of the thought behind the word. *You can also perceive a word, after all, when it has been separated from the thinker through a phonograph or even through writing. However, while in a living connection with the being who is forming the word, to transpose myself directly through the word into the thinking and mentally representing being, this requires a sense that goes deeper than the usual word sense, this requires the sense of thinking, as I would like to call it.* And an even more intimate relation to the outer world than through the sense of thinking is given to us through that sense which enables us to feel with another being in such a way as to feel at one with this being, to sense it as one senses oneself. That is the *sense of I: through the thinking, the living thinking which the other being turns towards me*, I perceive the ‘I’ of this other being.²³

“Word” and “thought” should not be taken too literally. In the sense of Steiner, the realm of perception of the sense of tone²⁴ or word encompasses all of hu-

23 Cited from the lecture of August 12, 1916, contained in “The Riddle of Humanity”, translated by John F. Logan, Rudolf Steiner Press, 1990. Logan has a mistake at the end of his translation of this paragraph, where he incorrectly attributes the “living thinking” through which the ‘I’ of the other is perceived to the *perceiver*, whereas Steiner is speaking of the living thinking of the *perceived*. The paragraph has been largely retranslated by the author.

24 The German „Laut“ is here translated by „tone“ (which should always be thought of as ensouled), the German „Ton“ by „sound“, consistent with the English translation of „Anthroposophy. A Fragment”.

man body language, including all expressed gestures of the soul insofar as they are perceived *in their immediacy*²⁵. Facial expressions of a human being also shows the stirrings of the soul, including the other person's thinking, which can be perceived by the sense of thought accordingly; insofar as the 'I' comes to expression in the soul, it can be perceived by the sense of 'I'. Being together in silence with another human being can thus also provide a field of perception for these three upper senses.²⁶

The sense of concept enables one to "delve into another being (...) through sensing what lives in that being as concept".²⁷ When (sensorially) delving into another 'I', first its stirrings of thoughts are perceived (as sense perception), before awakening, enriched, to one's own thinking. While *reading*, the order is reversed: we must first awaken to our autonomous thinking before the thoughts of the other can be perceived (now super-sensibly!).

When I read what has been written in a book, I face someone else's thoughts in a similar way I face nature. I realize: here beings acted creatively, but I myself face only the accomplished work. These condensed gestures allow me to surmise that this work arose out of life-imbued creativity, however, *within the realm of sense perception, I can never reach the creative beings* because they themselves are no longer present in the condensed gestures of the accomplished work that I behold.

In the written text, the complete content is there; I must simply learn to read it. I can only learn to read it by exercising my thinking activity, so that it itself forms the language. While reading, I retrace the gestures inwardly and experience their movement. The willing activity of my thinking must make them flow so that my thinking can grasp the *unifying impulse* of the movement – the unmanifest thought. While reading, I am not on a par with a thinker. I am confronted with mere letters, dead, petrified signs of former thinking activity; I only break through to the thinking activity, which condensed itself into these letters and words, when, out of my *own* wilful thinking, I cause the words to flow again and thereby the thoughts to resound. "The reader comprehends, because he himself fills the given text with meaning. (...) And not only does thinking make connections, but a power which arguably gives thinking its impulse to do so: the imagination", writes Michael Bockemühl in his excellent essay "Reading and comprehension"²⁸. I understand what I read only to the extent of what I am able to grasp through my *autonomous thinking*. Apart from that, I can merely parrot words.

25 For this distinct sense realm, see in particular the well documented work of Peter Lutzker: „Der Sprachinn. Sprachwahrnehmungen als Sinnesvorgang“. The book was translated from English, but the English manuscript was never published.

26 Together with the sense of hearing, the sense of phonetic tone or word, concept and 'I' are often called "upper senses".

27 cf. "Anthroposophy (A Fragment)", p. 95.

28 „Lesen und Verstehen“, published in: „Lesen im anthroposophischen Buch. Ein Almanach“, Verlag Freies Geistesleben 1987.

Do I read when listening?

Now I can also *listen* to someone present in an uncommitted fashion by “reading” the words he utters as if they were written in a book, instead of paying attention to *his* thinking. Persons with a dysfunctional sense of thinking in fact cannot listen in any other way. They hear sequences of words which they then try to connect and to enliven into thoughts out of their *own* thinking activity. If I listen in this way while the other speaks, I will be able to understand him in a way, although he will never feel understood. The unifying meeting of beings (through the sense for the ‘I’ of the other), for which the percept of the sense of thinking becomes permeable and which resonates with each perception of the sense of thinking, is circumvented when “reading” the words of a speaker, because the sense of thinking is bypassed altogether (which also disables the sense for the ‘I’ of the other). When listening in this way, people do not *truly* meet. A conversation of this sort is not “more invigorating than light”²⁹.

