

Waldorf Journal Project #4

June 2005

AWSNA

Foundations for a Healthy Life

Compiled and edited by

David Mitchell

We must recognize that in an illness in the human organism during the later stages of life . . . points back to earliest childhood (even) to the time before birth. It points back to the soul-spiritual existence of the human being before it was clothed with a physical body.

— Rudolf Steiner
Physiology and Therapeutics,



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Foreword

The Waldorf Journal Project, sponsored by the Waldorf Curriculum Fund, brings to English-speaking audiences translations from essays, magazines, and specialized studies from around the world.

This fourth edition of translations is comprised of articles intended for personal, faculty, and parent study. The articles deal primarily with healthy childhood. Some articles deal with difficulties prominent at this time, such as overstimulation, the overconsumption of sugar, and over exposure to sunlight. Antidotes are offered. There are two articles for parents and teachers on contemplative and lively thinking. The article about evolution and Goethe arcs like a rainbow above the rest, and an amazing play about Osiris and Isis concludes the series.

All the articles are available on-line at

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The editor is interested in receiving your comments on the articles selected. We would also be interested in hearing what areas you would like to see represented in future Journal Projects. If you know of specific articles that you would like to see translated, please contact me.

— David Mitchell, editor
Waldorf Journal Projects

Play and Toys In the Life of Toddlers

by

Elke Blattmann

Translated by Nina Kuettel

How do toddlers play today? Instead of an answer one increasingly hears mothers say, “My child can not play. Either she runs around wildly or sits there bored. If I do not give her something to do, she can not think of anything herself.”

The ability of children to play seems to be disappearing rapidly. In order to stimulate their children, concerned parents often buy them one toy after another. But the situation just becomes worse. The child sits surrounded by an overabundance of toys and still does not know what to do.

What does the small child, born into this world, want? He/she wants to experience the world and learn to live. The little child is a sensory organ. Every perception takes hold of his/her entire body. Watch her as she drinks milk from her mother’s breast, it is as if her little hands and feet also taste the milk. A three-year-old can not help but hammer along when he hears someone else hammering! The entire body enjoys the glorious noise. A five-year-old will stand before animated figures in their exact same positions. He will sit next to the “singing figure” with hands folded on his knees and his back straight and, along with the “dancing figure,” he will lift his feet and jump and dance throughout the room.

The impressions come, uncontrolled and unfiltered; the small child receives them throughout his or her whole body and the body responds with movement. The body plays along and imitates. The child can do nothing else but imitate and repeat what comes toward him as sensory influences. The child is practicing life. This is the activity that we refer to when we speak of the “play” of a small child. Play is as natural to a child as swimming is to a fish.

What happens when a fish is put into a small container? It will either swim around wildly or become apathetically quiet. Are not our children in a very similar situation?

The toddler’s environment today

Children of our time are everywhere confronted with limitations. Very early on they experience what they may not do. “Do not touch the buttons

on the washing machine! Stay away from the electrical outlets or you will get a shock! Do not run into the street; cars are coming!” Adults are always doing something that the little ones may not.

“Do not play in the mud; you will get dirty! Do not run on the grass; the sign says ‘Keep Off!’ Oh, leave that dead earthworm alone; it is disgusting!” How can children gain a relationship to their environment this way? How can they get to know the plants and animals?

Water makes the children wet. Dirt makes their clothes dirty. Fire is dangerous and not for children. Cold drafts in the air will make them sick. There are signs forbidding things everywhere one looks.

And what do the adults do? Mother turns the knobs and small containers start bumping and making noise. She opens cans or cuts up vegetables (purchased already clean) into the kettle. And Father? What can the child experience and imitate from him when he is away from home most of the time? It is usually a very boring world that is surrounding the child. Where shall the child go with his need for imitation; where can he find nourishment for imaginative play?

On top of that, if the playroom is full of plastic toys (the doll feels like the car, the building block, or the sand shovel, sterile and monotone) and when Walt Disney cartoon characters or monsters are leering from the walls, then the child is living in a world of deception, disappointment and fear.

Are we parents and grandparents conscious enough of how unbelievably much the world has changed since our own childhoods, of how much the opportunities for natural experience, that we took for granted, have since disappeared? We saw horses in the city streets. We brought water from the well. We swam without danger in the Elbe and the Rhine Rivers and saw fish swimming there. We felt the warmth of a flickering fire in a coal stove. We ate salad and potatoes that we saw harvested.

Today a child must ask, “Where does our water come from?” The child knows nothing more than that a faucet is turned on and off. Yes, where does it come from? A girl declines to drink her milk because she once saw how a cow was milked. And many children think that vegetables grow on the supermarket shelves.

Today, the natural world is penetrated and covered by a non-transparent synthetic world. The child gets used to this. A city child can hardly experience the forces and elements which maintain and enliven us and the Earth. Finished products are available everywhere. We get the products already cleanly packaged in plastic regardless of whether they are carrots or nails. It is seldom possible to follow the production process. For adults, life has become more practical, hygienic, and comfortable. For children it has become unproductive and detached from experience.

Is it any wonder that children do not want to play? Where can their senses still be met with genuineness and versatility? They have plastic and

synthetic fabrics in clothing next to their skin. Car exhaust and chemical fumes cover up the many natural fragrances. Chemical fertilizers cause fruits and vegetables to lose their original flavors. Traffic noise drowns out the variety of sounds of life and of quiet. And what does the sense of sight give them? When a small child looks for the little man behind the television set, that shows us how seriously he takes the world, but he gets used to the fact that there is nothing to be found behind the television.

It is common knowledge that unused muscles become weak. But are these appropriate questions ever asked: “Can senses develop to be lively and alert when they are never used and never find a variety of activities? And how can imagination, that mysterious creative force that a child brings with him in abundance, live when he does not get any real nourishment and stimulation through the senses but only caricatures of the world!”

Playrooms and toys

If one desires to help children play today, one must help create an appropriate environment. The old, natural surroundings can not be reproduced, but even in the most desolate city one can create a lot of beautiful things with a little imagination and enthusiasm.

The child should be covered in silk, wool, cotton, and linen in plain colors. How differently each of these fibers feels on the body! Very young children will, with true aim, grab for the silk scarves. There is no substitute. A canopy above the cradle completes this picture of happiness.

However, the child can only enjoy this pleasure when he is not forced to lie on his stomach from the first hours of birth. I have sympathy for the poor little bundles who, with the greatest effort and at the most tender age, try to lift their little heads up to see out of the crib or the stroller only to be met with furniture, people’s legs, the black asphalt, or speeding cars! What a perspective! The child who is relaxed and laying on his back gets an entirely different picture of the world. He can look up at the sky, follow the rustling leaves on the trees, and see the faces of people. Besides, the stomach position robs the child of his first toys; namely, his own hands and feet. A child is long satisfied to play with his own fingers! The next play things are then simple wooden mobiles that can be hung over a crib. They can be touched and emit tender sounds. The poor baby on his stomach must leave all that behind. As long as the baby is happy with the things in his immediate vicinity, he should be protected from the larger environment. Later, pretty, simple curtains around the bars on the crib give this protection.

This canopy, this “sky,” this covering, this little house should not disappear from the child’s room. Single-colored, straight pieces of cloth are enough, draped over a simple stand or stretched between furniture and bed, to create a play tent in no time. If they are hung differently, then the store is open. Or, the children wrap themselves in the cloth to step into other forms and roles.

Then the dolls are wrapped up or the cloths themselves become dolls. They are an inexhaustible toy.



Plain colors on the walls radiate tranquility and security. Repetitious figures or little flowers on the wallpaper have a disquieting effect and paralyze the imagination. Good art prints from the Old Masters or paintings done by parents can enliven the walls. True art has an immediate effect upon children, as does the enthusiasm invested in pictures painted by parents.

What a variety of experiences can be had with stable, massive wooden furniture! The pride a child feels when he can carry a heavy stool or push a table by himself! Their little hands love to glide over the wooden surfaces along the wood grain. (Sharp edges and corners that are so beloved by modern furniture makers are very disturbing in a child's room.) Then the little furniture movers come again and turn the furniture upside down to facilitate further adventures. Children should not be spared from experiencing the weight of objects. They must learn how the things of the Earth have different weights. How disappointing it must be if a child wants to lift a huge toy boat by exerting all of his strength only to discover that, made of plastic, it is so light that it practically flies into the air! It looks so heavy.

Just as with the weight of objects, children must likewise experience how some objects are more breakable than others. Why should one treat plastic dishes with care! But if a ceramic plate from the doll's kitchen gets broken, then little hands are much more careful from then on.

Plain wool rugs on the floor or the walls bring the right level of comfort to a child's room. How proud is the child if he sees the rug being woven on his/her mother's loom!

Which toys belong in this room?

First rule: Few, few! Toys usually have the fatal quality of rapidly reproducing. What treasures (not to mention plunder) again and again find their way into our homes as gifts! Parents must tactfully go about reducing the quantity of toys without insulting the gift-givers. It is helpful to have a large container into which some things can disappear for awhile and then suddenly reappear for special occasions.

A large basket with building materials should always be within reach: sawed-up branches made into blocks, pieces of tree bark, roots, and many irregular pieces that begin as waste in a carpenter's shop. The cleverest things can be built from these materials. Such a crooked and off-balance structure is not easy to keep together. It requires many tries and much balancing. Equilibrium is practiced here, and this is the beginning for many future engineers. In contrast, what a poor experience is offered by Lego's building blocks. One smooth, straight little block is snapped onto the next one. And they always hold and never fall down. One does not need much more than the tips of the fingers to use them. With natural building materials the entire hand must be used. Every piece feels different. The tree bark is rough and the roots are smooth. Pine cones and other tree fruits also belong here. One can build entire landscapes with them. Animals, flowers, and people made out of beeswax, produced for play in many colors (you can never have too much of this wonderful substance) can live in these landscapes. In warm hands the beeswax becomes soft and pliable, but as soon as it is formed then it hardens again very quickly. Please do not use 'play dough' which is always sticky and soils hands, clothes, and everything in the area.

Another item one should have on hand is good quality bees wax crayons, especially the block crayons that bring bright, strong colors to the paper and are not easily broken. The children quickly get used to making large, strongly-colored drawings.

One should not be worried about the choice of colors. Do not, for instance, choose only pastel colors or only the three basic colors. One can observe over and over again how the little ones enthusiastically reach for green. They will learn much later that green is a mixture of blue and yellow. And please do not leave out black! An emotional problem and difficulty can be put to paper using the black crayon and then the child can rid herself of the problem.

The drawings of their small children open up an interesting field of study for the parents. When left on their own the little ones know what they want to draw. With much enthusiasm they draw large spirals, circles, bars, ladders, the sun, and then, at some point, a head with legs. They will often give

explanations for their drawings, interestingly never copies of outer things. It is worthwhile to save all of these artworks and label them with names and dates. We have learned that children go through certain phases with their drawing and painting, and these are the same throughout the world regardless of race. It is very interesting to follow their stages of development. Just do not disturb the child when she is drawing or painting, nor have her color in patterns. Of course, this will change for school-age children.

Rhythmic toys

Already before birth the child experiences rhythmic movement from the mother's movements: breathing, walking, and so forth. After birth, this is continued by the up and down motion of a cradle. The little ones are endlessly happy with this motion just as they are with rhymes and songs. Soon the child is big enough to climb on the rocking horse and finally she can fly through the air on a swing set.

Some toys create rhythmic sounds, a little wooden figure that climbs a ladder or picking hens, for example. Children never tire of playing with these kinds of toys, and quite a lot of worry can disappear with the little climbing figure or through the joyful noises these toys make. Another new experience: The world around us makes sounds. Everything has its own tone. Even every kind of wood sounds differently and how much more different is brass, iron, and porcelain. Tone is something that must be available for children to consciously experience in our noise-filled era. Plastic is completely disappointing. It responds with a dull tone or no tone at all.

With all the toys that are given to children, the question should be asked: What does the child experience with each toy? Which senses are stimulated and in what way? Does it leave enough room for imagination? Certainly the best toys in the world are those that parents make themselves. That is also probably the best antidote for the childhood disease known as "buy me something!" which worsens with every toy purchased.

Dolls

Is it even possible today to buy a doll in a store that one would really want to give to a child? Even if the doll has a lovely facial expression, plastic is a highly unsuitable, soulless material to use to make something that should be loved by a child. When the dolls can move their mouths to laugh and cry "true to nature" or can stare at the child with cartoon-like features, then the dolls become fearful indeed. What a devastating effect must these grotesquely, moribund creations have on the malleable soul and the perception of form of a child!

I had a very enlightening experience with two brothers. The two-year-old was lovingly rocking a rolled-up piece of cloth in his arms: "Look, Mama, a weird old woman." The five-year-old saw it and also wanted such a doll.

