

Educating with Development in Mind: Individualisation as a Human Being

Education for the future places itself in the stream of human development. Christof Wiechert, the head of the Pedagogical Section at the Goetheanum pursues this theme with Waldorf education in mind. In the comparison of the *Study of Man* with Rudolf Steiner's *Meditatively acquired Knowledge of Man* it is evident that the individual in-between the polarity of the will and thinking – the theme taken up by the Hibernian Mysteries – is encouraged to take hold of the power of the middle.¹

The lecture course, *Meditatively acquired Knowledge of Man*² was held in Stuttgart for the teachers exactly a year after the *Study of Man*³ and comprises only four lectures due to a shortage of time and an excessive amount of work. Steiner wanted people to understand it as a continuation of the *Study of Man*.

And indeed, after he has pointed to the task of the Middle European impulse in education in the introduction – which follows on from Herder, Goethe, Schiller and Fichte –, the second lecture begins with a closer look at the second lecture of the *Study of Man*.

Thinking and Will

This second lecture of the *Study of Man* simply founds a new psychology by raising two questions: what is thinking and what is will? What sort of activity is thinking?

The main feature of the activity of thinking is that it must make use of pictures. When do I see a picture? When I stand in front of an object. It is the gesture of antipathy. The head has separated itself from the cosmos, has become independent; it can develop antipathy by looking and forming a picture in the imagination. One is in the realm of semblance, not in the real world, always turned back. The power of thinking comes from the realm before birth. If the power of thinking is intensified, it becomes memory, a concept.

The will, on the other hand, is without pictures (even if I conceive of an act of will); I cannot see it, it cannot be remembered (like the idea), but it is there and is at hand. What the will does, whether good or bad, is always real, is a fact, completely orientated towards the future. You can only will what lies ahead of you.

1 Already in the time of Heinz Zimmermann as head of the Pedagogical Section, a group of people met on one weekend every year to work on the *Study of Man*. After 14 years this work came to a close; however, now the group is continuing its work on the *Meditatively acquired Knowledge of Man*, while another group has begun anew with the *Study of man* and has already reached Lecture 7. The present contribution is above all the fruit of this long-standing work together.

2 Rudolf Steiner: *The Study of Man* GA 293).

3 Ibid: *Balancing Teaching* (GA 302a).

To will is always to engage with something, to connect. It is the gesture of sympathy. However, the realisation of the will lies for us humans in the time after death. The seeds of the will which are sown in life germinate in the life after death. There they will become the impulse for the future. It is to this part of man, the will part, that the cosmos itself has great sympathies; it sends, as it were, its rays of approval into the body via the human limbs. If this willing is intensified inwardly, then imagination will develop from sympathy and finally, using the will, the faculty to 'grasp' perceptions through the senses in such a way that what the eye catches can also be recognised. Rudolf Steiner calls this process 'conventional imagination'.⁴

Thus we see how this psychology builds up the soul out of the starkest polarity imaginable: thinking as a faculty that originates in the time before birth and the will which strives towards the time after death.

The Hibernian Mysteries

When we consider Steiner's explanations of the Hibernian Mysteries, the last great mysteries in 'Mysteriengestaltungen',⁵ then we experience how much effort it has been for the researcher of the spirit to approach the content of these mysteries, for they have the tendency to not want to open up. Nevertheless, once the researcher has succeeded in advancing to these forms and has managed to communicate them in human words to those interested, then a shattering picture emerges. And in a mood of awe just in a glimpse, the thought will open up that this mystery wisdom has poured in as a new science into the understanding of man for modern consciousness, into appropriate language for this consciousness.

The acolytes of the Hibernian Mysteries were also led to this polarity – the polarity of sun and moon, but in such a way that the sun represented the macrocosm, which comes to us through thinking, through science, clothed in the light of thoughts, without the character of being. This impression was above all a masculine one. The other polarity, the moon element, is above all feminine, living out of warmth, getting involved with life, pregnant with the future, representing not semblance but being. This sounded in the words:

I am the image of the world
See how I am lacking in being.
I live in your knowledge,
I will become a confession in you.

4 Then there is a digression into neurology (in those days): the activity of the synapses and the interruptions between them are presented as the places where the soul is touched. For where the streams of sympathy and antipathy meet, the soul finds its expression.

5 Rudolf Steiner: *Mystery Knowledge and Mystery Centres* (GA 232).

I am the image of the world
See how I am lacking in truth
If you will dare to live with me
I will become your contentment.

Knowing and willing are mentioned here, they are expanded in life to science and art.