When listening to audio recorded or radio broadcast language, much more content of perception is given sensorially than while reading: the remote speaker who is transmitted via a loudspeaker conveys his intonation, his cadence of speech etc. as carrier of a whole world of soul.³⁰ Through accentuation in the flow of speech, a particular understanding can be induced in the listener. A content so communicated is thus sensorially richer and easier to understand than when read. Precise soul observation will, however, not fail to notice that when

29 Cf. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: “The Green Snake and the Beautiful Lily”, a fairy tale.

30 A listener reacts to the articulated structure of words with precisely synchronised movements that correspond to those of the speaker (this is called “entrainment”). This was studied by William S. Condon. “One of the most significant and unexpected results (for Condon as well) of this unique study of the relation between speech and movement was the realization that not only is there a continual and exact coordination of a speaker’s movements with his or her own speech, but that the *listener* moves in precise synchrony to the articulatory structure of the speaker’s speech almost as well as the speaker does”. Furthermore, “no synchronization was found with non-speech sounds. It has also been shown that a two-day old American infant was capable of entraining to Chinese speech while at the same time not showing a synchrony of movement with tapping sounds and disconnected vowel sounds. These results were also duplicated when tape recordings were used.” This is how Peter Lutzker summarises the experiments of William S. Condon and L.W. Sander which were published in the magazine “Science” in 1974. Cf. Peter Lutzker: „Der Sprachsin. Sprachwahrnehmungen als Sinnesvorgang“, 1996, S. 44. (Lutzker’s book was originally written in English, but only published in a translated German version. The quotation above is taken from the author’s unpublished English manuscript.)

In a hand-written fragment of a text that was printed under the heading “Regarding listening and speaking” by the publisher as an appendix to the book “Anthroposophy. A Fragment” (p. 205 of the 1996 edition), Steiner delineates the perception of a sound of a lifeless object from an empathetic listening to a phonetic tone from a human being. After a longer exposition, he concludes “that in the case of human tone, the listener imparts his or her I to the I of another, while in the case of a sound of a lifeless object, the I is imparted only to the sound itself.” Prior to this passage, he had written about the “mystery of *empathy* with the I of another” and described it as follows: “We sense our own I in the I of the other. If we then perceive a tone coming from the other I, our own I lives in that tone, and therefore in the other I.”

listening to someone on the phone or to canned speech, the thoughts of the speaker are *not* perceived with the same immediacy as when people meet face to face, in spite of an empathy for the other “I” that can still be conveyed purely on the level of phonetic tone. In fact you need to *continuously follow* the thoughts of the other inwardly in *full waking consciousness*. It is hardly possible to sensorially “fall asleep” into the thoughts of the other while being spoken to on the phone or when listening to canned speech.

A certain relationship of beings can nonetheless occur while telephoning. Sensorially, insofar as the I of the listener perceives “a tone coming from the other I” and empathetically “lives in that tone, and therefore in the other I” (cf. the quote at the end of the last footnote). Furthermore, a relationship can also connect to an inner image, if one carries an inner image of the other human being with whom the indirect communication is taking place. This relationship of beings is not sensorial, however. It arises by turning our attention *inward*. In case of sense perception through the sense of thinking and the sense of I, our attention is *outward* bound. – It is even easier to realise that, within the process of reading, an encounter of beings is not mediated by the human sensory organism, but by our own *supersensible* thinking and feeling. When reading, I can notice how the thought, which is petrified in the written text, quivers slightly when touched by the will-power of my thinking and so begins to delicately resound within my own thinking. It resounds to the degree that *I* form the thought anew. The wider my comprehension of the interconnections of inner threads that manifest through the text, the more my own thinking – in the will-quality of the ‘I’ – becomes the bearer of the being who created the written work I behold. Reading thus becomes the starting point of a conscious advance into the supersensible worlds of the spirit.

Thoughts in a book can, however, be set into such solid clusters of mental representations that they are no longer able to resound. The petrified thoughts have passed under the threshold of possible reanimation. They may never have been alive in the writer himself. In that case only dead mental representations, schematically combined, are rigidly strung together through associations of word. In both cases, my thinking cannot perceive any thoughts.

Thinking and the sense of thinking muddled

In the last few decades, attempts at describing the anthroposophical view of the senses unfortunately often lack a clear line of demarcation between the forming of one’s *own* thoughts and the realm of *perception* of thought or concept. As mentioned in the beginning of this essay, some curious ideas seem to be rampantly spreading a fair measure of confusion about this issue within anthroposophical circles. We will now take a closer look at these.

In 1984, Georg Kühlewind described the sense of thought as being involved in the *act of reading*, a role which in fact should be attributed to the *activity of thinking*, kindled by word perception, as described above. Extremely

problematic is the way in which Thomas Göbel treats the sense of thinking in his book *Die Quellen der Kunst. Lebendige Sinne und Phantasie als Schlüssel zur Architektur* (The Origins of Art. Living senses and imagination as keys to architecture)³¹. Some of the claims disseminated by this book cause confusion to this day, also in circles that have never read it, because some of its content lives forth by word of mouth and in different popular exposés as in those of Albert Soesman³² (1995) and Wolfgang-M. Auer³³ (2007).³⁴

The first third of Göbel's book deals with an approach to the senses. For each of the senses, Thomas Göbel attempts to delineate the qualities belonging to its realm of perception and to grasp its entirety by contrasting and combining "archetypal qualities". For each sense, Göbel presents a diagram that is meant to cover the supposed spectrum of sense qualities of this particular sense. Göbel gives most of the twelve sense realms the same names as Steiner does. Simply using anthroposophical terms does not, however, guarantee a connection to the foundations of anthroposophy. Göbel actually accomplishes the feat of propagating an approach to the senses that, in parts, diametrically opposes Steiner's foundations of anthroposophy.