Their mother took a green cloth, tied off a round head, two arms, and two legs. She needed a face. So she took a crayon and drew eyes and a mouth. The boy happily went off with his “hunter woman.” When the little one saw what had happened he “also wanted one.” He gave his cloth to his mother and she made a similar one and gave it back. But the boy threw it down, disappointed. It was no longer his “weird old woman.” The doll had become too finished. His imagination was frustrated.

Of course, the boy was only two years old. Later on, the child will want to be able to dress and undress the doll. It should always be warm and cushy but solid enough to stand and sit, with spare features so that the child’s imagination can turn the doll into the unique being that the child needs, boys as well as girls.

Children want to be co-workers

In spite of having the most beautiful room to play in, it happens over and over that the children will not want to play there continuously. They hang on Mother’s apron strings. This is completely normal for small children. Up to age three at least it is a good idea to have a play corner where the children can be close to their mother. There they will usually play happily without making any demands. A ball, a feather, a wiggly toy animal are enough to keep them occupied for a long time. Do not disturb them! Do not provide



something for them to do. If children get used to that, they will always look to the adult to keep them busy and they will be prevented from their own play. Mother can peacefully go about her daily work. If she sings while she is working or says little verses aloud, the little ears will certainly be attentive.

What about older children? Sometimes they would rather “work” alongside their mother than play by themselves. Then it is good when they can experience such work where they can help. How diligently they stir the contents of pots and bowls! What pride when they cook a vegetable or bake a cake by themselves. Sponges and brooms and are used with enthusiasm, but only if Mother is also using them. Again, one needs to pay attention that the children get enough and varied experiences. Sometimes the vacuum cleaner can be left in the closet and replaced with a broom. A coffee mill that is cranked by hand is much more interesting than an electric machine. And every child should be able to see and smell bread baking. Of course, the most genuine experience comes when they have seen and heard the flour being ground first.

Washing day can be a festive occasion! A child must know what washing machines do for us. A six-year-old girl looked on in amazement as the clothes are being rinsed: “Why are the clothes made wet over and over?” “We put the clothes in the washing machine, and when they come out we hang them up to dry.”

Machines are a great help to us but we must not fail to realize what children experience, or do not experience, with them. All work with the hands is appealing to children and it stimulates them to imitate.

Why are the boys are so crazy about the chimney sweep, the trash collector, and the construction worker? These are a few jobs at which a child (a five-year-old, for instance) can still experience something “for real.” Few such trades remain out of the many that have disappeared from our experience.

Our journey on the earth – what an adventure!

Children need examples for their play. The whole world, Heaven and Earth, can provide them.

Stars and Clouds

Already when they are very young, children recognize and love the stars. They hold up their little arms to the sun and even in the daytime the sky will joyfully greet the dim, white sliver of moon. An eighteen-month-old child will happily recognize the dim light of the stars on a winter’s evening, even through the bright, garish lights of the city. If a child wakes up in the night and is restless, often looking out of the window at the star-filled sky can work wonders, and the child will peacefully return to bed.

It is a big step when the connection between clouds and rain is discovered. A five-year-old spent weeks observing the clouds daily, making bold weather predictions and proclaiming them loudly all around. How this works in the child’s soul! And then, a thunderstorm! The parents are as enthusiastic as the child and express amazement at the powerful events taking place in the sky. Enthusiasm and joy on the part of parents are important bridges from the child to the world. Parents need to be aware of this.

Earth and Water

It is good to have many playgrounds in the children’s area. Sand is an indispensable material. Imagination can take flight. The children make pies and build towns and waterways, streets and gardens. But, often we see children sitting in the sand doing nothing. If we let these children play in black, damp earth with lots of earthworms, centipedes, and snails, they will soon perk up. If there is a water source nearby and some really good, slimy mud can be made, then their happiness knows no bounds. How their cheeks glow from enthusiasm! No child should be prevented from playing in water and mud. They stamp their little feet joyfully around in the water. They touch it, build

streams and dikes, and anything that can float is pressed into service as a boat. Why should this be forbidden to the children just because it makes them dirty or could cause them to get colds? There are rubber boots and waterproof clothing in that case. But what Mother finds it easy to let the little ones enjoy their “water addiction” in the kitchen? What should one do if no yard or garden is available? Children must be able to play in the water. Little girls are untiringly diligent when they are washing their doll clothes. Even a bath tub can be some kind of a substitute for floating boats.

Air

Pinwheels turn and feathers float, driven by our puffing breath. Leaves and seeds from the trees twirl around in the air. Paper airplanes glide peacefully and elegantly off the porch to the ground below. And if a strong wind comes up, then run outside to the big meadow where the little ones can feel how the once soft breeze can suddenly take their breath away and tear at their jackets. Outdoors the children experience natural laws with their whole bodies in such a way that we could never hope to teach them through schoolwork.

Such joy when Father lets a kite fly up in the air. And if the child is allowed to hold the string, then he is completely convinced of the liveliness and strength of his companion high up in the air because the kite is pulling so hard on his own little hand. But as long as the child holds on to the string the kite is also responsive to the child and copies all the little movements that the child makes on the ground in a big way in the sky. If the kite is “set free,” then it tumbles to the ground. Mysterious physical laws are experienced in this way.

Fire

As with all earthly things, what goes up must come down. Fire is the only thing that strives up to the heights. Spark on spark, flame on flame, all are sent upward. Here “lightness” is an opposing force to heaviness. But children are often prevented from experiencing this. There are school-age children who have never seen an open flame, never struck a match. But if one only knows of the heaviness of Earth, then one knows only half. For this reason children must experience fire. What things will burn? What can extinguish fire? They must learn these things if they are not to grow up estranged from the world and life. Somewhere in the city, or its surroundings, there can surely be found opportunities for such experiments.

King and Princess

An insignificant occasion, hardly noticed by adults, is enough for the image of the king to spring forth from the child’s imagination. The child will put something on his or her proudly held head for a crown and say: “I

am a king!” The next time he may pretend to be a princess. There are images that the child immediately recognizes almost without any outside influence, as if they are simply remembering them. For example, the image of a wolf need not be explained. This is why children intensely like hearing the fairy tales. They awaken images that lie deep in the soul. Grimm’s fairy tales are an inexhaustible treasure. They nourish the imagination of the child and, at the same time, stimulate new ideas for play. This occurs even if one very carefully and slowly introduces the child to the fairy tales. The story of “The Sweet Porridge” can satisfy a three- or four-year-old for a long time. Beginning at an earlier age is not advisable. Before that age, simple stories out of the experience of the child, and rhymes and verses are enough.

One must have a sense for what fairy tale would work best at the time of telling. It can often serve as an answer to something that is troubling a child. For example, a small boy plagued by fear and afraid of the dark heard about the big, bad wolf from older children, and that became the personification of everything which frightened him. After he heard the story of “The Wolf and the Seven Goats,” his fear completely left him.



The first and second times one tells a fairy tale to a child one notices how he or she attentively follows the story. However, by the fifth or sixth telling something new appears: the plot is no longer the most interesting part of the story. The child takes in the word order like nourishment. Oh, woe, if a little word is missing or some other word is interjected! No changes are tolerated, the same as with sacred texts. Children may want to hear the same story for months. One sees that, for the child, repetition of the same experience increases its value. Fairy tales should be told, not read. The common experience shared by the storyteller and the child is very different when the story is brought forth from the inside than when it is read from a book. The book is like a wall coming between the storyteller and the listener. Freely telling the story will be the most fruitful experience for parent and child. However, one can not always thoughtlessly trust one’s own memories from childhood. It is amazing how differently the Grimm’s fairy tales are held in people’s memories. A little review and preparation time is necessary and very worthwhile.

Do not keep them busy – just be there

It often happens that children go to their mothers and say, “Mother, I don’t have anything to do!” Or, perhaps the children just sit around and

whine. One must have ideas for times such as these. Even so, do not give children something to do just to keep them busy. Children who otherwise play well usually react badly to busywork. Rather one can make suggestions or do something playful oneself, and the children will soon follow along. But what about those times when the laundry must be done and dinner must be started? Children can be very disruptive at these times. “Mother, you have to come and buy something from my store!” Shall we now put off the little disturber so we can get on with our work? If we try, the child will certainly not give up. “Mother, can you please make me a crown, a gold one?” At this moment, if one stops what one is doing and makes the crown, or whatever it happens to be, then the child is quickly immersed in play again, and the adult can continue the work that was started. The best idea is to react immediately to the children and be there for them in the moment, and then resume the adult task.

Weekdays and holidays

Periods of idleness every so often are to be expected and appreciated. For example, the weekdays have their own identifiable characteristics as to what certain things happen repeatedly (shopping day, laundry day, bath day, baking day, and so forth); And then comes Sunday or a holiday. Yes, the holidays! We should not let these valuable occasions slip by unnoticed. They break up the long year and allow us the opportunity to experience the uniqueness of every season in a living way. If one does not wish to take on old traditions, then new, still meaningful, ones can be discovered or invented and repeated year after year. If we live with a solid rhythm in our daily lives, and if we know how to celebrate holidays, then the children are upheld by the harmony of the whole and will find their way back to their play.

Preparation for life

The first seven years of life are a unique space of freedom for the human being. A person will never again go through his or her days so unfettered and free. The whole world is there for the small child and he or she opens wide the door of the senses in order to let it in. Never again will the person perceive so intensely or be able to live life so devotedly. The intellect and reason have not yet taken on their leading roles.

Children have a finely tuned sense of justice and freedom. They are very sensitive to orders and demands that require their subjugation. If one orders them to do something, they simply become deaf. If the same demand is turned into a game that we also enjoy, then the little ones will immediately and joyfully join in and help. Wherever we are at play that is where we are nearest to the child. If we live our lives with joy and enthusiasm, then the children will freely and gladly follow us. Let us make use of this great chance that the children offer to us! Let us learn how to play again! Many things will become fun, golden, and cheerful.

Often today, instead of having this attitude, adults try to break into this golden space of freedom in all places. The little ones are kept busy and directed. They must be 'prepared' for life, adult life, that is so earnest and important. There is an array of very cleverly designed games of intelligence which are supposed to program our children from the cradle onward. Are we blind to the fact that a separating filter is being put into place much too early?

Much is spoken about developmental phases which should not be overlooked. Truly, the first seven years constitute the not-to-be-repeated phase of experience and play. We should take this phase seriously and learn to play along. If so, we are giving the children the best preparation for life that they could have.

Child's Play and Its Significance for Healthy Development

by

Rudolf Kischnick

Translated by Nina Kuettel

Those who interact with children today have probably observed that their ability to play is disappearing. Children today can no longer play as children of earlier times did. Consequently, play as a primal phenomenon of child development is in danger of extinction. Either it mutates into some kind of wild, riotous acting-out or into apathy and a state of listlessness and passivity.

This phenomenon is an alarm bell going off that must be taken seriously because it causes a deep-seated, negative change in the constitution of the child. Children who can no longer play are sick in a certain sense. This may not have immediately apparent and clinically recognizable symptoms, but is rather a disposition that leads to mental weaknesses and physical ailments later in life.

The incapacity of today's youth to play out of an overabundance of life energy, to immerse themselves body and soul into some play activity and imaginatively live in that activity, to transform themselves through their imagination, has to do with the fact that the physical body of the child is emancipated too early from the soul-spiritual aspect. In normal development the body, soul, and spirit should remain as a unit until puberty. The body, as one of the heavy, underlying elements should not become free from this unit before puberty, but should rather resonate along with mental soul-spiritual experience. Until physical maturity is reached, the child must be able to completely penetrate his physical body with its soul capacities. And, he remains only a "child" insofar as it is able to accomplish this.

When we are not successful in supporting the childhood experience through insightful direction and strengthening the child's ability to experience so that mental stimuli can be perceived all the way into the physical body, then the child is weakened in the core of his being. When people grow up with a physical body that is poorly developed for mental-soul experience there is a worrisome increase in the numbers of people with neurotic illnesses, which phenomenon is especially noticeable in Western civilization. Whether people will have the ability, with increasing age, to cope with themselves and their destinies, or whether they will fall into dependency relationships

with their bodies, as is the case today with most adults in the Western world, essentially depends upon how much inner, soul-spiritual strength and flexibility they have. However, how one finds the way and activates this mental aspect so that it is available as a real force, an ability to overcome the difficulties of life, has not been sufficiently penetrated or seen in its deeper connections.

Enthusiasm as a life-enhancing force

One of the most important elements of building a strong personality core that can help human beings withstand the negative influences of life is enthusiasm. When a growing people are touched and moved in their hearts by that which meets them in the form of impressions, when they do and think with internal resonance, then their soul forces are exercised and strengthened. We know what it means for adults to be inspired by a great idea and to act on their driving forces. For those in the grip of genuine enthusiasm, it is as if all hindrances and weaknesses are blown away because they have been penetrated by a higher principle that overcomes the physical body and its limits.