Then in the further stages the neophyte of the Mysteries goes through crises of shattering and constriction, by means of which he is shown the way via icy cold into the time before birth and via heat into the time after death.

Learn to gaze in the spirit at winter being
And you will have a sight of the time before earthly life

Learn to dream summer being in the spirit
And you will have the experience of the time after earthly life.

The priests foretold the overcoming of this polarity for the future by showing (in pre-Christian times) the neophytes the image of the Christ: he will lead these opposites together.

Forces at Work

Now how does this relate to the second lecture of 'Meditatively acquired Knowledge of Man'? The motif of polarity is picked up once more in the second lecture of the *Study of Man*. Here too the 'male' and the 'female' of the polarity have receded right into the background. These are world forces that are at work. In this respect every individual has a part in the male and the female.

Now it is completely new in this lecture that the 'birth' of the ether body, the time of school readiness, is portrayed as cosmic formative forces streaming in, which work on forming the body. Once this task has been completed, these forces strike back up again from the body, but they also continue to stream in. When these two forces meet, a struggle ensues, a battlefield. The result of this 'battle' is the change of teeth. However, the relationship of these forces needs to be considered at the same time. The forces streaming in through the head from distant spaces behave like 'attackers', the forces streaming up from the (formed) body as 'defenders'. The relative strength of these (opposing) forces determines whether the child feels more drawn to the pictorial or more to the intellectual side.

The truly special part of this description is that it only becomes accessible to you, if you picture the forces streaming before you. If you do not manage to, the text remains hermetically sealed. We could take the view that this is a classic illustration of the 'pictorial understanding through meditation', which is spoken about two lectures on.

The same applies to the second polarity. This time we are dealing with astral forces, which stream in through the head into the child's body from the world and thus bring it to maturity such that all organ systems which are fully present as a disposition, but not yet functioning, now 'awaken', so to speak, to the world. When this is accomplished, these astral forces strike back up again from the body, meeting the forces streaming in. The result of this 'battle' is, for example, the breaking of the voice with boys. This time it is not the formative forces that bring about this process, but the powers of music and speech. Here the relationship of attack and defence is reversed such that comes from the organism behaves aggressively. What streams in as the music and speech element from the world picks up these forces and ennobles them to cultural activity. In other words, every adolescent (going through puberty) must be able to have the experience of an upper school choir. The relative strengths of attack and defence will, in this case, bring about the way in which the powers of music and speech are related to powers of imagination and will.

Here too there is this streaming pictorial element. If we look at both together, we will experience the building up of the soul forces out of the connection of the human being with the cosmos and their surroundings.

The health-bringing element

Curiously, Steiner characterises a third 'battlefield': this lies on the boundary between the ether body and the 'outside world'. Granted that the ether body projects slightly beyond the physical body, do we have here the real boundary between inside and outside? What is going on?

We can call this process to mind as follows: through what happens in these battles, the ether and astral bodies change, resulting in other relationships of the forces in them. Why is it healthy and wholesome to do eurythmy? because the ether body is already doing it in this way. If we do eurythmy, we use our ether body, which is held back by this means. This holding back brings about health, has a strengthening effect. This is a description of the process from the inside. Seen from the outside, this 'battle' looks like this: "And if we draw a line, draw something, then it is an attempt to fend off what wants to deform us on the inside." This inclination to deformity involves the ether body developing the tendency to grow etherically in an excessive way through the new balance of forces. Anyone who would have any form of education would 'swell up', would be 'puffed up'. Every drawing makes 'barbed wire' in order to prevent it. Steiner's use of language here is drastic.

One of the great riddles of the Hibernian Mysteries is that the acolytes had to feel the colossal statues all over, which represented knowledge and will (life) in male and female form. They were meant to have such an experience of touching the boundaries of the form. The male form turned out to be elastic; that means working from the inside, the female form turned out to be plastic, changeable in response to touch. We are led to the question, what is inside, what is outside?

How does the inside pulsate with the outside – physically, etherically and in a soul way? At the end of these lectures Steiner describes how when you are modelling a human head the formative force comes positively towards you, as if it would be sculpted from the inside out. And with modelling the limbs the process is like penetrating, forming from the outside inwards, “you press in as if the organism is drawing back.” The way this corresponds to the acolyte’s experience of the Mysteries can hardly be overlooked.

Thus, the ‘*Meditatively acquired Knowledge of Man*’ seems like a mysterious linking up of the world laws with human laws. The great riddle of man will be divined in the riddle of the individual human being.

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