31 Philosophisch-Anthroposophischer Verlag, 1982. Book reviews appeared in *Die Drei* (5/1983) by Michael Bockemühl as well as in the weekly „Das Goetheanum“ (Nr. 14/1984) by Werner Barfod.

32 Albert Soesman: „Die zwölf Sinne. Tore der Seele“, 1995 (translated from Dutch).

33 Wolfgang-M. Auer: „Sinnes-Welten. Die Sinne entwickeln. Wahrnehmung schulen. Mit Freude lernen“, 2007.

34 The author of this essay had contact with all the authors named in this paragraph (except for Auer). When the bulk of this essay appeared in the weekly „Das Goetheanum“ in 1984 (in No. 31/32 and 33/34), Thomas Göbel remarked in a reply that appeared in the following issue that he had written his book from the point of view of the sentient soul, the author of this essay his remarks from the point of view of the consciousness soul, wherefore no contradiction existed. – The author and Dietrich Rapp personally visited Kühlewind not long thereafter and attempted to reach an understanding about how the sense of thought is understood. Kühlewind stuck to the position he had committed to paper in his essay „Bemerkungen zur Belehrung der Sinne“ (Das Goetheanum 47/1985): “The sense of thought is active in an experience to the extent that thoughts already known to me and well practiced thoughts are involved: it is these that are directly, ‘simply’ perceived.” He lived this attitude in all its consequences, only allowing-in thoughts previously known to him in the conversation. This prompted the author as well as Dietrich Rapp to each write an article on the relationship of the sense of thought to intuition in „Die Drei“ (11/1986). Parts of the then published essay by the author „Denksinn oder Intuition? Zum sinnlichen und übersinnlichen Wahrnehmen von Gedanken“ have been integrated into this essay. Dietrich Rapp's essay „Begriffssinn – Vorstellungssinn – Denksinn. Über die Hüllen seiner Entbindung“ builds on sensitive and very detailed soul observations and can be considered a significant step toward a better understanding of the thinking-regard (“Denkblick”) and the sense of thinking. The motto of this essay is taken from this article. – In an exchange of letters, Soesman made clear that he was urged to write up the oral accounts of the senses he gave in a series of lectures. This he did, but without high scientific aspirations. – Lastly, the author corresponded with A. Ganter on this theme, from whom stem the thoughts about the sense of concept which Göbel expanded upon in his book. Ganter first propagated these in a group of students in the 1950s in Freiburg, Germany and still did not doubt their veracity near the end of his life nearly half a century later.

In his chapter on the sense of tone (which for Steiner and Göbel is synonymous with the sense of word, for Göbel also with the sense of shape and which should not be mistaken with the sense for hearing sounds), Thomas Göbel writes (p. 77f):

Through the exercises with the two Escher prints [reproduced in the book], one can experience that there are different possibilities of penetrating material given to the sense of sight – when suitable – with the sense of shape. In order to check this possibility further, let us look at figure 10 [reproduced at the beginning of this essay], which depicts a regular hexagon, the corners of which are connected by three diagonals. (...) Finally, figure 10 can also be seen as a space-filling cube (...). This exercise also shows that we've been working with at least two senses: namely with the sense of sight, which perceives the "light and dark", remaining unchanged in all cases, and with the sense of shape intervening in different ways.

Here the *activity of mental representation* (see the beginning of this essay) is nowhere mentioned. According to Göbel, we perceive the shape of space-filling objects through a "sense of shape", which supposedly is the sense of word or tone of the anthroposophical approach to the senses, "intervening in the field of vision".

He expresses the consequences of this point of view for the *concept of reality* in the last sentence of the ensuing paragraph (italics added by the author):

The reason why the sense of shape can see different cubes when it apprehends a cube in figure 10 is connected to the lack of elements in this figure which are present in reality: for example, an opaque, structured surface, different lighting conditions of the visible sides, a base on which the cube stands, perspective and so forth. When all this comes together in the field of vision, the sense of shape also operates in accordance with reality. *The manifestations of nature as perceived by all our senses shall here be called "reality"*.

At the end of the chapter on the sense of tone or word (p. 83), Thomas Göbel reproduces in sequence the word "cube", the above figure and a photo of a wooden cube. For the senses of sight and shape these three shapes of the cube are different, he writes. "Solely for the sense of thinking, no difference exists. It can apprehend the same concept from the shape of the writing, the drawing and the photograph" (p. 80). "Here the sense of sight is the basic sense into which the sense of shape or tone as well as the sense of thinking and of the I intervene in such a way as to bring forth that which meets the eye" (p. 93). The last sentence originates from the chapter "Interplay and totality of the twelve senses", in which he calls the senses of hearing, seeing and touching the three basic senses, into which the three "integrative senses" – sense of tone, sense of thinking

and sense of 'I' – intervene respectively. For the sense of touch, he describes this intervention as follows:

Eyes blindfolded, have a sculpture, for example, placed on the table in front of you. If we try to experience the shape through the perception of our fingers and hands, this is only of difficulty because here our sense of shape is inexperienced. This applies to the sense of concept accordingly. It can also intervene in the touch realm. We will be able to perceive a table or chair by touching them with our hands.

According to Göbel, we perceive the concept of chair or table via the sense of concept or thinking in the same way we apprehended the concept of “cube” in seeing. Not only spatial forms, but even the concepts of objects are perceived sensorially. If a theory of the senses is constructed in this way, all of reality is in the world outside and manifests itself entirely through our senses.