It is of little use to tell older people, “You must become mentally more active and flexible!” Most often the mental and physical organization is already so hardened that spiritual opposition can no longer be overcome. If we want to create the opportunity for our children to remain open to the rejuvenating energy of ideas and not prematurely fall into the aging and hardening processes, then we must see to it that they have a strong capability for experience that reaches clear into the physical organization. We must show them how one is able to be immersed in experience. During their childhood that is not really very difficult since every normal child is actually longing for, with every fiber of his being, to experience what he feels and perceives, in the youthful sense, to be enthusiastic.

Play in the elementary school years

During the elementary school years not one day should go by without a certain experiential intensity being created in the child. The child will grow into a completely different youth if the parents and educators give the greatest attention to consciously strengthening the child’s soul. During this early time of life everything should be done to avoid any idleness of the soul. That is not always easy because adults generally no longer have an accurate conception of what is essential in children’s lives, more important than all the outer comforts.

Waldorf schools, as an example, try, through an artistic means of education, to impart a fullness of experience to the child which he needs for holistic development. Play activity takes on a significant role. In play lies the force, the will, of the child to harmonize. Every play activity involving

movement is carried by a strong will impulse. During the childhood years however, this should not yet be activated but rather work in the background as inspiring force, maintained and carried by rhythm and imagination. Both these forces belong together and should be especially protected as a unit because they form the only entrance into the child's soul. One is easily inclined to say that imagination today is something unreal and in our age of objectivity it has no place. The truth is somewhat different: Imagination is the most important source of creative energy for the personality.

Imagination is important

To understand this we must look at the human soul and try to picture that what we describe as soul forces reveals itself with a kind of graphic quality. There is a world of pictures within the soul of which the child is only unconsciously somewhat aware. When the child grows and changes from day to day, deep inside there is a process taking place that is outwardly recognizable, for example, through an observation that up to a certain age the child has a special relationship to the world of fairy tales and later to fables and adventure stories.

If we are successful in bringing the child closer, through imagery, to what he unconsciously feels in a similar way, then we can observe how the child quasi-awakens, how he blooms internally and is set in motion. There is a mystery hidden here that escapes every ostensible attempt at definition. If we simply overlook this world of imagery or disallow it, then we cannot hope to understand the child, just as we would understand so little about the lives of earlier peoples apart from their relationship to myth and story.

Certain images have an extraordinarily quickening and inspiring effect on a child. A true educator must realize this and keep it in mind, especially when he is encouraging children to play games involving physical activity. It is a mistake to believe that movement for movement's sake is the main activity in children's play. The most important aspect is that all play starts on the inside and grows from there. First, the child must be addressed, especially his need for transformation, before he is stimulated to any activity. The child wishes to imaginatively transform himself into the images that the teacher brings near to him.

This can happen during a movement game in a most wonderful way. We have the cook, the ferryman, the bear, the fox in its hole, crocodiles or vultures, a robber or princess, fisherman or king, giants and gnomes. There is an entire world into which the child can – and will and must! – become immersed. All of these images actually do live in the child as soul forces and when the child is given the possibility to transform into all of these beings, then he gains inner fullness. The children work out the characteristics of their own images and learn to interact with the forces that otherwise mill around unconsciously on the inside and are dammed up by the physical,

from there to escalate into unhealthy drives and appetites, as we experience today in countless cases.

Harmonizing the will

In real, imaginative play a catharsis takes place, a clarification of the will, so to speak. A child contends with the driving force of his will and thereby gains mastery over it. Let us take, for example, the game known as the robber and the princess. Around the age of ten there is a certain duality in the soul of the child that can find expression in these two images of the robber and the princess. The child's increased bonding to his physicality has the effect that at this age strong egoistic characteristics appear, the robber. But that is just one side of what is going on. Likewise there is, like an opposing image, something on the inside which can be seen as the pure image of the soul-self, the princess. This duality lives in the soul of every healthy child and during play the children change into one or the other of these images and back again, thereby learning about themselves. They become aware of the breadth of their own soul in such a way that it becomes a kind of moral debate. And that is the salient point.

Under no circumstances can technology or mechanical concepts stimulate the child in the same way. Airplanes, trains, cars, or even atoms should never appear within lively play. Such images bring about the creation of a certain kind of motor activity and actually prevent the children from immersing themselves into life processes so that they may grow into something living.

Modern upbringing in regard to play

In today's literature we find an expression that did not exist in earlier times: "play education," which means to teach children how to play again. The inability of children to know how to play was not known before now. Children simply played and when they had the opportunity that is exactly what they did. But times have changed. Play was a lively expression of an animated child; today it is a pedagogical method.

Today, we see in play an important opportunity to bring our children up to be real "human beings." What technology has taken away in terms of live-promoting forces, we must make available again. One of the most effective and important methods for bringing this about is imaginative play. Schiller says, "The human being plays only where he is a human being in the full sense of the word and he is only completely a human being where he plays." Today, this humanity is constantly in the greatest danger. Our times are both the enemy of play and the drive to play. As will and intellect have become the driving forces of today's civilization, between these two millstones, the human's feeling life is quasi rubbed out. The life that most children of today are given to lead offers too little stimulation to bring forth the power of the "feeling life" of the person that is anchored in the rhythmic

organization, the pulse and respiration. However during play, and through play one can accomplish that the child is reinforced, again and again, in its humanity.

Play as a balance between head and limbs

What comes to expression during play in such a wonderful way is the balance between above and below. The head, which mirrors the life of the imagination, affects strong tendencies to form, which also hold the danger of torpidity. From the lower region, that of the will, the tendency to chaos is a constant threat. The balance between these two principles is found in the respiratory-circulatory system, that is, in the rhythmic organization. The world of feelings is physiologically carried by these central processes in our organism. We can experience this in the increased heart rate caused by happiness and in the way our breathing is affected by the expression of happiness and sadness – laughing, crying, or sobbing, for example. Play that is lit up with strong, inner experiences gives a person the possibility of perceiving and becoming active in this middle part of his or her being, and the child is still much more strongly rooted, through his perceptions, in the spheres of life than are adults. For this reason the child immediately feels if an impression from the outside world is “agreeable” or not. Rudolf Steiner said that the child in his/her elementary school years must “savor” the world. But that means that the child must be brought to a life which can have a positive influence on her constitution. The child should not learn only in terms of intellect, but also be healthily stimulated by that which is taken in down into the very life processes. This can happen only if we do not influence the child in a one-sided manner, that is, neither too much intellect nor too much will. We must address the child’s middle region, its rhythmic being, as the bearer of life. This happens in every genuinely artistic presentation of material to be learned and also, in a singular way, through an appropriate approach to play. The knowledge of this connection helps us find our way to caring for and strengthening the child’s forces of mind and harmonizing her entire constitution.

Renewal does not just happen

Enlivening, strengthening, and maintaining this ‘feeling realm’ requires constant encouragement. In earlier times people still received strong, enlivening forces from their home environment as well as the unspoiled natural environment. Today, we have a different situation: a radical poverty in all areas of life. In many areas, especially that of play and the desire to play, renewal is no longer possible without direct intervention. The tendency of the times has such a paralyzing effect that genuine, imaginative play will become extinct if its primal elements are not recognized and encouraged. However, if they are recognized and encouraged, then it would mean an

invaluable gain for our youth. There is no better method of overcoming the increasing torpidity of soul and mental coldness of children, who are often disinterested and isolated, than to reawaken in them the ability to play.

The task of adults

Often it is very difficult to stimulate children to play since one usually meets considerable resistance from them. They have no initiative because they are too deeply embedded in physicality. But once they discover the energy radiating from some play activity, when the inner child begins to live, then the children who found it hardest to play will show themselves to be the most original and persistent in playing their best-loved games over and over again. As strange as it may sound the initiative must come from adults because, for many children, their inner driving force has been damaged. If an adult can become enthusiastic about some play activity because he or she sees it as being right and important, then the children will joyfully participate.

The lack of initiative in young people can be balanced by a heightened interest and the increased activity of older people. This knowledge puts a special responsibility on all those who have to do with children. Those who are of the opinion that in this age of technology young people have no need of imagination but should simply act out as they will on bicycles and roller blades, have a misconception about the being of a child. There has never been a generation for which it was more important that they be looked after in a humane way as the children of today who must live out their childhoods under today's conditions.

Old games and new games

One often hears today: Our children do not like the old games. They want something more matter-of-fact and tangible. Even though that is often unfortunately true, this tendency should be counteracted. The old, imaginative games are not old-fashioned and superfluous, but are rather exactly most appropriate activities. One can easily compare them to the fairy tales in that the timeless value of the fairy tales, that has meant so much for the minds of children over the years, is also hidden in the old, traditional games. Of course, that does not mean that no new games should be played. The creative ideas that come up during group play are very enlivening. However, those trying to create something new should look at the qualities of the old games and try to find something that is likewise as "genuine," that is timeless and comes from the inner world of images.

Forms of play and their significance for the growing child

How should our children play? The answer to this question must be: They should play in such a way that the whole person takes part. Since the

different assets and abilities of children appear gradually, the character of play is constantly changing and there must be a constant influx of the new, provided it is appropriate to the particular stage of development.



The sandbox

The sandbox is a very important element of play. The tactile, malleable forces can work here, the same forces that work in the child's body during his entire first seven years. At this age the whole person is more malleable and has the need to be active in that way. The hands wish to be used for tactile creation. For the child, it is of immense benefit when the same forces that are still working to form his or her whole being can be effective in the child's own activity. Playing in the sand allows the child to be original and creative in such a way that is not easily possible otherwise. One is actually planting the seed for something that will later mature into creativity. Parents and educators should therefore see to it, especially during the first four years, that children have the opportunity to play in sand.

Undirected play

Up to approximately age eight it is relatively easy to stimulate a child to play. There is however one condition that must be fulfilled: There must be an environment that also encourages the child to want to play. During this time the child takes in the contents of his spatial environment with an unbelievable intensity. He does not experience things as inanimate, dead objects, but rather as animate beings. Later, the child will want to understand the world with his/her intellect, but right now the child wishes to understand with his/her hands and whole body. The child climbs, slides, crawls, holds himself up and lets go again. Behind all this activity is the inner desire to taste, feel, and experience the world and get as close to it as possible. These are the forces of purest sympathy expressing themselves. At this age, play is fundamentally nothing more than a love of the world.

The child loves the object he is climbing upon or crawling around and he deepens this love through constantly new encounters. The whole strength of an unspoiled mind streams into the world and it receives what it gives. A pile of dirt nine feet high is “his mountain.” This is not merely a pile of dead material but something thoroughly alive. A child knows this being very well and interacts with it as if he or she was interacting with one of his own kind.

Children need such lively relationships because they build their own capabilities upon them. It is clear that this is better possible the more the environment in which the child is growing is differentiated and characterized. Rental units, asphalt streets, bare parking lots, and even empty green spaces do not offer much that can encourage children to play. Trees, bushes, a ditch, a “mountain,” things to on which to climb can crawl through, fallen tree trunks, big rocks to walk around, climb upon, and jump off of, or perhaps even an old boat, all offer countless possibilities for play. These are examples of the kinds of environment that are desirable. Technical structures for play should not be brought in under any circumstances. They do not address the deeper forces active within the child. Rather a “miniature world” should be available to the child with a kind of primal-image character.

The playground equipment such as swings, slides, and jungle gyms should contain as little metal as possible. Children need a certain quality of warmth that is present in wood. It makes a difference if a swing set is made from solid oak logs or metal pipes, which is often the case today. In one case the play equipment has a “face,” that is absolutely significant for the soul of the child, and in the other case it does not.

Rhythmic rhyming games

Rhythmic rhyming games and undirected play belong together like sleeping and waking. During undirected play the children can follow their own directions, and during rhythmic rhyming games they are organized. We know of these two natures in the human being. With children these opposing natures have not yet become clearly delineated but they are germinally present and must therefore be taken into consideration. Children do not desire to merely let off steam during play. They also want to give themselves over to something. Their desire for organized rhythmic games comes out of unimaginable depths. They take in the simple contents during the repetition, and one gets the impression that the activity has a healing effect and does the children much good.

All of the traditional rhythmic rhyming games contain a mysterious echo. It may be very simple words or nonsensical verses without much meaning. Together with the simple melody, they are often nothing more than a kind of spoken song. No matter, they always have a magical effect on the child’s soul. It is an act of real soul hygiene when we give the child the possibility to immerse himself in this element from time to time. Children of today,

especially, need this because they are already so awake. The over stimulation of the senses, always on the increase, makes our children overly alert and nervous. Constantly changing impressions weakens the will but rhythmic repetitions strengthen it. A rhythmic rhyming game with its calm repetitions means more to them than we realize. Those who interact with children on a regular basis should know this and observe it.

