

Inner Development of the Teacher

– How it may allow the Light of the Subjects to Shine

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Dornach, edited version from Neil Carter – with
permission.

(This article is my reported version of Florian's opening lecture at Samford Valley Waldorf School, Queensland on the 16th July, 2011. The seminar was attended by 82 teachers from Australia and New Zealand – and organised by the Pedagogical Section in Australia with support from the Anthroposophical Society in Australia) Any errors made are my own – with apologies. NC

My students sometimes ask, what gives you the right to be our teacher?

It is not my degree I have from University, nor is it my contract with the school which says I am allowed to teach here. I think the only thing which allows me to be a teacher is that:

I am ready to develop myself. I am prepared to change and respond to the challenge of the students: Nothing else.

Three soul forces: thinking, willing and feeling

I have my students in front of me and I ask myself, "What is the challenge we have today? What is the real challenge?" I would like to pick out one aspect: the reality that we all have in ourselves – that our different soul forces of thinking, feeling and willing nowadays have a tendency to separate.

Take the little child. A little child is not able to separate his soul forces. A child feels something, thinks about it and does it. It's just one unit. Thinking, feeling and willing are one unit. But as you grow up, you can separate them—you can think something, you can feel something completely different about it and you are able to do something else. They are not a unit, they have fallen apart. Out task in education is to try to integrate these again. Integrity!

We do not have much consciousness about this separation because the normal feeling I have is that thinking and feeling just go with each other. I am not aware so much of the influences the two have to each other. So, if I see a snake here in Australia, the feeling comes out immediately. Our feeling is influenced by the mood you have at the moment. If I have seen a movie by Hitchcock or I see a white shark in a movie and I go swimming in the sea and something is touching me, I am

almost scared to death because I have the feeling that everything which touches me is now a shark!

If you look at your class sitting before you, each individual carries their mood within their own selves. This mood will influence very much what you will do. If you want to teach, really, then you have to get yourself into the mood in your classroom in order to bring anything to the heart of the students.

If you don't take care of the atmosphere you create in your classroom, then you are lost. You can do what you want but it's always influenced by what the student is feeling.

So, we teachers are somehow artists. Our art is to create a certain atmosphere, which is far more important than what we say.

So: What is interesting in your lesson?

The problem is that we are all always looking at the content we teach – we want the students to know what we are saying to them. That is so important for us. My (often mistaken) belief is that my students in front of me are very much involved in what I am trying to teach.

However, the reality is something different. For example, a student was sitting in front of me and looking at me in a most concentrated way. I asked at the end of the lesson, "Now what did you get out of my maths lesson today?" and she said, "Nothing". "So what was interesting in this lesson?" and she said, "Your socks are not matching the colour of your trousers and I think you should change your haircut!" She had a feeling about Waldorf teachers, that they are not dressed properly! She continued to enlighten me: "You know, you told us to be interested, develop interest in things, so I do it in your maths lessons because, although I'm not interested in maths, I do something else. For example, I'm looking at your clothes and I'm very interested in your clothes." So she was very engaged in my lessons



but not in maths. After that encounter, I had to change my lessons to make it more interesting. I used more colour in the diagrams plus in my dress so that she might become more interested in maths as well!

To the question of this separation of soul forces, I think we have to deal in ourselves with this question. How do we bring them together? How can we develop a clear thinking strength of will and have balanced feelings between thinking and willing? Feelings, lying in between will and thought are influenced by both.

Example: Chemistry Lesson on Alcohol

I would like to give you example of a chemistry lesson, where, as a math teacher, I was suddenly asked to relieve the Chemistry teacher in our school. I had to teach about alcohol. Class 9 (15 year olds) are very interested in this theme and students of this age battle with the effects of alcohol over the weekends (many students in Switzerland have to go to hospital because they are drinking so much—used currently more than Marijuana).

I began the lesson by taking a small sample of alcohol, a very strong alcohol, and said to a student who had never drunken any, “You don’t have to drink it, just take it in your mouth and spit it out afterwards”. She did this, and what happened? Her first reaction was “Yuk!!” There was no thinking—that interjection just came out, a weird noise like you make when you jump into cold water. Interjections are first—they pop out without thinking. So that’s the beginning.

When you cool down a little bit, you can say the first sensible word, maybe, “It burns!” or “It burns terribly!” So we have this wonderful word that separates us from the world: ‘it’ (in German: ‘es’ which is just a great word).

