



From Un-bornness to “I”-Consciousness¹

The Three Great Steps of Incarnation

Michaela Glöckler

Three steps are needed for “I”-consciousness awareness to find its place in the physical body. How does this happen? We constantly experience “I”-awareness as a point [a large dot as “point” was drawn on the blackboard]; and if we don’t succeed in focusing, concentrating so that we become totally present with ourselves, we are not really there. We have to “be there” to look at the complexity of this world and make it clear to ourselves, the world of thoughts, feelings, of our striving, of what we want to do and are not able to do because of something in our way. There is all this richness, this wealth. On the other hand there are the complex conditions of our life—one billion people are starving; they live with the minimum. Someone else has too much to eat, and those in between ask what planet we are on here where this can be tolerated. Rudolf Steiner said calmly that the social question is a pedagogical question. And the pedagogical question is a medical question. If you don’t know what is healthy and what is sick, how can you recognize the healthful aims of education?

In another statement, Rudolf Steiner said that in the future, people will not ask what is true or false but about what is healthy or sick. What is healthy? What is unhealthy? Physicians can define that well. Healthy is being master of possibilities. Sick is not being master and being unable to unfold one’s possibilities. Health is being able to serve. Sickness is being limited, restricted from serving. And that is a question of education. How do we have to incarnate so that we become instruments

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for ourselves and for others too, so that we humanize and do not dehumanize? When we can do this, we will be able to solve the social question. We can also advance possibilities for others. This is the possibility surrounding a young child. The young child is obviously in need of support, and the whole surroundings become centered on the child and on his need for development. We want to please the little child and make him happy. Sometimes we do this with sweets, but it is better to do it through a smile.

But we need a concept of what is healthy self-awareness, self-consciousness. Everything around me, the world in which I am, finds itself within me and finds a point in me from which I can relate to the outer world without losing myself. With all this wealth of feelings and thoughts, it is amazing that we do not lose ourselves. All this is the gift of the physical

body. In the physical body self-awareness awakens; the whole world of wisdom finds itself. I have my balance point, my center of gravity. And it is on that balance point that my spiritual center of gravity forms, so that I can sense myself in one point.

Then around this point there is my destiny [a large circle was drawn with the point as its center].

Rudolf Steiner stated in his lectures on occult investigations into the life between death and rebirth² that an incarnating soul knows that, for the next earth life, he needs a certain kind of education. The soul needs a certain kind of knowledge that he can absorb early on. But often this education is needed at a time of childhood when we do not have the parents

who would offer us a happy life. And if we go to parents who might not give us a happy life, when we would prefer different parents, then this education which we may not be able to reach becomes the most important thing. One cannot imagine all the different situations that incarnating souls experience in spiritual life.

One finds souls who, before birth, had the most terrible struggles in themselves because they saw that they might be abused in youth by a horrible set of parents. We see many souls who go through terrible struggles in the spiritual world as they prepare for their births. This is not only an inner struggle but is also projected to the outside and one has the struggles outside oneself as well. The souls go to their next incarnation feeling a deep split within. Rudolf Steiner described a situation of looking ahead to preview the coming incarnation. We know that the soul prepares for a particular generation, country, language, parents, and so on. But now, because of interference with birth (through abortion), hundreds of thousands of girls, especially, are murdered. These souls then have to reorient themselves, to decide if they want to come. Souls are constantly rejected and sent back.

Then there is the additional struggle to decide between a happy family life and educational constellation or a horrible one. Therefore one of the messages of this lecture is to encourage the founding of new kindergartens. New care centers must be founded in our towns so that the right education will be available to these children who will not get to come in to the proper situation in their families. I once encountered a beautiful founding of a Waldorf school: parents put an ad in the local paper saying that they wanted to found a Waldorf school in their community. “Come to the pub.” Thirty people came and then ten founded the school. The more places there are for a good

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education, the easier it will be for the unborn souls to find the right incarnating possibilities for themselves.

[Returning to the chalk drawing] This circle is our destiny. It has a wide aspect as well. We are constantly in conversation with our destiny, which is our partner, the sphere with which we have to converse.