The old-time games

Up to about age nine games such as jump rope, marbles, tops, hopscotch, and so forth, should be available. Today one may think that mechanical toys like roller skates and bicycles can replace everything. However, that is certainly not the case; the traditional toys awaken forces that bicycles and roller skates actually block.

Spinning tops

To keep a top spinning one must keep it going with a stick, and that calls the child into activity, not in a robot-like way but by adjusting himself to the present dynamic conditions. The spinning top is something alive; it has the dynamic of ascending force that is very significant for the child. The ebb and flow of this dynamic stimulates the child's blood and circulation forces and, in a subtle way, penetrates into the feelings.



Today's children have a difficult time with this game because usually they are lacking the necessary capability to transform. It is our duty to stimulate this capability and the spinning top is a good method to do so.

Hopscotch

Girls have always felt very drawn to this game. Below is Hell, above is Heaven which can be reached if one successfully completes all the levels that increase in difficulty. The rock or piece of glass must be moved through the different squares.

There is no question that such a game has hidden within it aspects that indicate the old mysteries. The person should ascend through level after level until finally the level is reached that represents Paradise or Heaven. In some areas of the world this game is even called "Heaven and Hell."

Marbles

These kinds of games give off an atmosphere of peace and contemplation. It is clear that, fundamentally, the modern child does not want to live only with the motor dynamics of our age as many would have us believe. The tendency of the child to again and again withdraw from all haste and become

immersed and sort of magically enmeshed in a quiet and mysterious world is the child's unconscious, deep desire for soul hygiene.

Jump rope

For many children who are disturbed in their rhythmic processes (which may have various causes), jump rope is extraordinarily good medicine. When they jump into the swinging rope they must align themselves with the rhythm and by doing this they come out of themselves, so to speak. They become freer and happier. The physical exertion is sometimes considerable but the rhythm carries the movement and happiness comes along with it. It should always be so. At first, something is fun and then because it is fun to practice, physical strengthening follows.



From ages nine to twelve

Age nine is an important stage in the life of a child. At this age the child discovers its own world of imagination colored by its personal perceptions. The child's soul longs for images. One can observe over and over that the children are seized by a kind of hunger for images. It has already been said that a child wishes to transform himself into all of these figures that he feels drawn to and that the child tries to live out that which he is moved by clear images into the movement of the limbs. The subject matter that will stimulate the child's imagination is now largely dependent upon the child's environment, his parents and teachers, and whether the child will find the possibility of expressing again what he has taken in. Both aspects are important and can be compared to breathing in and out. Our children must feel stimulated on the inside in a healthy and encouraging way (not comics, which are a brutalization of the feeling life). They must also be given the opportunity of living out the impulse taken in from appropriate images. We must not look at play from an isolated point of view as merely being the expression of the mechanics of movement. Rather, we must see it in connection with the whole human being. In the important stage between the ninth and tenth years of life soul-mental aspects are unquestionably at the forefront of the child's development. If one reaches the soul of the child, one also reaches his body. If the soul of the child goes along in harmony with all of the physical acts, strength and coordination will then follow as a matter of course. Rudolf Steiner illuminates: "In order to make the child physically strong, robust, and without inhibitions, during the childhood years one must seek the physical body by way of a detour through the soul and the spirit."

Does Life Have Meaning? Destiny and Reincarnation

by

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There comes a point in everyone's life when one asks the question about life's meaning. It may be an individual query or one for mankind as a whole. Often the precipitating factor is some kind of life crisis, a negative experience or an event such as illness, accident, disappointment, or failure. Much depends upon the response to this central question. The negative or positive response comes from deep in our inner nature and our sphere of will. It determines our attitude about life and our trust in life. It can either lame or inspire our will to live.

As a response, a general, resounding yes or no is not sufficient. Rather, individual destinies are so diverse that an individual answer is also required. Further, this question draws others along with it, as we shall see, and is interwoven with them, and, perhaps the meaning we seek does not even exist in a certain form but must be co-created by us through deeper insights into the interconnectedness of life and personal efforts of will?

The uncertainty may nevertheless be valued as positive, as a wake-up call. An animal can not ask questions because it can not objectify its experiences and think about things or itself. The ability to ponder one's self or one's life brings to light something of our real humanity, the possibility of self determination and building of the self.

The answer to our question is readily at hand for those with a purely materialistic view of life. It would be something like this: The individual human life has no meaning. It can not have because meaning would require that we be conscious, intentionally working, planning, and precognitive beings. We, however, know that "God is dead," that is, dreamed up by insecure, superstitious people as the image of perfection in Heaven. In the end we are only members of a higher order of mammals that, like all organisms, is subject to absolute transitoriness. As an organism, we are determined by strict laws of nature, created in the stream of time, and then we disappear again without a trace. The uniqueness of human life is equally dependent upon a thousands of coincidences that are sometimes challenging, sometimes hindering, or even destructive as in the case with accidents or wars.

Hopelessness because of meaninglessness

This world view is one that millions of people in our age of natural science are convinced to be true. It penetrates more or less consciously and negatively into the life of the soul. The feeling of meaninglessness creates insecurity and anxiety and promotes resignation and weakness of will. In challenging life situations courage, trust, and perseverance become paralyzed. Questions arise: In the end everything was for nothing! What is the point? Where did it all get me?

In spite of our high standard of living, in Germany every year around fourteen thousand people commit suicide. How many must it be in the whole of the civilized world? According to statistics from the World Health Organization (WHO), Poland is ranked number one for suicides and Germany is number six. The city of Berlin has the highest suicide rate in the world, this record reached in 1978 because of the suicide rates of children and youth. When one finds out that at least ten times more people are taken to the hospital for failed suicide attempts each year, then one begins to realize the extent of the desperation.

Further, every year over 100 million people become ill with serious depression. This descent into darkness and paralysis of the will, which have developed into one of the worst plagues of civilization, come from a chronic lack of mental strength and passion which give our life meaning. When no meaning is there to light the path, how quickly unhappy circumstances in which suffering, loss, failure, and severe hindrances turn into situations which appear unsolvable. It is the darkness of these situations that so often pushes the depressed person into self-destruction.

No wonder that countless people attempt to deaden their feelings of frustration which have grown out of meaninglessness by any means possible! For that, our civilization offers countless methods, from finding excessive pleasure in base sensuality to the addictive desire for sensation awakened by the mass media and the increase in alcohol and drug consumption of our youth, to name only a few.

Human life can not flourish in an atmosphere of meaninglessness, without substance in which a healthy breathing of the soul is possible. The question about the meaning of life has become now a question of the preservation of the inner existence of humanity. Taking a long range view, progression or regression, cultural flourishing or demise, yes, even humanity's existence or nonexistence, depends upon a positive search for the answer to the question: What is the meaning of life?

Setting goals

In the pre-Christian era the religious content of the myths and cults permeated one's entire life with meaning and purpose. Knowledge today which comes largely from natural science can not accomplish this and often brings about an opposite effect. Natural science, in spite of the abundance of knowledge and technical advancement, can not answer questions about the

essential nature or the *meaning* of existence. But since ideas of natural science are increasingly filling and mastering the consciousness of modern humanity, the knowledge from pre-Christian era and of Christian faith is more and more replaced. The strength of faith present in earlier times is noticeably on the decrease as is indicated clearly by the slogan, "God is dead." So, in our modern times the draining of all meaning is practically preprogrammed and takes stronger hold. In response, the question of meaning steps more prominently into the foreground and is more consciously and clearly formulated. The answer is all the more pressing.

How can the buried, or deeply hidden, meaning of life be newly discovered or recognized in a way that is appropriate for our time? Christian Morgenstern writes:

Whoever does not know the *destination*
Can not find the path
And will wander around the same circle
His entire life;
And comes to the end
Where he started from.
The meaning that was gathered
Is all the more shattered.

The word *destination* can lead us further. Human life and behavior are not determined by species-specific instincts, drives, and desires. Human beings, who have been given reason, can look ahead, out of the given circumstances, make plans, and form thoughts that point into the future. In other words, human beings can develop goal-oriented ideas. This is the case in all walks of life and is often much more of a determining factor in our lives than we are aware. Setting our mind on an idea – depending upon the quality of life – can lay claim to our entire self and be an impulse for our will. It can become a life ideal and largely determine our future life path.

One thinks of the great explorers at the beginning of the modern age: the first time a ship was sailed around the world, the first time someone set foot at the North or South Pole, or climbed the highest mountain. What great efforts these goal-oriented people made with their life's commitments! Life on this Earth is so diverse that the goal-setting possibilities are endless. A young man may see his ideal as starting a family with at least three children, or a father plan to give up the rented apartment as soon as possible to move into his own home. Another may plan to remain unmarried and earn so much money in ten years that he can travel the world and get to know every continent. Others put their energy into being successful in chosen careers. Athletes expend great effort and must set aside many things (alcohol and nicotine, for example) to become world class competitors and perhaps, at some high point in their lives, enjoy the recognition of the whole world.

But can we not all use some kind of high point in small measure, whether it be the fulfillment of a desire, compensation, or some other recognition of

our efforts, in order to go through life with renewed vigor and realization of some degree of life's meaning!

We all know how every step that brings us closer to a desired goal fills us with satisfaction and awakens and increases our joy in life. Setting a goal makes life seem all at once *meaningful*. In fact, the search for meaning in life is inseparably bound to the discovery of or setting of worthwhile life goals. This activity carries an upright force that pulls one out of resignation and frustration, makes it easier to overcome hindrances, and gives us inner strength.

One can see the opposite happening in the majority of our youth today. Since parents and schools, even the whole of society, often do not show the way to desirable goals that can take hold of one at the deepest inner level and promote enthusiasm, then those dormant healthy forces are often transformed into their opposites. A will that is not put to good use finds expression in destruction. Those with more sensitive natures, simply "flip out" or fall victim to cults or drugs.

Without an ability to remember, to look into the past, our life of soul would fall apart. But just as much we need to look toward shining goals in the future to keep our human souls in balance! Without this meaningful forward outlook one would eventually vegetate within the daily routine or suffocate in resignation.

The questionable validity of setting outer goals

The activity of setting goals to give meaning to our lives is standing on shaky ground. Is it not constantly being tested or defeated by the negative side of life? Perhaps the man who plans to start a family is diagnosed with a grave illness so that all of his plans are for nothing, or maybe he is forced to change careers after he has already had a successful start. The effects of a serious illness can make it impossible for an athlete to have a career in sports. Perhaps unanticipated inflation turns one's savings into practically nothing overnight and the trip around the world is no longer possible. How many plans and goals disappear day in and day out because of loss of employment? The resultant decrease in quality of life, the loss of self esteem, and the threat of unwanted and completely unfulfilled spare time cause people to question the meaning of life. What new meaning can society create or what can be found by the individuals themselves when unemployment continues indefinitely?

There are actually no *outer* goals immune to negative circumstances. The higher the goal and the more intensely the person is committed to its achievement, the deeper the "hole" into which he feels he has fallen. How many disappointments lead in this way everyday to mental breakdowns and often end in suicide because everything has become meaningless!

And how is with people who are born brain damaged or retarded, or the chronically mentally ill who must spend their lives in institutions? Are they not mentally incapable of setting goals or understanding them? Are not their

lives, which are completely dependent upon their fellow human beings, absolutely meaningless from the beginning? During the time of the Third Reich in Germany, the term “valueless life” was coined and the “humane” shortening of those lives was systematically carried out. The questions of euthanasia and “assisted suicide” show that this plaguing term and its consequences have in no way been resolved. Lives are still perceived as incurable and valueless; lives are still ‘humanely’ shortened.

But death, *early* death, is by far the biggest stumbling block to finding meaning. Infant and child death by illness or accident snuffs out the becoming or blooming human life. Thousands of people every year fall victim to natural disasters such as earthquakes, volcanoes and floods. It seems especially tragic when people purposely cause the early deaths of their fellow human beings by means of wars, murderous dictatorships and revolutions, or crimes of all sorts. Even if we have found the meaning of life, is it not destroyed again by the gruesome power of early death which can push us into a black hole of unpredictable coincidence and meaninglessness?

We can not save ourselves from this glimpse into the underbelly of life. We are confronted with it daily through the media. These are hard tests that lay in ambush for those making an effort to find meaning in their lives. Obviously we must move to a totally new dimension in order to carry on in a productive manner.

Death as a test of the question of meaning

Every deeply penetrating search for the meaning of life will eventually arrive at the question about the true nature of human beings, where we come from and where we are going. We have already pointed out that a purely materialistic world view sees human beings as only subject to genetic inheritance and environment, as a transient natural creatures whose being is limited to the time span between conception and death. Every life path, then, deadends without goals or meaning. There also remains very little of all of human experience – the acquiring of earth knowledge and the efforts involved in moral striving. Without some idea of an eternal existence, it is not only an early death that extinguishes all meaning but also a completely normal death at an advanced age. With the sheer numbers of people being born all the time, in the end, this or that individual matters as little as this or that ant.