In his chapter on the sense of thinking, Thomas Göbel writes that reading is also *perception of the sense of thinking*.

We consider it self-evident that we can apprehend other people's thoughts while listening or reading. It is less self-evident to understand this as an activity of the senses. The “cube” in the section on the sense of shape showed that word-shape and meaning-content are two different qualities, which consequently must be perceived by two different senses. We will now try to structure the different meaning-contents of language.

According to Göbel, the sense of thinking or concept perceives the *meaning-contents of language*. The greater part of this chapter therefore deals with grammatical analysis. The author doesn't reach beyond that: he penetrates the world of thoughts only to the level of language.

Are I and its style one and the same?

In the next chapter, the author claims that the sense of 'I' perceives the style of a personality. In order to illustrate this, he reproduces a black and white print.

(...) [Look at this reproduction] and only continue reading when you have come to a perception of the artist's personality, whose work of art you're looking at. The artist in question is very well known but this work of his is rather unknown. He who knows this artist but not this reproduction and recognises his “handwriting” therein can realize that this recognition must be related to the fact that he previously developed a sense for this artist. One does not form a judgement as to who the artist is, (...) the sense of 'I' grasps the human being who created this piece of art.

Here Göbel overlooks the fact that the ‘I’ of a human being and the unique style it may coin are not one and the same. Just as we perceive the gesture of speech through the sense of tone or of word, even in petrified, written words, this same sense of tone or word can indeed also be involved in the recognition of the gesture or the style of a work of art. One certainly speaks of the “signature” of a work of art or – as Thomas Göbel himself states – the “handwriting” of an artist. But just as we would never think of mistaking a signature for the kernel of the I of a human being – even though the signature may well be an unequivocal sign for the personality – we should not mistake the style of a person with his or her individuality. In each incarnation, the individuality may coin a truly unique style – but *is not* this style. *Just as with reading, there is nothing to perceive for the sense of thinking and the sense of ‘I’ when we look at a work of visual art.* The creative activity is imaginatively condensed in the work of art, ready for the artistic *activity of the beholder* to again lift it into the sphere of becoming. To experience this activity, this co-creating while beholding, indeed distinguishes the experience of art from mere gazing. – In the performing arts (as in music, theatre or eurhythm), the artist’s creative activity and the spectator’s or listener’s creative activity interpenetrate. This engenders a *shared* inner space of becoming. Insofar as the artist creates art out of the vigour of the I, all of the upper senses can certainly participate in the act of perception of a person currently present. Within such “a living relationship with the being that is forming the words”³⁵ – but already no longer in case of a phonograph, a film, a book or while looking at a painting or a sculpture – the senses of thinking and of ‘I’ can facilitate a direct transposition into the other human being, feeling “another being as yourself”³⁶.

Is there only a sense world?

It generally remains a problem for conventional science to understand how thinking is related to “reality”, which it imagines as a realm somewhere completely beyond thinking and cognition. Most strikingly, although more or less ignored, is the question why, of all things, mathematics – which lives in pure thinking – can be applied so remarkably well to the “real world”.³⁷ All these problems would be solved if one could but find hidden senses with which the human being could perceive the *concepts* of the objects of the outer world *sensio-*

35 From the already cited quote of August 12 1916, contained in “The Riddle of Humanity” as cited above

36 Ibid

37 Related questions are touched upon in the section „Mathematik wird Anthroposophie“ (mathematics becomes anthroposophy) at the beginning of the essay „Zwei biographische Schlüsselerlebnisse Rudolf Steiners. Zur Entwicklung und Ausbreitung der Waldorfpädagogik“ (in „Basiswissen Pädagogik: Reformpädagogische Schulkonzepte“, Volume 6: „Waldorf-Pädagogik“, 2002). They are gone into in more depth in Detlef Hardorp: „Mathematik als die erste Stufe übersinnlicher Anschauung und ihr Bezug zur Sinneswelt“ („Mathematics as the first step of supersensible perception and its relationship to the sense world“) in „Die Drei“, May 1989.

rially (as, for example, the concept of the cube): thinking would then be applicable to the sense world because it would handle concepts that are still contained in the objects; these concepts would merely be mirrored into the human soul through a sense of concept. Then all reality would be outside in the world and would consistently reveal itself completely through the senses. – *Observation* of your own activity of thinking and of mental representation shows, however, that this is not so.

If this observation is missing, we can easily come to the wrong conclusion, namely that we get to know the world around us only through sense perception. This is how Wolfgang-M. Auer positions himself in the introduction to his book “Worlds of the senses”³⁸ published in 2007: “What we know about the world, we know through perception. This holds without exception.” That he means sense perception when speaking of perception is made clear when he proceeds: “Imagine for a moment, as concretely as possible, that we would be deprived of one sense after another”. He continues by depicting how the world would successively shrivel if seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, the sensation of warmth, touch and finally the self-perception of the body would fall away. “And if now any remnants of self-perception would be withdrawn from us, we could experience nothing from the world nor from our own body. They would not exist.”