Destiny is the horizon with which we are always in dialogue. The more we have this dialogue about its meaning, about the positive side of what we can learn from it, especially in very difficult destiny situations, the better it will be for our “I”-consciousness. There is a wonderful statement from medieval mysticism—“I do not know who I am, I do not know what I know.” I am a strange thing, a dot and a circle. I unfold a healthy “I”-awareness only when I am point and circle, becoming aware of myself in my body and developing the ability to have this conversation with my destiny, the developmental chance I have when

I bring point and circle so together that attention is brought together for the unfolding of my biography.

There are three great steps into incarnation. The third step does not have to do with our dialogue partner of destiny. It has to do with our true essence, our true persona, the being that resounds through the body and through the soul—how we feel, think, and act. Always something radiates through of the essence of a person, the radiation of persona. What radiates through is love. Our destiny is tied to the astral body, ether body, and physical body. Everything is inscribed into them, depending on what we have done that is good or difficult. All these consequences are drawn onto the paper or sand of these bodies. Our “I,” however, did not experience the fall from paradise, and remains innocent, pure. It is pure love, pure light, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Our “I” holds within it the goddesses

we are seeing each morning of this conference in eurythmy.³ If we look at the male virtues of vigor and courage and add these as well, there are expressions of “I” that are neither male nor female. The “I” can bring different properties to expression through a male body than through a female one, which also depends upon what the world around us allows us to do, what is possible for our gender, as for example in China or Peru. If there are no partners to share our destiny with, we reserve our possibilities for another incarnation.

Radiating and holding back are the two sides. The body is a carrier of the “I”-consciousness and it is a carrier of developmental possibilities. Both are there.

There are two beings, Lucifer and Ahriman, who do not like these components at all. Lucifer does not want us to have awareness of the world around us. He wants us to enjoy ourselves, mirror ourselves, and develop aberrations from healthy self-awareness that go toward egoism. Like Lilith, we are not so nice as women if Lucifer tempts us. Men do this too, in their own way. This is where Luciferic temptation comes in. Lucifer is a microcosm interested in small things. Lucifer is happy with vanity. Life has to be fun and joyful, where we can take pride in ourselves and show off. One time when Rudolf Steiner came onto the school playground in Stuttgart, he said there were two ladies sitting in front of the school who should not be allowed in. A teacher who went to look saw no one. But Rudolf Steiner explained that the two he saw sitting there were vanity and the craving for power.

Ahriman, on the other hand, has a deep hatred and lack of understanding for destiny. People are only numbers to him; everyone is interchangeable. Schiller described this through the Inquisitor in *Don Carlos*—people are just numbers. Rudolf Steiner told physicians that Ahriman wants to kill karma. We cannot use a more accurate concept; we must listen to it and ponder on it. Ahriman wants to kill destiny because it makes development possible. Grand Ahrimanic powers focus on the earth, on

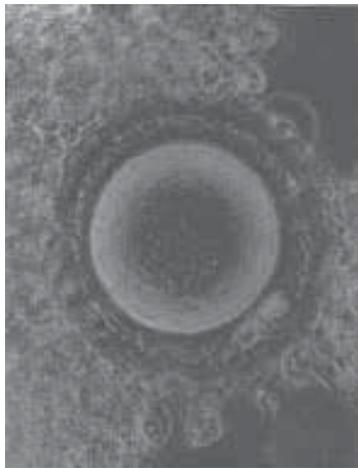
the solid, the rational, the mathematical. Of course we cannot live without these; all this is his work. But Ahriman wants us to use these powers to dominate and control others. Lucifer and Ahriman cannot understand development, which is a Christian, human, humane motif.

Therefore the third aspect of incarnation is that the persona is always in dialogue with these two powers. Ahriman works with hatred and envy. Lucifer works with enjoyment, pleasure, and vanity. If we keep this in mind, we can understand what is essential. The true persona, the human principle, works with love, dignity, and freedom. If I am not constantly in danger of doing something wrong, I cannot find out for myself what is right. We learn from mistakes, and doing so is always a victory over Lucifer and Ahriman. There is nothing more Christian than making mistakes. If we feel stupid because we have made a mistake and resolve to do better, then feelings of inner strength come. We practice and practice and overcome Ahriman when we devote our time to improving ourselves and do not try to dominate others. Then what arises is an atmosphere around children where they experience that the world is good.