The modern human being sees him/herself her standing before the seeming uncrossable chasm between knowledge and faith. Religions of all times, Christianity also, would not make any sense without a belief in a life of the soul after death. But ideas that are oriented to natural science make it increasingly more difficult for modern human beings to believe in this traditional, or even dogmatic, idea of eternal life. The one-sided concept that humans evolved from animals and a naturalistic theory of creation, from the “big bang” theory to molecular biology, make belief difficult. So too does medical evidence of the dependence of our consciousness on nerve and brain physiology because the complicated chemical-physiological and

electrical processes are almost always only referred to in materialistic terms. Add to that what has been previously neglected: explaining the difference between the animal soul and the human soul. This is a central question that, remarkably, theology has not addressed seriously enough. Could not also a dog, whose expressions of passion and dispassion, drives and aggression clearly indicate its soul, also have an immortal soul?

The mystic Angelus Silesius wrote:

Man, become your real self,
Because when the world disappears,
The unreal falls away,
The real self remains.

A fundamental tenet of Anthroposophy is to understand the real self as the 'I' being and to recognize that the spirituality of the world is individualized through the 'I.' In the human soul shines the spirit as the self-conscious 'I' and this soul, as the actual, immortal, divine core, must be fundamentally differentiated from the animal-related soul. Without this differentiation between soul and spirit required by our times and which already took place in ancient Greece in the form of the ideas of psyche and pneuma, every study of man is predestined to failure.

Lasting value as the last goal?

Understandably many people desire to insure themselves against unpredictable life circumstances by hoarding treasures that "moths and rust" can not harm. In consideration of *lasting value* some institutions recommend diamonds or gold bars. Might not such an effort in the realm of transience (in a Goethean sense) be seen as an image of an event in a higher plane? Death is the great equalizer: It disassociates the person not only from his physical shell but also from all earthly valuables, every kind of possession, one's rank and social standing, and one's pride in a nation or race. What is able to withstand its destructive power and is worth taking across the threshold of death? What proves itself to be real when the "unreal," the transitory, falls away, when that which makes us male or female, white, yellow, or black falls away?

It is the growth earned by all earthly learning, effort, and work that our 'I' brings with it into the spiritual world as the fruit of development in our human life. Above all, the gained wisdom, deepening of the feeling nature, ability to be interested, devotion and sympathy, as well as the strengthening of the will into solidity of character, self control, and unselfishness. Herein rest the seeds of new creative abilities.

How often we are shocked or concerned about our own imperfection or the imperfection of others. But, in the final analysis, it is only the expression of the fact that human beings, in spite of being the crown of creation, are still *unfinished* and are called upon to develop toward perfection. The poet

Friedrich Rueckert indicates this with the following poem:

In everyone there lives an image
Of what he should become.
As long as he is not that,
His happiness is not complete.

This divine-spiritual, primal image is the highest goal of humanity. To strive toward that goal and increasingly make it a reality are the actual deeper *meaning* of our lives. Human beings, as carriers of spirit, in contrast to animals, have unlimited capabilities of learning and developing, of evolving. From insight and freedom human beings are able to develop into what is seminally present in them. Creation continues within human beings, albeit with their cooperation as beings capable of self-education.

This is only possible because they have the “divine spark” spoken of by Christian mystics. It is what makes them immortal and calls them, during the course of every human life, to grow into a spiritual flame. The knowledge of the true being and laws of development that are possible today takes the horror out of death and throws a new light on the question of life’s meaning. Without this powerful light we must remain in the darkness of meaninglessness.

The earthly duty of humankind

In setting these higher goals, are the other goals in the foreground devalued as meaning-giving elements or even eliminated? When we further illuminate them we find that that is not at all the case.

Every human activity, especially regular work, requires a certain amount of subject knowledge, attentiveness, overview, carefulness, devotion, efficiency, talent, and responsibility, to name only a few qualities. This applies equally to very demanding work of professionals and artists and to the seemingly simpler tasks such as cleaning, washing, or weeding. No matter the work, our ‘I’ is always challenged in some way. If it does not rise to the challenge, is indifferent, then we have before us an inattentive, lazy, disorderly, or irresponsible person.

In other words, every activity is embedded in the great, lifelong soul-spiritual developmental process of human beings. That is why the achievement of the goal or success is not the only important thing, but the striving itself is equally important. What experiences and learning processes are gone through, what difficulties overcome, what new qualities of soul are developed on the way to the goal? These soul qualities connect, usually unconsciously, with the highest goal and allow the true fruit of life to slowly ripen. In this way also we can see and feel that everyday existence is permeated with the enlivening element that imparts meaning to life. The person who is religiously- and spiritually-oriented can illuminate and enliven all surface goals and thereby gain a higher quality of life.

But how does it look when insurmountable hindrances stand in the way, when illness, accident, or failure makes reaching the goal an impossibility? How often the normal daily routine is interrupted by experiences that are perceived to be painful, disturbing, unjust, or humiliating. And are there not also so-called unlucky people for whom the negative gains the upper hand and threatens to darken the entire life with an overabundance of apathy, worry, and disappointment? Does it not belong to the nature of being human to strive for success, happiness and passion, and to avoid or insure one's self against, whenever possible, all unhappy, painful experiences?

There is only one outlook here that will help and it takes into consideration the higher, spiritual viewpoint. Older, wiser, more experienced people often accept that they would not have wanted to miss the hard, disappointing, painful experiences and times. The depth and maturity of soul gained would surely not have happened in a life that was only happy and carefree.

It is decidedly so that inner development of the individuality is not interrupted by the darker side of life. Quite the opposite is true: Everyone can learn from their mistakes! As a wellspring of order, contemplation, relaxation, and self control, our 'I' in thinking, feeling, and willing is nowhere so challenged as during difficult times. Error and lack of knowledge call on us to make more efforts to gain knowledge. Interaction with other people, which can be difficult, requires from outside enhanced patience, tolerance, and love. Hindrances and blockades, as with all unhappiness in general, require a stronger input and perseverance of the will.

Difficult and unhappy circumstances always signify a special chance for development for the individuality. They challenge the spiritual presence in a way that occurs seldom in other life circumstances. All difficult times can be understood as *tests* that are essential to life. Seen from the perspective of the spiritual world, which is our real home, could it be that joy and sorrow, happiness and pain, and gain and loss are all at the same level in the service of challenging our 'I' being? According to Goethe it is the law of polarity that penetrates all life and makes possible an increase in development including also the more perfect appearance of the human ideal.

In considering divine thought (ideal), which is at the foundation of the creation of human beings, the poet Albert Steffen takes us a step further: "At every moment where, from the 'I' of the person, in the sphere of freedom, love develops, there are all the Heavens joyful to witness a worthy revelation. Man should know this! And all the purely immediate world crises should be viewed with this consciousness, from this aspect of the heart, and be overcome."

It is my hope that this article will stimulate the reader to test the content of truth in these thoughts. Their recognition strengthens our trust in life and God, allows our courage to grow, and steels our will.

Destiny and meaning in light of reincarnation

In thinking over the question about the meaning of life, hopefully everyone will critically look back upon their own lives. Desired and undesired

experiences, encouraging and discouraging encounters and relationships, joyful and burdensome events, successes and failures, all parade before our mind's eye and form themselves into an individual life. The progression of this life leads us to form judgments or to come to some kind of conclusions as a prerequisite for an answer to the question of life's meaning. It is inseparably entwined with that powerful mystery of life, individual human *destiny*.

The mysteriousness of destiny

Every person must form, carry, and live his destiny. One's relationship to it essentially determines one's attitude of soul, trust in life, and self awareness.

It is one of life's experiences that many people stand before their destinies in a state of not understanding. This weighs especially heavily on a person whose life is burdened by suffering, worry, and unhappiness. Anyone who believes he can go against his own destiny, can not say yes to it, is living in a state of dissatisfaction, with himself and the world. This causes a weakening of the will. This attitude is often bound together with jealousy of others who have a happier destiny and, in countless cases, can end in depression or self destruction.

In order to get away from one's self and gain the strength of objectivity in relation to one's own life, it is recommended that one take a look at other people who have had difficult destinies, over which they have triumphed, and try to see things through their eyes.

But here, also, we reach a limit. Among other things, we look again at the apparently "valueless life" of retarded, brain-damaged, or mentally disturbed people. These are destinies which from the very beginning are often perceived as absolutely meaningless because they have no control whatsoever over their own lives. Physical limitations and lack of freedom all the way to official declarations of mental incapacity appear to hinder every form of development and self-determination.

The mysteriousness and problematic nature of destiny is made even more so by another fact of life that every observer must find challenging. The varying circumstances from which people begin their lives and also the extraordinarily unequal circumstances are hard to understand. What a strong influence on personal development, career success, and just getting along well in life are such things as inherited talent, a harmonious homelife, the best education, and a healthy social and cultural milieu. And is not a child born in the slums to a mentally disabled mother and an alcoholic father, who must grow up in those attendant circumstances, predestined, so to say, to a life of crime? The readers will certainly know, from personal experience, the many variations between these two extremes of destiny. Their causes remain hidden.

How can we explain such heavy influences on destiny as the fact that we are born male or female, and have a healthy body or a weak body, or even

that we have a genetic defect that we have to deal with our entire lives? (Biology will tell us it has to do with an accidental combination of genes.) What is the reason we are born into a certain race or a certain cultural milieu? Even though joy and suffering, happy and unhappy circumstances, play into every life, still there are countless people who are burdened with a life full of hindrances, unhappiness, and enmity while others seem to have won the lottery of recognition and success.

A purely intellectual understanding of life can only lead to the view that individual destinies are not only unequal but apparently ruled by a massive injustice that manipulates all of human existence on this Earth. How strongly the feeling of having to suffer unjustly or being mistreated can sicken our soul and put us into a state of dissatisfaction or worse. Countless people are subject to this and find themselves on the shadowy side of life.

A view that is only oriented toward life's outer circumstances and denies spiritual connections is only able to see destiny, with all of its unpredictable events, as the sum of accidental coincidences, senseless and almost unbearable. But even for those with religious viewpoints difficulties arise. For instance, the Muslim believes that everything is predestined by Allah. This can create fatalism on the one hand or fanaticism on the other hand. The Christian view of *foreknowledge* of an all-powerful, all-knowing God is evermore dissatisfying to modern humanity because of the unfathomable nature of divine working in our lives which is both personal and yet unknowable. The idea that all unjust suffering and unhappiness will be balanced out in a "better world" in eternity is small comfort.

Insight into individual destinies is so difficult because it requires knowledge of the true essence of human beings, their 'I' as the actual carrier of their destiny. What follows will explore this possibility from an anthroposophical viewpoint.

The idea of reincarnation as an aspect of humanity

No one can claim to have comprehensively contemplated the meaning of life and the mystery of destiny who has not taken the possibility of reincarnation of the human soul into consideration as a possibility. The concept of repeated Earthly lives however does require a spiritual viewpoint regarding the true, essential being of humanity. A basic understanding of the immortality of the soul after death, its post-existence, must begin with the term "preexistence." A supernatural-spiritual, or cosmic world, must be accepted as being just as real as the physical world on Earth.

Reincarnation is an article of faith for millions of people in the Hindu and Buddhist religious traditions. Actually, this knowledge of reincarnation is an ancient, generally accepted aspect of humanity that is documented from ancient Germany, Greece, and Jewish esoteric traditions. This idea was never completely lost, and many great Christian philosophers in the West were convinced of its truth.

As Eastern wisdom and schooling practices are gaining increasing influence in Western lands, it must be pointed out that the aim is not to

uncritically or dogmatically accept or even propagandize a traditional element. Impossible – because the highest goal of the Buddhist religion is to bring the wheel of rebirth to a standstill as quickly as possible. This kind of escape from the Earth as the “Valley of Wailing and Suffering” is often also combined with the idea of total depersonalization and dissolution into the bliss of Nirvana.

The idea of reincarnation must be given new impetus as a truth in such a way that takes into consideration the human development up to our modern times. This requires that the term ‘I’ is understood as the spiritual core of an eternal individuality. This concept has never existed in the East and, indeed, could not have existed since human development at the time when the Eastern culture arose had not yet reached the proper degree of maturity to understand it. But this ‘I’ concept did exist in ancient Greece, the cradle of Western civilization. Aristotle first spoke of *en-tel-echie*,¹ meaning the eternal spiritual element in human beings which makes them related to the gods.