Thinking is not touched upon in Auer’s book, let alone other supersensible perception. He adopts Göbel’s vocabulary and also speaks of a “sense of shape”, to which he adds a “sense of meaning” and a “sense of style”. For Auer, the “sense of meaning” also encompasses the ability to perceive “the meaning from the objects” (Auer, p. 122). In the corresponding footnote, Auer deems that Steiner named this realm of perception “sense of concept” or “sense of thought” and that Göbel named it “sense of thinking”. Not only did Steiner already call it “sense of thinking”, he clearly defined it as referring to a much more specific realm of perception than Göbel and Auer, for whom thinking no longer has a necessary role to play in the cognition of the world because, for the child, “the step from the perception of shape to the perception of symbol or from emotional to cognitive understanding” (p. 103) simply means stepping from the “sense of shape” to the “sense of meaning”. *Everything* is accessible through sense perception – if not, it simply does not exist. Nothing exists apart from a finished wrought world directed towards the senses, a world of objects, which simply manifest their meaning sensorially to the “sense of meaning”. Cognitive understanding is completely subsumed into sense experience. Auer (p. 113):

(...) first we must perceive the meaning from the pictorial elements or from the objects, so that the corresponding associations can appear. From all this it

38 The book by Wolfgang-M. Auer was (only) published in German in 2007 under the title: „Sinnes-Welten. Die Sinne entwickeln. Wahrnehmung schulen. Mit Freude lernen“.

follows naturally that we also perceive a meaning from the single object, namely the meaning which the particular object possesses. From the table we perceive the meaning “table”, from the chair the meaning “chair” and from the pistol and knot similarly “pistol and knot”.

A theory of knowledge can hardly become more primitive than that: Meaning in the world gets delivered as *part and parcel of sense perception*. As long as we don't see the necessity to develop ourselves toward becoming aware of our own soul activity while engaged in the process of observing phenomena in the world around us, and as long as we don't acknowledge this soul observation as an equally valid phenomenon, the whole scientific approach will remain one-sided. Deprived of this attention toward our own soul activity, conventional science will continue to advance as usual and as envisioned by Francis Bacon – bypassing Goethe and Steiner.

The only source bringing forth thoughts that is also able to manifest its essence in the world of wrought work³⁹ is the human being. Without human thinking as “the translator that interprets the gestures of experience”⁴⁰, inorganic nature manifests none of the concepts by which it can be grasped; these concepts – along with all meaning – must arise from *within* the human being. Organic nature manifests its concepts to the degree that the human being ascends to supersensible perception of these concepts in an act of cognition wherein thinking not only acts as “translator [of] the gestures of experience” but *itself becomes experience*.⁴¹ The so experienced germinating moments of thinking are only to be found in the world of becoming, not in the world of finished form, towards which the human sense organisation is directed.

The source of perception from which our own thinking wells is intuition. This source is of supersensible nature. The source of perception for the one and only life of concepts which can express its being in the world of otherwise finished form is the sense organ of the sense of concept or thinking which, directed towards the wrought world, is source of perception for the germinating moments of thinking of another human being.

Detlef Hardorp

Translated by Elisabeth Hardorp and the author

39 Cf. Rudolf Steiner, “Anthroposophical Leading Thoughts”, leading thought no. 112. The German “Werkwelt” is there translated as “accomplished Work” instead of “world of wrought work”.

40 Cf. chapter 11 “Thinking and Perception” in Rudolf Steiner, “The Theory of Knowledge Implicit in Goethe's World Conception”, also translated as „The Science of Knowing”

41 Compare, for example, „The Nature and Significance of Goethe's Writings on Organic Development”, in Rudolf Steiner's introductions to Goethe's scientific texts, translated as “Goethean Science” by William Lindeman (volume 1 in the edition of collected works).

Living Learning

As Steiner teachers it is our brief to create a learning environment for children which allows them to develop their abilities in freedom and in a healthy way. We look at learning as a living process: on the one hand we are careful not to call upon forces active in the organism too soon. Once they have been released, however, these same forces require a framework in which they are able to work. Life forces are transformed into forces for learning. Physical senses transform into senses for learning. Content should reflect the motives of the pupil who is learning. Context true to life will connect the pupil with the world and the spirit.

Life forces are transformed into forces for learning

A Class Five boy came to my clinic with his parents. Jonas was suffering in the Steiner School because he was unable to bring his own abilities into the lessons. "When I wanted to tell my teacher about Buddhism in the Ancient Civilisations Main Lesson, she replied that I was just repeating things I had read in a book." "The subject of reading was a problem, because Jonas was already reading fluently in Class One and we were advised to keep books away from him as this would be too intellectual," the mother added. Jonas explained that after his baptism in his ninth year he had spent a lot of time grappling with Buddhism and had come to the conclusion that it was the only acceptable religious path. His psychosomatic symptoms had now reached a point where he was unable to continue coming to school without jeopardising his well-being. As soon as he left the school he felt much better.

This kind of thing does not occur often, but Jonas' example serves to show what happens when we do not respond to life forces which have already been transformed into forces for learning at an early age. Forces for learning, etheric forces which have been released, damage the organism if they are not allowed to be directed to learning, just like growth forces damage the growing child if they are directed to learning too soon. We must be clear here that we are speaking of forces – forces, processes and transformation. My long experience in diagnostics, curative pedagogy and special needs has shown me that in our schools we are not properly prepared, especially in the lower classes, to work with the constructive or destructive possibilities of these forces because we are so busy protecting the children from quick learning processes.