I was so pleased last night when Louise deForest spoke of kindergartens that are too perfect. But there are also “oh dear!” kindergartens where the educators do not understand the requirements of sensory development. It is important that we know why we do what we do, why the walls are a certain color, for example. When each experience that greets the children is consciously chosen, we can feel joy each morning that what surrounds us is good for the children. We radiate our joy in knowing what is good. We must add to the outer experience an understanding of what it stands for, with a commitment to thoroughly know what we are doing. We combine light, air, color, form, and enough space to be flexible. We also allow moments of intentional chaos, so that we can all find our way back to form. Then the children will be able to feel the process toward development.

Taking hold of the body, looking toward destiny from pre-earthly life, and developing “I”-awareness are all things that we need to do. Taking hold of the body is the first step of incarnating. The second step addresses our karmic surroundings. As much as we can, we have to form the child’s environment so that he feels addressed, accepted, and taken into a world where people communicate with one another.

Then with the third step of incarnation can come the flash of “I am.” Here comes the first shining experience of “I am.” I have a body; I have a destiny. But I am not just these. I am more. I am a being. The more my body becomes an instrument of my development,



A human egg cell (Image from Gertrude Lux Flanagan, *The First Nine Months of Life*)

and my destiny the arena of my development, the better my “I” can find itself.

In the human ovum we see a point surrounded by a circle. The image of the ovum looks as though it has a subtly glowing corolla around the circumference.

The image of a solar eclipse looks very similar. Here we have the microcosm and the macrocosm. Only the sizes are different. But the movements of the stars up in the heavens are the same rhythms, the same movements active in the physical evolution of the body. [To further illustrate this reflection of the macrocosm/microcosm, the image of a developing sun out in some galaxy, with its swirling, spiraling shape, was shown alongside that of the developing tissue fibers of the heart.] The developing heart organ is similar because the fibers move in the same kind of vortex pattern as the developing sun. This cosmic swirling pattern is also shown in human fingerprints. We see these motifs again in the development of children’s drawings. [The spiraling condenses to a point that becomes enclosed by a circle.]

After fertilization, there is the tiny hovering of a point forming within the liquid of the amnion, surrounded by the circle of the trophoblast. The play between the inner and the outer continues with the development of the ear and eye. The ear is a wonderful spiral that goes entirely inside; when we hear we internalize. The eye goes out and becomes global. Rudolf Steiner observed these similarities and polarities.

There is dramatic play of forces from week to week that creates the organ systems in such a way that they work well together. The



A developing sun



Two stages of hand development in utero (*The First Nine Months of Life*)

organs develop first. Only then do the limbs begin to take shape. The limbs are inserted into the physical body from the outside. The head evolves from the center. The “destiny” person, the person of action, comes from the periphery. [The forming of the limbs from the periphery was demonstrated by a series of photos that show just the little buds that will develop into hands and feet. By gradual steps indentations appear in the buds which begin to differentiate into fingers and toes. The shape of the fingers and toes appears to be impressed upon the hands and feet from the outside.]

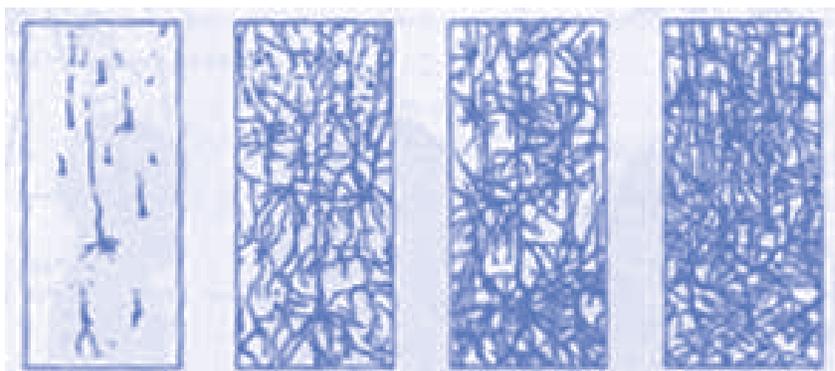
Then the child is born and enters independently into the physical world. The child is freed from the mother’s narrow body. This first liberation opens the doorway to more freedom. Every learning process is a bit of liberation. Learning something new gives us more freedom for the future because we have learned something new to use. Aborigines say that initiation is always when we learn something new. In the Shinto tradition, a new initiation occurs every two-and-two-thirds years, just as Rudolf Steiner saw. [Something unique to human beings was demonstrated in a slide showing the arrangement of human teeth.] The child and adult have the same size and shape of gum and positioning for the first ten teeth. This does not change with the loss and replacement of the baby teeth. This allows the human being to speak. In animals, it is