Another basic requirement is the inclusion of one of the greatest discoveries of Western natural science with which names like Goethe, Darwin, and Haeckel are irrevocably linked: the *development* of all life forms. This thought is also only marginally present in Eastern wisdom. Of course, in the materialistic-thinking in the West there is the danger that this thought will be limited to the mechanics of development in the sense of one-sided fields such as molecular biology and genetic engineering, for example. It is a symptom of our decline that the theory of evolution has taken on only outer, more or less accidental environmental influences (like mutation, selection, fight for existence, and so forth) as factors in development and that spiritual or creative aspects are denied. However, it can be shown that, in the sense of Goethe’s teaching on metamorphosis, the development of every life form is the expression of an encounter between two worlds. As it relates to human beings it means this: The growth of a child must be understood, down to the anatomical transformations and physiological processes, in light of the fact that a soul-spiritual being works its way into the growing organization over a period of about twenty years. In an unconscious way it works on the formation of its own physical covering in order to come completely to itself and to serve the mature, physical body in this world. It is the *embodiment* of a spirit-soul that has “descended” from supernatural worlds.

The Christian religion knows of reincarnation: “And the Word became flesh.” The working, spiritual principal of the Divine Nature is taken seriously in that He becomes human. As long as the concept of incarnation is not reconciled in other related areas of life study such as embryology, biology, anthropology, as well as in medicine and pedagogy, there can be no sustainable, reality-oriented study of man, nor an understanding of reincarnation. One of the main goals of the technically-oriented tenets of Rudolf Steiner’s spiritual science is to make an essential contribution to the task of the future, which is to bring the concept of spirit into organic science and into practical applications.

The concept of rebirth and development of the individuality

In the first part of this essay we described the development of the individuality as one of life's highest meaningful goals. Even if we look away from the many hindrances and disturbances, the question remains: Does one single human lifetime contain enough years to realize the potential dormant in every person and to make use of his/her hidden spiritual resources?

Numerous facts gained through research on evolution elucidate this question. The phylogenetic development of the five-toed, short-legged ancestral horse up to the perfection of the highly specialized Arabian stallion has required thousands of years. Just as much time has lapsed in regard to what we know today as the African elephant. The early small-headed creature with just the beginning of a trunk is hardly recognizable as the beautiful and powerful animal it has become. Likewise there is such genetic development underlying the human physical organization, subject to the laws of species and form. But whoever contemplates the essence of the individuality, as the carrier of the 'I' and the essence of biography, will realize that, as it relates to spirit, every person is a species unto himself. As opposed to the animal kingdom, here it comes down to the *development* of every *single* individual and also to the short measure of time allotted to a *single lifetime*.

In past millennia individuals were much more strongly connected in the lives of their family, kinfolk, and race. They were predetermined by blood ties. Personality, responsibility for one's self, and consciousness of freedom were only rudimentary. The primitive state of development that can still be found today in some tribes would not support the self-aware, self-determining promoters of individual rights that make up the majority of people in modern times. Throughout history we find very different developmental conditions that individual souls could not change.

Johann Georg Schlosser, a friend in his youth of Goethe and later Goethe's brother-in-law, said: Reincarnation "explains a thousand mysteries." (1781) Indeed, there is hardly a human problem that, when viewed with a sense of the concept of reincarnation, does not take on a new kind of fruitful illumination. True, it is not only animal species that have many thousands of years to develop, but also the human individuality. From the time that the human physical organization matured out of its animal-like previous developmental stages to the point where it could take in the 'I' spark, the rhythmically integrated chain of recurring lives on Earth pulls itself through creation as a totality on a higher order. Jean Paul said: "Let a soul return as often as it will. The Earth is rich enough to give them new talents, with new centuries, and new pasts and with new futures." Since human beings grow beyond nature as the only beings given an intellect, they require this very special adaptation of the law of development. All the efforts and experiences of *one* life subject to the temporary nature of physical existence must be processed into the yield of destiny during the spiritual life between death and rebirth. Afterward, the soul that is reborn into a new physical body finds itself in new conditions, in a new age, and a different culture, all appropriate for its advanced possibilities for development.

Every person is inseparably bound to the greater developmental path of humanity as a whole and may see himself as a member of the process. In spite of all the hindrances, coincidences, accidents, and evil attacks, we can not fall out of the divine plan of development for humanity. This is a certainty that releases a calming and satisfying feeling.

There is an old saying: “No master just falls from Heaven,” even though we come down from a higher world. In the same way, no person can come into the world as a “blank slate”! With our talents and inclinations, our weaknesses and difficulties, we bring the good, the immature, or even sometimes the bitter fruit of our previous lives with us.

The ultimate reason for recurring lives on Earth is for the higher development of the individuality. Reincarnation provides us with the necessary periods of time. This higher level of meaning combines seamlessly with the concepts developed in the first section of this essay, of gaining meaning through goal setting. Thusly, the concept of reincarnation is also related to the laws of development of modern biology, which cover all of evolution in the kingdom of nature. Rudolf Steiner published much material and gave many lectures on the subject of reincarnation *for our times*, particularly the publication *Reincarnation and Karma*. In the study of biology one learns that every higher-level organization has gone through many previous stages that were more primitive. This also applies to levels of achievement in the soul-spiritual area. Individual talents and abilities do simply happen, unearned, a gift from above. Also, in the opposite case, they are not unjustly hampered. Such an understanding of the issue is appropriate for the self-consciousness of Western people who agree that individual striving and effort are their duty on Earth. “What you have inherited from your fathers, earn it, so that you may own it!”

Higher levels of organic development are captured through heredity and may not be lost. Spiritual science can reveal how similar laws are also active on a spiritual level. If a species can be understood in the physical sense when one grasps the conditional aspect of heredity, then also the spiritual being can be understood in connection with a similar spiritual heredity. I have my physical form because I am descended from human ancestors. From where do I have that which comes to expression in my biography? As a physical being, I repeat the form of my ancestors. What do I repeat as a spiritual being? ² Henry Ford, founder of the Ford Motor Company, said: “What for some appears to be a special gift or talent, is, in my opinion, the fruit of long experience gained over many lifetimes. To that I must add that I believe we are reborn on this Earth. You and me [sic], we all are reborn many times, live many lives, and store up our rich experience. Talent that is apparently intuitive is, in reality, hard-gained experience.”

Completely independent of the influence of Eastern elements, in eighteenth century central Europe, G.E. Lessing published his spiritual testament *The Education of the Human Race*. Written in his last year of his life, this short publication views the concept of reincarnation in a more modern sense:

Perhaps all of the witnesses to past cultures such as monuments, works of art, writings, cults, and so forth, will senselessly disappear. But what people have striven for, suffered, and learned by the creation of these things, they will take with them into future lives as higher abilities.

These abilities benefit not only single individuals, but also all of mankind. Humanity educates itself! Humanity as a whole actively takes part in its own development and is in no way merely the result of a higher creative power as in the other three kingdoms of nature.

In 1851 Gustav Widemann, a homeopathic doctor, won an essay contest sponsored by textile manufacturer Maximilian Drossbach (1810 – 1884) concerning the question of reincarnation: “But it is not only the interest of the returning individual force that can be thought of as a reason for reincarnation. It is also the interest of other people. There is no other force that can be of such good service to the whole of humanity as recurring lives on Earth.”

With Lessing and Widemann one can hear the new breath of life infused into Western thinking, evolved from an earlier Christian way of thinking. The perfection of human beings over a long path of recurring lives does not have to do with self-perfection or salvation of self in an egotistical sense. Selfless service to others, mutual helpfulness – love thy neighbor as thyself – are incorporated into the concept of reincarnation and development. The “fight for existence” that is present in humanity is caused by the greedy, lower nature of mankind. This nature can be raised and transformed in and by every person. The positive effects of such individual development benefit others in the long run.

Karma, the law of destiny

The physical world is controlled by unchangeable natural laws. They determine the order of things and how they work together. They are understood as the basic law of cause and effect. Precise knowledge of this law makes possible practical interaction with natural forces and has, as a result, dramatically changed the face of the Earth.

Human destiny and individual soul development, which is closely intertwined with the supernatural worlds, are subject to certain laws. They come from a higher, moral-spiritual sphere to penetrate human earthly existence. They can be examined by those who have the ability to gain knowledge of higher worlds. Modern spiritual knowledge can also give certainty about the reality of reincarnation and raise its deep-reaching truth out of the realm of speculation, faith, or theory. The teachings of reincarnation and karma, as the laws of destiny have been called in the East for thousands of years, form the heart blood of modern spiritual science.

Human destiny, which from the outside appears to be a collection of coincidences or the impenetrable fate brought about by a higher power, is a woven fabric whose origin is to be found in the last life or perhaps even further back. It is influenced in the supernatural world through spiritual-

divine processing of all earthly efforts and striving of the soul during thinking, feeling, and willing.

Every real striving for truth, every experience, that deepens us in the sense of devotion, interest in the world, warmth of heart, all industrious, unselfish, or creative work, and all moral efforts, allow the spiritual core of our being to be illuminated and to grow. Such experience and activity connects the soul, even after death, more strongly to the divine-spiritual world. This allows for the acceptance of that which we bring with us in this way and quasi turn over. It can be transformed into a positive seed for the next life. As opposed to this, error and lies, lack of interest and hate, egoistic, inconsiderate, or even criminal behavior, not only darkens our “I,” but also alienates us from our spiritual world origin. The necessary correction and working through of such spirit-denying behavior leads to imbalance in our entire constitution and to disharmony in our being; that is, to weaknesses, predisposition to illnesses, and hindrances in our future destiny on Earth. They are rocks in the road that people have put in their own paths in order to awaken by clearing them away, being more able to find oneself, and to newly strengthen the moral will. But also the events that seem to happen accidentally from the outer environment and are perceived as good or bad are subject to the law of karma. The behaviors and activities in a previous life, whether they are beneficial or harmful to the world, are written into our destiny.

So-called “love at first sight” is, in reality, carried over from a positive encounter between two people in a previous life. In this way many very old relationships can be continued or find fulfillment. The soul ties created through friendship or love, or even discord and hate, are unbreakable. People who are separated through misfortune or some apparently unsolvable dilemma will be brought together again. Every neglectful or atrocious act that debits our “life account” requires a balance in the next life. This is a basic principle of karma: a higher unerring form of *justice*. On the other hand, the mercy of a divine world in its wisdom, has made it possible to learn from one’s mistakes in a new life and to free one’s self from self-alienating and burdensome guilt in order to further develop in a meaningful way.

Why can we not remember our previous lives? I will talk about *one* of the reasons here. Everyone knows that abilities come about through laborious, tireless, and attentive study and practice. Countless tries in the study of writing, or practice on a musical instrument are eventually transformed into full-blown ability. That conscious, mindful labor gradually penetrates to the unconscious and to the physical body, and later, when one writes or plays the music, almost all of the steps to learning are forgotten. At that point, if they popped into the consciousness it would only be a disturbance. A similar situation exists with the higher ordered metamorphosis of one life into the next. The previous life does not live in our conscious mind, but it is all the more present in our predispositions, tendencies, and in our whole physical-mental constitution.

Do not get the idea that a Greek temple builder would necessarily become a better architect in his next life. His technical and artistic efforts to gain the

right mass and proportions and pleasingly formed outer structure are all internalized during the time between death and rebirth. The apparently “forgotten” work reappears as inner feeling creative ability for harmony and composition: Perhaps humanity will be enriched by a genius musician who creates timeless masterpieces. If one has this in mind while contemplating the last, broken pillar of some temple ruins, then one begins to understand what Lessing meant in his work *The Education of the Human Race*.

Another reason that the cloak of forgetfulness covers our previous lives comes from the fact that most people today could make little good use of the unannounced appearance of ancient experiences. Everyone knows how hard it is to objectively view one’s own mistakes and weaknesses or to objectively look at situations involving disagreements with others. The way it is, a person can be blissfully unaware about possible devastating traits carried over from the past and thus get a fresh start in a new life and all the interactions it entails.

To research one’s own karma using methods of spiritual science requires the highest degree of maturity in spiritual schooling. For this reason we stringently warn against using hypnosis or some other quick method, which unjustifiably penetrates the structure of the personality, trying to force a look into previous lives, even though this is possible to a certain degree. Such attempts are usually uncontrollable and therefore all too easily mixed or diluted with error and illusion.

It is a karmic law that, in the next life, experiences and activities that have played out more in the mental-spiritual arena will go a level deeper into the biological-physical aspect. Human relationships, which Goethe named “relationships of choice,” will be transformed in the next life into blood relationships. Good or bad life habits, virtues and sins of a previous life and impossible to change at that time, we find again in the next life in the form of a better or worse physical constitution, or in a particular condition of temperament.

Each person is embedded in certain outer and inner life conditions which can be perceived as related to destiny, can also limit our freedom, and whose root cause is to be found in a previous life. We ourselves were and, for the most part, still are the blacksmith of our own destiny! And, before every person the future lies as a space of freedom that makes it possible to form a new destiny, filled with ‘I’ force and reasonable actions based upon ideals. Here belongs *how* we deal with the preconditions and immutable circumstances such as illness, for example.