I accepted two pupils from a state school into Class Six in quick succession. They both had excellent reports and presented very good learning habits. These children had suffered from early learning pressure, resulting in stomachaches and headaches and a lack of joie de vivre and the time and desire to play. "Wait three days and you will experience your child at home as you remember them from a

long time ago”, I had the audacity to predict. Again and again I have observed this in the middle school: it takes three days for these children to blossom again, without the need for any special measures, simply because of the effect of our range of subjects and the relaxed atmosphere for learning. This was confirmed by a letter from the parents thanking us. Cabrina has found the time to play again! And: Raoul now tells us lots about what has been happening at school!

This shows how, especially since the introduction of G8, the pupils, being rushed from one learning goal to the next, have often been so damaged in their vital processes that they can recover only when they are allowed to learn in a living way. Both phenomena give us food for thought. They show how closely connected learning and health really are:

Learning forces want to be harnessed for learning in a living way.

Physical senses are transformed into ‘senses for thinking’.

Indeed, learning is connected with the lower senses and most especially with movement.

I recently spoke with someone who had just completed one of my special needs courses. She told me she had been working in dyslexia therapy in PTE as a Waldorf teacher and that she had been the only one using movement. The head teacher had apparently remarked: “It is really interesting how much your pupils have come along with their learning.”

We know about this connection and that is why we ensure there is movement in all manners of subjects. However, for some years now there has been a noticeable increase in the classroom in balance and movement exercises aimed at improving learning conditions which have now become a target. The following took place during one of my lesson observations:

Frau Maler was practising the multiplication tables with her third class after the pupils had completed a twenty minute balancing parcours where they had to walk along turned up benches carrying small sandbags piled on various parts of their bodies. Everyone sat in a circle and concentrated on mental arithmetic. Suddenly the teacher jumped up and everyone followed suit and was clapping again. The pupil next to me whispered: “We always have to do this in between, it is really distracting.”

Learning is a cognitively moving process. When pupils are focused on learning they hardly move. Even hyperactive children writing a story which they want to write stay in their seat and do not want to be distracted by another command. Although movement and learning are linked, movement distracts from the learning process. Children moving restlessly in their seats are not necessarily in

need of movement but of the type of learning which grabs them and directs their body, soul and spirit towards one goal. The pupils practise this in woodwork, handwork, gardening, Eurythmy. All these subjects are really about movement towards a goal. Often class teachers wish to improve movement or perfect it, sometimes their aim is to control certain negative movement patterns. I would like to observe here that surely this must be the task for the experts, for example the physiotherapists, the Loheland gymnasts, or those specialising in motor skills. Living movement in the lesson should always be related to learning. Yes to juggling, string games and even dancing!

“When will we dance again?”, asked the boys in Class Four. In the middle of the main lesson we often left the classroom for 10 minutes to be refreshed through movement to music. Afterwards we were able to continue working on our theme.

From my perspective, with regards to living learning processes, we should ask the following questions about physical movement in the main lesson:

Does movement actually take place?

Is the movement related to the material or the learning goals? Are they movements designed for learning?

Are there any short movement sequences right in the middle of the lesson?

Does movement take up more than 10 to 15 minutes of the lesson and does it result in distraction?

Does a long ‘rhythmic part’ at the beginning of the lesson lead towards the learning goal or does this concept need rethinking?

Just like learning forces which have been held at bay may have a detrimental effect on health, movement for its own sake can diminish living learning in the main lesson.

Structured movement aids learning as part of healthy learning processes and is connected with a goal.

Dynamic differentiation

The inner differentiation of a child’s spirit never fails to amaze us grown-ups. We usually anticipate certain cognitive ability and certain talents much later. And yet, right from Class One, we need to teach the children with a mind which is open to their talents because we do not know which of these lie dormant yet. Dynamic differentiation is an ingredient from Class One to living learning:

The children now knew 4 letters. L, M, I and A. You can fill volumes with those letters. For example the conversation between two donkeys can be written on the board, the repeated I-A, written in large, small, fat, thin, timid or confident letters. A purely phonetic text which all the children were able to read out in their own expressive way: Jonas and Matthias read out the story of the two donkeys running in

a race, fast and still - faster and finally they read the sequences of I-A breathlessly with the rest of the class making sure that they read exactly what is written.

The inner picture leads to the symbol which in turn leads to the scene being set out: this way the children are able to learn the sounds dynamically, using their entire being, and with virtually no risk of making a mistake. Every one is able to achieve this because for the sounds I-A no joining of syllables is required. At the same time the task of writing or reading such a dialogue does not differentiate between talents because there is no limit to the creativity and differentiation applied in the inventiveness of letter arrangements and the transformation during reading. However, an I will always be an I and an A will only ever be an A. The limits of phonetics must be painstakingly observed.

For the children this lesson was a celebration because every single one of them was able to read. But what must come next in order to allow this security to continue to the comprehension and transformation of syllables? The next topic was: Mum lost Lia in the dark. The two words made a lovely text in the exercise books of the children which again could be read out in an expressive manner. Many children developed the story like this: Mum and Lia had gone for a walk in the woods on a beautiful autumn day The children were able to let their imagination run freely and they were no longer reading from their exercise book but speaking sentences worthy of printing out of their inner pictorial world, beyond the restriction of the written letter.