So the sequence so far: “Yuk!!”, then “It burns!”, and then, “The alcohol burns.”

Maybe you could leave it at that, you wouldn’t go further. But with older students you can come to a chemical formula: C_2H_6O , plus pollution at $14^{\circ}C$.

If you read the formula do you still feel the interjection “Yuk!”? No, it’s dead. So you experience something but have to kill the experience to gain knowledge. Now you know everything about it. It’s just perfect. It’s a chemical structure. You recognise the pollution which is in the alcohol, but it is there is no

experience left. You killed the new experience but you know everything. As a student you must go to the death point, you must go down and kill everything to have your knowledge.

What I want to emphasise in Waldorf teaching is that it is important where we start. We start with the experience—the “Yuk!” and end up with the dead chemical formula. However, if you start at the chemical formula, then you have killed everything to start with and you won’t get to the human experience so easily.

As a further approach to alcohol you can start with starch—something you need as food. That’s important. But there is a transformation. In a chemical transformation, starch changes into sugar. As you know, sugar is not just food, it’s something for your pleasure, something to enjoy. Pure sugar is something you don’t need actually in this world. You have sugar in your food but if you use it as a pure substance (chocolate), it is something for pleasure.

So we have food and then we have pleasure.

Thinking of alcohol, what does it do? It is a substance which brings you a little bit out of yourself. But if you go on the next step from alcohol—to the ethers, then you have something which is anaesthetic which brings you completely out of yourself. Alcohol is not an anaesthetic but it still has such a tendency. So if you go this journey with your students, you can transform all this long process. It has something in it which has very much to do with students themselves. It is something which belongs to everyday life and of course this part is very interesting to the teenagers. To do all the experiments which you need takes a whole week to develop this and you get this feeling of the transformation: from food to anaesthetics.

This transformation is the principle of teaching. It is a very good principle of teaching.

You have to know your subject perfectly—you study it and out of your joy you can do this. You can take in everything and it becomes alive—you connect your subject of the whole world. The subject becomes bigger and bigger and bigger, and then I have the problem that there is no more time that night. It is so interesting.

Now step two: You have connected with the world but the most important part in teaching is to connect to the human being. What is the connection of your subject to teaching? - to

yourself? - to the children? It's not just something which is separated from them—it is something that has to do with their own life. The subject connects to their own life because it has to do with pleasure; it has to do with the special situation of anaesthetics.

What is alcohol doing to you if you take it to this extreme and it acts as an anaesthetic and you lose your consciousness? A lot of questions arise in the class discussion. You are connected very much into this process and if you do this then you lift up your teaching and to bring it into a connection with the human being. It's not just knowledge and I think that's one of the central keys to teaching. How do you connect your knowledge, the thing you teach to the whole human being, so it answers the students' inner question, "What has it to do with me?"

A meditation to assist with managing time

We, as teachers are time artists—how can we bring this subject into the right time management? Each student has his/her own time and you have your time and you have a school time table!

Some students are starting to sleep and other ones are very excited—how can we bring this all into balance? That's our job – to balance all this in time.

So what do you do in meeting your students and how do you manage this time?

It is the teacher's own behaviour, soul forces and presence of mind that are important.

I cannot be free unless I am present.

The 'ship's wake' you leave is the resonance of the path of your lessons.

How can the teachers really be present and have presence of mind?

I end with a suggested meditation for teachers:

- Ten minutes after you wake up in the morning, try and remember the last thought you had before going to sleep. Do this each day for several days.
- What happens is that gradually you get a different feeling for time—the time between the wakefulness and consciousness.
- The experience lightens up what happens in the night time.
- Knowledge is not teaching.
- Pure knowledge deadens the students.
- Our task is to transform knowledge with heart forces.
- Ask yourselves who your best teacher was and who was it who worked out of their heart?♦

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Brian Keats hails from Mullumbimby NSW Australia and has been compiling and publishing the **Astro Calendars** (Biodynamic planting and naked eye astronomy guides) annually since 1987. He is author of the annual **Moon Planting Primer, Betwixt Heaven and Earth** and co-author of **Biodynamic Growing Guide**. Brian has lectured and conducted workshops around Australia, USA, Canada, UK, Switzerland and Japan. He is practiced in biodynamic farming and was a founding member of the Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Association of Australia.

Brian's websites are: astro-calendar.com and northernstarcalendar.com



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A bi-annual newsletter published by the Anthroposophical Society in Hawaii

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