Everyone can learn to more deeply understand his or her destiny, accept it, and create it oneself. This is extremely significant for self confidence and willingness to live. Looking toward the next life on Earth works to counter a mood of resignation, to make every effort seem meaningful, and to give hope for the balancing out of any injustices suffered. We learn to diffuse feelings of antipathy, hate, and personal vengeance because our “enemy” is also woven in with us, according to the law of karma. Many evildoers may

avoid the long arm of the law on this Earth, but that is not possible with divine justice. With this in mind, whoever is able to lovingly and truly forgive his or her neighbor is able to unpack a lot of burdensome karma.

In the following paragraphs are a few short points about the laws of karma. The reader is encouraged to investigate the numerous other spiritual-scientific publications on this subject.

The karma of gender

The concept of reincarnation throws a decisively new light upon the differences between the two sexes. A deeper look into the spirit-soul present in each gender will, on the one hand, encourages equality of men and women appropriate for our times. But on the other hand, this view must also take into consideration what happens from the perspective of karma: Generally, a male incarnation will be followed by a female one and vice versa, although this is not a hard and fast rule. For example, if someone dies young because of chronic illness or some other circumstance of fate causing him to be unable to fully experience the different conditions of his sex, the person may be reborn with the same gender as the previous life.

There lives, more or less unconsciously, in every person the desire for completion and wholeness, reflected in the vague feeling that being bound to one sex makes one only “half a person.” In our times, without being conscious of the core of our humanity and its laws of development, this desire threatens to mislead many into a tendency for women to exhibit their masculinity and men exhibit their femininity. This appears symptomatically in such actions as young men wearing braids and earrings or women striving to hide their feminine characteristics behind a facade of masculinity, down to their clothing and haircuts.

What is wrong with taking full advantage of the opportunity for a male incarnation to be schooled and strengthened by the special sensitivity, carefulness, or even motherliness that are predominantly female characteristics? In another incarnation more masculine abilities and virtues could be explored. A man who must perhaps work especially with the intellect, whose career requires that he be oriented strongly to the outside environment, can be thankful for the possibility of experiencing an inner life of soul as a woman in his next life. All qualities gained in such swings of the pendulum remain intact and will bear fruit in subsequent incarnations.

From this viewpoint the differences between the sexes can be fully accepted. There is no need for false “equality,” although equal rights are an absolute necessity. Perhaps here the idea of reincarnation can actually create some sense of peace.

A healthy balance in this alternating play of polarities can only be achieved when the development of the ‘I’ being is considered as the highest directional goal. There will be plenty of opportunities for this during the course of life with all its myriad circumstances. Wherever the spiritual core of the individuality feels that its ability to judge, its sense of responsibility and

morality are being addressed, then the shared characteristics that go beyond specific gender will shine forth.

The results of early death

One could think that an early death would destroy the opportunity of development that life presents or, at least, prematurely interrupt it. No matter the circumstances, death is all the more tragic and difficult the earlier it appears. The idea of reincarnation shines a clarifying light on this mystery of life. The karmic result is, in most cases, a quick rebirth, in the same century if possible and under similar cultural and other conditions. This equalizing comes about because life that was taken away, often through no fault of one's own, has had little experience to be worked through in the spiritual world.

The mystery of death, however, is deeper than that. In the spiritual world not only does the time of death play a significant role but also the kind of death and the way we die, in other words, the quality of death. For the soul of an old man over eighty years old, who lays aside his body like well-worn clothing, entering the threshold of the spiritual world is a gentle, expected event. It is a completely different story when a young, healthy and vital body is suddenly destroyed and the soul is torn away through no fault of its own. Senseless, shocking, and terrible as this destruction must seem from an outside view, the victim's soul experiences something significantly positive during the process of working through experiences after death. Young people still largely identify with their physical bodies. The immediate contrast between the transitory nature of the physical body and the eternal nature of the 'I' being leads to a more intense awakening experience than that for a person who is old when he dies. Young people awaken to their own core of being and to the essence of spirit that is in the world. The fruit of an early death brings to the reborn person's deep unconscious hidden knowledge and a feeling for what is essential. Just as someone can be immunized against a disease, so is the person who was killed at an early age immune to any materialistic darkening of the spirit. He will instead instinctively direct his steps in life to a spiritual understanding of the world.

Rudolf Steiner said this in regard to the tragedy of the fallen during the First World War: It is the spiritual world that transforms the "senseless passion" of a war into the meaningful, individual fruit of inner spiritual knowledge, by way of sacrificing the proffered life to a higher necessity. In this way humanity, in light of the tens of thousands of such sacrifices, will be given the power of spirituality." Similarly, every early death, according to the circumstances, leads to enhancement of certain tendencies and abilities.

These results, however, do not apply to death by suicide. This forced separation leads to a very tortuous state of soul and feelings of guilt during the experience of life after death. A person, as spirit, can not escape coming to terms with the big "disappointment." He has set himself at odds with the God-given possibility for development, and all the problems that caused the

suicide remain unsolved and must be worked through following the laws of karma.

Now back to the problem of the seemingly “valueless life” of a mentally retarded individual. Even such a life as that, in which many things are experienced, will be processed, although the ‘I’ is mostly or completely non-functional. The next life in a healthy body includes an enhanced and deep feeling for life and a stronger impulse to new activity on the Earth. The many acts of an educational or caretaker nature received by the individual in the earlier life call forth the desire for a balancing return of activities in the social environment. The karmic teaching from such a handicap is never abstract. It becomes deep-reaching, thoroughly lived experience and forms the starting point for new capacities and enhanced self realization.

The population explosion – a contradiction?

In almost every discussion of the concept of reincarnation the justified question is raised: does not the increase in world population in the last few centuries contradict the idea of reincarnation since only a limited number of souls can be taken on board, so to speak.

The Christian understanding, which can not be taken for granted, that every soul since time immemorial is newly created and planted within the developing body either at conception or shortly after, leads to an incomprehensible number of spirits who have crossed over into eternity. Billions and billions of human lives have already been and will be. An individual soul would seem to disappear in the mass of souls from the past and the future, remain unknown and unrelated. One could speak of a population explosion in Eternity or of an inflation of spirits.

The reincarnation concept postulates there is a certain number of ‘I’ endowed beings, even though that number is unknown, that were created eons ago in a great, divine act of creation. Novalis said: “Whoever does not reach completion here, does perhaps over there; or must begin a repeated earthly course. Should there not also be over there a death whose result would be an earthly birth? In that case, the human race would be smaller; smaller in number than we thought.”

If life between death and rebirth was, on average, as long as a life on Earth then only a doubling of the population would be possible. After that the number of souls waiting to incarnate would be quickly depleted. Through spiritual scientific research it has been determined that at present the timespan a soul spends as a being in the Spheres is something like eight hundred to one thousand years! At any given time there is always a much larger number of disembodied souls than souls that are incarnated. An increase in the population on Earth only leads to an accordant lessening of the souls in the Spheres.

Certainly, the increase in world population has many earthly and cosmic reasons which are probably not penetrable at this time. Besides the

improvements in hygienic conditions there is one other reason that can be named: Materialistically inclined people, who do not have the depth brought by a spiritual way of life, are without genuine artistic experience, or the impulse generated by religious contemplation. In their poverty of soul they take less spiritual material to be worked through into their life between death and rebirth. They have connected themselves too strongly with the Earth and therefore require a quicker re-embodiment.

Reincarnation and Christianity

Reincarnation is not an official teaching of Christianity. The Church Father Origenes spoke of preexistence, but in the sixth century Pope Vigilius declared in an edict that the concept of preexistence was an error and should be treated as heresy, and the door to the idea of reincarnation was closed for the confessionally-bound Christian. However, in the Gospels themselves this truth blazes through in certain places. All the ancient Jews knew about the prophecy which said that before the coming of the Messiah the prophet Elijah would reappear. That is why the disciples questioned the Lord about it. He “answered and spoke: Elijah shall come before and bring everything to rights. But I tell you, Elijah is come already and you did not know him, but have done with him what you will. In the same way will the Son of Man have to suffer. Then the disciples understood that He was talking about John the Baptist.” (Matthew 17:11-13).

This would have been the perfect opportunity in the life of Jesus Christ to declare the tradition handed down for generations about recurring lives to be false once and for all. But the opposite is what happened. In this single instance Christ confirmed reincarnation. He spoke on the same subject (Matthew 11:14), saying something that is unique in the entire New Testament: “That you would accept it.” The implication is that the recognition of the concept of reincarnation should not happen on the authority of the Master, but rather returned to the sphere of the freedom and insight of the disciples themselves.

As to development to ‘I’ consciousness and freedom, humanity must be cut off in their consciousness from the supernatural worlds and increasingly made to rely upon themselves within the earthly plan. Within this framework the knowledge about the alternating rhythm of recurring lives had also to retreat for the most part. The feeling that one must make do with a single life on Earth has contributed strongly to the Earth-oriented consciousness of personality. In the meantime however the consciousness and ‘I’ development of humanity is so far progressed that the truth of reincarnation can now be newly presented and understood in a way that is appropriate for our times.

Actually the concept of reincarnation is fundamentally of a deeply Christian character. Like Christianity, it draws our attention to the spiritual core of each person regardless of their outer covering.

But what happens to the souls who lived before Christ? And what about the millions who still today can not come to the deep truths of true

Christianity? Naturally, every person who takes his or her particular religion seriously will find many positive opportunities for development that are not open to an atheist. But as far as salvation is concerned, does it really matter whether one is a Mohammedan, Buddhist, or Christian? Reincarnation leads souls through many lives in many different cultures and races, thereby making it possible for every soul to encounter Christianity.

This great rhythm of life also means that we can and ought to let go of the problems associated with nationalism and racism. One of the worst evils is a person's complete identification with his own particular blood and race, a tenet that is absolutely inappropriate for our times. It muddies the spiritual consciousness and makes one subject to blood-bound instincts and drives. The inhumanity of the spiritually darkened representative of the Third Reich should be a convincing enough lesson! Changes in one's physical aspect in each incarnation causes the forces of love bound up with the blood ties to be changed into more spiritual and unselfish love, the essence of Christianity.

The oft-expressed opinion that reincarnation is identical to self-salvation could only come about through a misunderstanding of the thoughts on development represented here. The salvation of humanity depends upon the realization of the original ideal of humanity. This occurred physically for the first time with Jesus Christ, the Son of God who became man. In the future the earthly destiny of every person will depend upon the relationship he can find to Resurrected One. Through His sacrifice, He became the Spirit of Humanity. He is the lifeblood of the becoming human organism to which He irrevocably aligned Himself.

As we have seen, the concept of reincarnation allows for a genuine understanding of humanity as a whole. It is only in modern times that a world-spanning human consciousness has been formed. Human intelligence and technology have opened up the possibility of having global connections and exchanges. At the same time, the worldwide threat of destruction has been cast as a shadow by technology and human egoism. The global character of the concept of reincarnation contributes important moral forces that could awaken humanity to a re-thinking of our predicament. The recognition of reincarnation and the law of karma could become a healing balm for humanity and the Earth and support a major turnaround on a moral level.

Spiritual rebirth

The search for meaning in human lives is illustrated in the Gospels during a conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus (John 3:1-21): "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he will not see the Kingdom of Heaven." At first, Nicodemus does not understand Jesus' words and thinks He is talking about physical birth. Whereby Jesus explains: "Truly, truly, I tell you, unless you are born from water and spirit you can not enter the Kingdom of Heaven. What is born of flesh, is flesh, and what is born of spirit, is spirit. Do not be amazed that I have told you: You must be born again."

It is this path of imbuing humanity with spirit that has been traversed through all the ages in all religions. In this age of scientific materialism this

knowledge has been extremely darkened. This lofty goal can be achieved only through many lifetimes and in harmony with the development of humanity as a whole. The deed of Christ reveals this highest goal: The spiritual birth of a higher being. Since one short life is not enough to achieve this goal, we must and are privileged, wisely and justly led by the law of karma, to go through many physical births on this Earth. In spite of being bound to “the flesh,” the divine-spiritual world will be opened to us in full consciousness.

This poem by Christian Morgenstern sums up the search for the way:

Overcome! Every hour,
That you victoriously overcome,
Be comforted, that you will
Abundantly find your new life.

Every insult, every shame,
Every suffering, every pain,
Will, with right understanding,
Decide your ascent all the more.

Without original sin you will sparkle,
Lively again before your grandchildren.
Countless people in the dark
Are shown the way to the Sun,
By a victorious one.

Endnotes:

- 1 A principal that carries its goal within itself, or whose goal is self-determined; from the Greek: *en* = inner; *telos* = goal, meaning, purpose; *echein* = to have.
- 2 In *Theosophy* by Rudolf Steiner.