In the lower school this dynamic differentiation lives completely in the experience of the individual. The class as a whole and each pupil must be able to make a connection with the lesson topic and find a way of being expressive within it. But where in all this is the healing repetition which strengthens our life forces? We support and strengthen the pupils' good habits in all the rituals, in beautiful handwriting and in a rhythmic lesson structure. Good habits are the basis for a fruitful relationship with lesson content. With regards to content, children in Class One already demand a dynamic approach and differentiation.

Learning will develop in line with the talent and age of the pupil in a dynamic and differentiated way.

Learning content and motives of the learning child

Class Six is learning about Roman debates in front of the senate. The virtues of the pro and the con, the black and the white, are listed precisely, having been considered thoroughly, and any personal advantage is discounted. This topic covers the inner motif of an entire year ranging from black and white drawing to percentages leading us right into the polarities of our economic life. However, a "Class Six mood" sometimes occurs early in Class Five allowing other aims and needs to surface. An example from the Art lesson makes this apparent.

In Class Five we had been reading a book by Cornelia Funke: Lord of the Thieves. The children had chosen a building in Venice for our Venetian Carneval, the San Marco Basilica (metamorphosis of a Greek temple) which was difficult to draw. This now adorned our classroom wall on a large poster. We made Venetian masks from plaster and each child was given the task of wearing a flowing coat from carnival silk in the appropriate shades. The children turned up looking magnificent, steeped in the harmonious beauty of the colours of the rainbow. Only Laurenz and Jan stood out: their masks and coats were black and white. They were my oldest pupils. This time, in Class Six, we will all wear black and white, and instead of the beautiful building posters with black and white patterns will adorn the classroom.

In each instance the pupils have been able to find themselves in the learning environment, which was artistic on this occasion. They were able to come together internally and externally, making small allowances for each. They were able to prepare the carnival day without any help from their parents and with a high level of motivation each time.

Motivation comes into being when external and inner Motives are in harmony.

Context true to life

Near the end of the last main lesson I ask the class: children, what do you think of when you hear the word Ice Main Lesson. “Eating ice cream.” “Painting ice!” “Work with the theme of ice age!” “Selling ice cream!” “I have an ice cream recipe!” Anabell calls out. This is how I had planned it. It remains to be seen if I have time to cover the ice age. Unconsciously the children had reflected the following steps: experience – reflecting the picture – thinking, and finally transforming.

Rudolf Steiner encourages us to glean from the children themselves what is needed for a lesson. Only the first step had been successful. Living and learning are closely connected and each main lesson which involves food being eaten allows those children who are sometimes fearful to grow in confidence – I experienced this time and again. How will it be for Anabell whose fear of mathematics I would like to conquer in this main lesson?

On the first Monday we all go out for an ice cream. I have asked the children to bring two Euros. The clouds disperse during our short walk to the ice cream parlour. The children order different flavoured scoops from the Italian ice cream seller who understands them exactly even when some of the Italian names are mispronounced. I notice how many children are quite happy to walk away without their 80 cents change, how many do not seem to know that 50 cents is half of one Euro and which of them can work out really quickly how much four scoops should cost. Then I give them the following task: five children buy twelve scoops, some eat three, others only two. This helps me to find out how the children calculate: An-

abell finds a way: she has drawn five cones, one for each child. "First I gave each child one scoop and then I carried on adding more!" she tells me proudly.

I can tell that the practical context is working. Max, quick at mental arithmetic, was quite stuck. This approach is helping those for whom numbers without descriptions stem from an alien world and challenges those far down the road into the number world where there are no ice cream cones. You have to return to earth to calculate ice creams. Both paths are now able to meet. But I must revert to counting in units and then grouping them ...

"... and then the ice cream seller's assistant had dotted the ice cream scoops all across the beautiful meadow allowing each guest to take three and nobody had to wait in a queue." This is how my Maths story ended. Each child had covered a page in the main lesson book with lots of dots which now needed to be gathered. "But there is one more ice cream", says Lina, "I can't reach it!" The next day I bring my prepared worksheet and now five dots need to be grouped. How many scoops might that amount to? Anabell is not yet certain; she writes 20 and 2. Yes, that is correct. Max can confirm 20 units of 5 which are so easy to add up plus 2 single units: 102!

At the end of a project main lesson the cheeks of the children are glowing with excitement and the teacher is able to take a step back because everything has gone as planned and has worked out every time:

The boys are wearing clean white shirts and the girls colourful skirts! I gather up my team in the classroom which has been decorated with flowers and cast a last glance at the procedures, arrange the handwritten cards and then the many children begin their fabulous activities. "Another Findus!" "Two Pettersson!" "Where are the bowls?" The children have given names to the different ice cream cups. Anabell's face is radiant, she is running and serving and calling out again and again: "I don't need anybody taking over from me"

Anabell has indeed been able to overcome her fear of Mathematics. I am able to say this with conviction now she is in Class Six.

When children are able to learn in a context which is true to life and which has been adapted dynamically to give them a real aim for the community, this will have a beneficial effect on their health.

*Uta Stolz
translated by Steffi Cook*

For discussion¹

Thank you for the very enjoyable and inspiring articles in the Newsletter. I would like to draw your attention to the more or less familiar topic of health care.