not the same. The teeth and the jaw change with growth. [A slide showed how a baby chimpanzee’s face and jaw are similar in profile to a human child. But as the chimp matures, the jaw becomes much more prominent and thrusts forward.]

The more specialized something becomes, the less it is free. There is less freedom for the being to meet the world with. Animals grow apart from the human being and specialize themselves. With our arms we cannot fly like birds, but we can do so many other things. Waldorf education wants to educate toward freedom. That means that, as much as possible in early childhood, the first years of school should be without specialization. Then the human instrument has more possibilities. Then there is no one-sidedness and the more human and less animal-like we will be.

When we speak, the glottis is closed. When we breathe, it opens. We stop breathing when we speak. Parallel to this is brain development. It is a stormy activity. Everything we bring to the child from the outside stimulates development. [A slide illustrated this stormy picture of development. Pictures of nerve fibers in the brain were shown from the newborn through the ages of 3, 15, and 24 months.] The brain becomes increasingly complex and chaotic-looking in this pattern of complexity.

What is happening within the brain is caused by the experience of outside stimuli meeting the child. This is all unconscious preparation for the persona. This physical instrument will be the physical home of the “I” that can meet others. [This thought ended with a photo of a little child walking along behind two adults. The child is walking with head bowed and hands clasped behind his back in exact imitation of the two men.]



Microscopic sections of the human cerebrum showing synapses between brain cells (From M. Glöckler, S. Langhammer, C. Wiechert: *Education – Health for Life*)

We carry the laws of the cosmos within us, which direct how we form ourselves. But there is also an aspect of our higher being that is always in communication with the hierarchies. This can express itself in different ways. How can we meet our different children in their different developments of self-awareness? If we take seriously these three steps, we can become masters of the physical body, of physical development. But we can also be experts of destiny. For ten to fifteen minutes in each faculty meeting we should read lectures on reincarnation and karma and lectures about life between death and new birth.

Why? This is the world where the “I” decides to come back to the earth. This is the world where beings communicate with other beings, where our “I” is connected with the dead, with the elemental beings, with the angelic hierarchies, the divinity, the trinity that forms our body in its image, differentiating it into three parts. We are images of the divine essence. If we study lectures on destiny we understand that whatever we do in one life to improve radiates in our next life in a more

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healthy body and a more harmonious destiny. Then we can become citizens of two worlds. With the children we can give them a helm in spirit, soul, and body. We all keep Natasha [mentioned by Louise deForest in her opening lecture as the child she has learned most from because she feels that she failed her] in our minds as the potential for our learning.

Endnotes:

1. This article is from a lecture delivered at the World Kindergarten Conference 2012 in Dornach, Switzerland. Originally published in *The Journey of the “I” Into Life: A Final Destination or a Path Towards Freedom?* Nancy Blanning, ed., Spring Valley, NY: WECAN Publishing, 2012, with permission.
2. Rudolf Steiner, *Life Between Death and Rebirth* (selections from GA 140).
3. A eurythmy performance representing a series of goddesses going from Isis (Egyptian), Layla (Iranian/Sufi), Lakshmi (Indian), Kore (Greek), Lilith (Hebrew), Banshee (Celtic), to Sophia (Russian).

Michaela Glöckler lives in Dornach, Switzerland, where she is the leader of the Medical Section at the Goetheanum. A former pediatrician and school doctor, she is actively involved with the Waldorf school movement worldwide as a lecturer and is the author of many books on child development.