For almost three years I have been practising ‘eurythmy for health’ (‘hygienic eurythmy’) with classes 1 to 7. After standing in for a eurythmy therapist, I was given the chance to regularly practise this “third wave” (about 15 minutes per day for four weeks, twice a year during main lesson) with whole classes, in the class room or any other big room that happened to be free.

I was encouraged, even enthused, to do this by the following description in *Health Care as a Social Issue*²: “There is a social realm that is in urgent need of intense health-giving impulses through deepened insight into human nature. It is the realm of education, of teaching. Without deeper insights into human nature we will not be able to fully understand the meaning of the words: the children sit at school, with their backs bent and their breathing consequently inhibited ...”

Since I had this opportunity – after years of work as an artist and teacher – I am learning about the “breathing” of adolescents.

“... Because much of what is unhealthy in the world today is so because there is so little harmony between what the physical body does to adapt to the world outside and what the etheric body, with its inner mobility, demands of the physical body. We want to overcome this lack of harmony by encouraging the physical body to be as mobile as the ether body is.”

These two sentences from an “Introduction to Eurythmy”³ by Rudolf Steiner inspired me to intense studies and practice ...”⁴.

There are plenty of exercises based on the eurythmy figures – movement, feeling and character. Stimulating and soothing sounds, contraction and expansion, energy and peace dance, laughing and crying. The teacher’s heart rejoices given this abundance of formative life forces!

To quote Christian Morgenstern:

To be a teacher
An artist I must be,
Flesh and bone,
imbued with creativity.

Ekkehart Wacker
translated by Margot Saar

1 On the question of the three-fold structure of the main lesson. A stimulus for Discussion, by Christof Wiechert, published in the Pedagogical Section Journal, Issue 38, Easter 2010

2 Health Care as a Social Issue. Public lecture given by Rudolf Steiner in Dornach on 7 April 1920

3 Rudolf Steiner, An introduction to Eurythmy, Munich, 28 August 1913, before the first eurythmy performance.

4 On eurythmy for health: E.-M. Autenrieth, Persephone 9, Arbeitsberichte der Medizinischen Sektion am Goetheanum, Verlag am Goetheanum.

World Kindergarten Conference and World Teachers' Conference

1 – 5 April and 9 – 14 April 2012
Goetheanum

The Descent of the Ego in the growing human being

As is widely known, the International Conference of the Waldorf Steiner School Movement and the Pedagogical Section at the Goetheanum are in the process of preparing the next World Teachers' and Educators' Conference.

This conference will be different in that it will be divided into two separate events both dealing with the same range of topics.

The world kindergarten conference, organised by the International Kindergarten Association (IASWECE) in collaboration with the Pedagogical Section, will take place before Easter 2012. The World Teachers' conference will take place after Easter 2012.

This separation is necessary due to the high number of attendees expected.

There will be regular in-depth contributions to the theme starting with the next edition of the Circular. This next edition will include an article by Iryna Kokoshynska (Ukraine) and by Thomas Zdrazil (Stuttgart). After that the series will be continued by other colleagues.

We would like to encourage Kindergarten and teacher groups to spend some time on this subject in their pedagogical and any other appropriate meetings. If colleagues would like to write something about any specific theme we will be happy to receive this and to publish it in our Circular.

Some recommendations for work on the theme

Right at the beginning of the 'Study of Man', in the **first lecture**, we can find the following sentence in the middle of this lecture: 'The task of education conceived in the spiritual sense is to bring the Soul-Spirit into harmony with the Life-Body'. (The 1932 edition shows this sentence printed in italics). With this aim in mind, 'we must be conscious of what we do right down into our core'. (GA 293, 21.08.1919).

This gives us the theme for our conference. From birth onwards, we need to know **what we do**. In early years' education, in the Kindergarten, the Lower School, the Upper School, we need to have this consciousness for what we do. We must have this in order to make each action as self-evident as are the right thoughts which we have towards the growing child.

The concept of the I or the Self is one which needs always to be approached from various angles in order to keep our thinking flexible and to encourage it to think spiritual thoughts. The **second lecture** from 'The Essentials of Education'

(a series of lectures amounting to a legacy completing Steiner's work in Stuttgart) offers much help with this. This lecture describes through picture, music and word the descent of the soul (and the I) into the physical body. (GA 208, 09.04.1924). The right action in this context becomes visible in the **fourth lecture** of Meditatively Acquired Knowledge of Man. (GA 302a, 22.09.1920; available also as a single lecture).

The chapter **'The essence of the Human Being;** (GA 9) from Theosophy is recommended for those wishing to gain a general foundation.

Naturally there are many other ways of accessing this theme. These are just a few indications.

From January 2011 the Section's website will contain useful information about these conferences.

*Christof Wiechert
translated by Steffi Cook*

Agenda

Coming Pedagogical Section Conferences and Events at the Goetheanum, 2010/ 2011

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|---------------------------|--|
| 15. – 17. Oktober 2010 | Tagung zum Thema Klassenspiel |
| 22. – 24. Oktober 2010 | Tagung zur Willensfrage in der Erziehung |
| 31. Oktober – 4. November | Förderlehrertagung |

2011

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| 18. – 20. February 2011 | Meditative Praxis für Lehrer und Erzieher |
| 12. – 15. May 2011 | Mystery Drama for teachers |

2012

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|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| April, 1 – 5, 2012 | World Kindergarten Conference |
| April, 9 – 14, 2012 | World Teachers' Conference |