Overstimulation

“I Have No Time”

by

Walther Bühler, Alfred Schütze, and Rudolf Treichler

Translated by Nina Kuettel

Causes, prevention, and cure

Overstimulation is epidemic in our times. Almost everyone suffers from it to some degree. It is not even possible for every person to seek treatment from his/her physician for this problem and, fortunately in less severe cases, treatment is also not really necessary. In this article we will go into the causes of this terrible and escalating malady of our times and hopefully shed new light on the search for self-healing.

Symptoms of overstimulation

Overstimulated people often get carried away by sense impressions and thoughts without really being able to connect to them. But anything that does not have one's full attention is easily forgotten, so difficulty with concentration is followed by forgetfulness. Instead, other thoughts or pictures come to the mind without any desire to remember them. Strong, but poorly assimilated impressions, as they are daily thrust into our lives, can disturb overstimulated people even in their dreams while sleeping. The senses themselves become oversensitive. Involuntary movements of the limbs, startled reactions to noises, increased rate of one's own body processes such as the pulsing of the blood and the beating of the heart, become more prevalent. All of these symptoms combine with a general irritability and agitation that can escalate into anger. Temporary relief comes through fatigue and slumber, but without any real rejuvenating sleep, naturally, such people become afraid of new impressions, of life, and they become insecure and indecisive. Overstimulation can take a tight grip on the entire life of the soul in thinking, feeling, and willing.

Many problems that occur from the pressures of living together stem from overstimulation and the resultant nervousness that arises. People would be more willing and able to understand each another if only they did not “get on each other's nerves.” Often we are not able to give sufficient attention to another person, to even listen properly to someone else. We are too quickly

exasperated by togetherness. We do harm to others with our own anger and agitation. The others are either crushed by their own insecurity or they lash back in anger.

Causes of overstimulation and nervousness

The nerves are extensions of our sense organs. They bring impressions to the brain which are then stored in memory to be processed by thought. Just like the sense organs, the nerves and the brain do not have a lot of rejuvenating power; their cells do not reproduce after birth. Dull, organic life must withdraw within the sense-nervous system so that the conscious soul-spiritual life can develop. There is constant disintegration in the nervous system during the gathering of sense perceptions and the unfolding of thought. We feel the sum of these processes of decay as fatigue and weakened abilities of concentration. During the long rest of sleep our nervous system that was “ruined” during the day is regenerated using the energy in our blood and organs such as the heart and liver. In this way sleep is the great healer.

However, this regeneration takes place in wakeful periods as well, but in a more delicate manner. For example, we use the blood’s energy to regenerate rhodopsin in the retinas of the eyes that is destroyed by each impression of light. Just as the sense organs and nerves must be constantly nourished with blood, so must our perceptions and thoughts be constantly filled with the soul energy of blood, which is feeling and willing. Otherwise, the disintegration process would gain the upper hand, even in regard to our mental capacities. This is what happens in the case of overstimulation.

Just think of people living in large cities! They are exposed night and day to a cacophony of disconnected, undesired impressions that tax the nervous systems beyond the disintegration process already taking place. They can not follow the street noise with attentive interest, the thousand impulses of light, or the buzz of voices, even though all of these impressions lay claim to their nerve tracts. In the home people become oblivious to the radio’s volume or allow the sensations on the television screen to shower over them. The fight for existence in the workplace does not allow hurried people to find any relaxation, not even during breaks. From there it is only a small step to the habitual use of sedatives, tranquilizers, and sleeping medications of all kinds. Unfortunately, these only bring temporary relief from suffering and may leave us with an addiction that will, in time, seriously endanger our health and well-being. Work may also become an addiction into which the overstimulated person can flee to forget about his inner emptiness and restlessness. But the outer busyness can not hide the fact that the inner passivity of the soul becomes ever stronger and the ego’s ability to lead one’s life becomes ever weaker.

In the background of this situation we see the flattening of religion, the instability of our morals, and the strife that is a hallmark of modern society. Sober-mindedness and conviction of spirit, former wells of strength, are ebbing away. The human ‘I’ finds it increasingly difficult or impossible to

get the appropriate nourishment. It is no wonder that a nervous person, whose 'I' is "no longer on board" with its impressions, becomes agitated and irritable.

In contrast, a healthy, relaxed person actively takes in his or her environment. Loving interest quickens an attentive gaze; the strength of will present in the 'I' controls the rise of memories and does not allow thoughts to bounce here and there. 'I' want to perceive or grasp something; 'I' complete a thought process. Our thoughts become internally colorful and rich, but only if they are accompanied by feelings; otherwise they are gray and monotone. All of this provides the prerequisite conditions for our nervous system to be properly supplied with air and blood, and to be healthy.

We find the opposite occurring in overstimulated people. Perceptions and thoughts are not "well-circulated" with feelings and will; the gaze is unsteady, and concentrated thought is not possible. The experiences of the 'I' are controlled and weakened by superficiality and disquiet. The whole picture of the world that the person wishes to maintain is threatened with breaking down into tiny pieces. From a physical standpoint, the sense-nerve system becomes one-sided and the disintegration processes already present normally gain the upper hand. This leads to oversensitivity to the outside world, to the processes in one's own body, as well as increasing insomnia as a result of abnormal hyper-alertness. Serious physical ailments often result.

Overstimulation and illness

An overstimulated person's superficial attitude about experiences can lead to physical consequences. Experiences that do not penetrate the surface of consciousness become burdensome to the unconscious soul life when they are forgotten, just like half-digested food in the stomach. Poorly "digested" experiences can result in physical problems in the digestive tract that affect the stomach, but even more so the liver. The many feelings of discord and ill humor of overstimulated people originate in the liver and can escalate into depression. Beginning with nervousness, we now have a mental illness that is connected to organ dysfunction but has its root cause in the superficiality of one's soul life.

Most of all, it is the nervous system of overstimulated people that is in danger of sickening. When the nervous system becomes over-taxed and one-sided, then the already mentioned disintegration proceeds. Regeneration lessens and degeneration, the destruction of nerve substance, takes over. This degeneration is the beginning of many nervous diseases, especially those that are prevalent today. For instance, we find in this category the atrophy of the brain in the form of Alzheimer's disease in which the nerve cells self-destruct. This disease is accompanied by progressive speech and personality disintegration. When the blood vessels in the brain calcify, then the brain is no longer getting enough blood, and for this reason it degenerates. With multiple sclerosis, the most common chronic disease of the nervous system today, the question arises if perhaps the disintegration occurred at the

beginning and the infection followed. The degenerated tissue becomes foreign matter and the body tries to deal with it just as it does with all foreign substances. Through the infection, the blood tries to dissolve the decayed place in the nervous system.

Some of the symptoms that appear with such diseases, such as heightened hyper-alertness and irritability, could be seen as an escalation of what has already been described with overstimulation. The picture of the world that the person with a nervous system disease had tried to make is now completely disintegrated. We can observe how many of those with more extreme nervous system diseases can take in and grasp only single things. They have lost the understanding of the essence of individual perceptions and their own connectedness to themselves and to others. The inability to concentrate and the loss of memory capacity go together. Whatever one is no longer able to fully survey and absorb, one can no longer concentrate upon and thus easily forgets. If the forgetting process attacks the motor system of the limbs, then the main symptom is paralysis in that area. Here there is an essential connection to the mental “paralysis” of severe overstimulation that can be observed as a precursor to a nervous system disease.

Of course, that does not mean that every nervous episode must lead to a disease of the nervous system. Besides overtaxing the nerves, infections can also bring about nerve diseases. But when one thinks that an infection is present at the beginning of the disease process, then one should always consider that there is a weakness of the nervous system already present which allows the infection in the first place. Such a weakness is more likely to occur when the nervous system in the organism has already become one-sided. Taking these connections into consideration, one can hope that determined treatment of weak nerves and nervousness through self-education could prevent the onset of diseases of the nervous system.

Overstimulation and constitution

The predominance of the nervous system also affects the constitution of the entire organism. “Asthenia,” a medical term that means weakness, is used to describe one type of body constitution that is characterized by weakness. The formation of the body is determined by the nervous system in this type of constitution. Body formation, which is served by the metabolism and blood, steps back in favor of the destructive forces that are stimulated by the nervous system in the entire organism. The result is a slender build and weaker body formation, which also affects the organs and weakens their function. People of this constitutional type tend to look at the details and are not able to perceive the whole picture. When asthenia is prevalent, such persons are more easily agitated and fatigued than others. Constitutional nervousness has to do in part with a genetic predisposition for it and in part with the environment in early childhood and youth.

There has been a marked increase in the number of people observed to be of this particular constitution. At the same time overstimulation is also

on the increase. The connection is obvious and irrefutable. However, the increase in overstimulation is much greater than the increase in constitutions characterized by asthenia. People with a rounder build, whose body formation is determined by the metabolic system rather than the nervous system, are suffering from overstimulation and nervous fatigue more today than in earlier times. That means that the tendency for the nervous system to become dominant is breaking through to other constitutional types. Rudolf Steiner spoke of a *neurasthenic disease process* in which the illness is completely determined by the nervous system. The preponderance of the nervous system does not need to express itself in the body form of the organism because it finds expression in the life and illness of the organism. This disease process is on the increase. But the final reason for the “constant rise of neurasthenic problems” is, here again, as a leading neurologist, G. Schaltenbrand, expressed it, the “spiritual uprooting of human beings.”

Wherever the disintegration that is normally present to a certain degree in the nervous system begins to spread to other parts of the organism, a neurasthenic disease can be determined. In heart and circulatory disease, statistically the number one cause of death today, the inflammatory disease forms are found less frequently than calcification and degeneration. But even chronic inflammations such as inflammation of the liver can be accompanied from the beginning by degenerative processes.

Onset and prevention in childhood

For the most part the nervous system in a small child still serves the formation of the body. This can be seen when one observes the deformations that can occur when a part of the nervous system fails due to illness. At a later age, the nervous system, especially the brain, serves the configuration of mental growth. Growth forces transform into thinking forces. Just as early in life cells combined and formed bodily organs, so now thoughts come together and build soul-mental organs which the child uses to learn to perceive and process the world in a soul-mental way. The beginning of the change of teeth is a sign that the creative growth activity in the body is complete. From then on no new organs are formed. The body and its organs continue to grow and mature but the forces that affect the formation of new organs are now active in the soul-spirit, mental arena. Then the child is ready for school.

From the viewpoint of the physical body, life forces die in the brain in order to serve a new life of mental-soul thought. In other regions of the body the life forces remain more available to the physical body such as in breathing, blood circulation, and metabolism. Contrary to the nervous system, in these other areas of the body physical development is still taking place. But the child needs these remaining life forces that are more closely bound to the physical body for its mental life. On the one hand, the nervous system is supplied with air and blood by the stimulation from the soul, as has already been mentioned. On the other hand, blood, respiration, and metabolism themselves again send quickening forces into the soul and make it possible

that we develop a warm interest in the world from the warmth of our blood and that we have feeling and willing forces available for thinking. They are dependent upon and serve each other.

All of this does not come to completion by itself. The child's environment plays the biggest role in how the child develops. For instance, if a child gets too little love and security, too little "motherly love," then his or her physical and mental development of warmth suffers which, again, causes a weakness in physical and mental development. Also, if there is too little stimulation in the school to awaken a "warm interest," then there can be disturbances in the physical foundation of a child's feeling and willing life as well as the physical life itself. If, in addition, a child is under pressure to perform and must fill his or her mind with as much as possible in as short a time as possible, then the processing of that which was supposed to be learned suffers. The feeling and willing life get too little nourishment and can not properly participate. In order to increase the intellectual capacity to which this kind of education one-sidedly appeals, it is necessary that more life forces be taken from the physical body than is advisable for its development. In this case, school makes the child ill. Evidence of the above is observable everywhere today.

The manifestation is that physical development escalates in the overburdened head region without being able to mature and develop in all directions. The increase in the number of people with asthenic constitutions has to do in part with today's educational practices. But there is also a connection to be made with the increasing overstimulation of school-age children, with the mental/soul after-effects. Wherever thinking is so one-sidedly addressed that the 'I' does not "get on board" with its feeling and willing life, then overstimulation and anxiety result; at least the predisposition to adult nervousness is found there.

Already back in 1912 Rudolf Steiner brought attention to the fact that all the "cramming" done for exams in school was aiding and abetting overstimulation.¹ While considering his present time and looking forward toward the future, he formulated that "education" must equal "healing." The Waldorf education he created is based on the recognition and acceptance of this statement. Waldorf education strives to address the whole being of the child, body and soul, and not just the head and its intellect. Above all, our nervous system, which is overburdened by today's transportation methods and technology, must be continually healed from the disease of disintegration to which it is predisposed and epidemic. This healing education would also simultaneously prevent adult overstimulation and the physical maladies that it precedes. Since the wheel of human development can not be turned back to the "good old days," it is more important than ever that countermeasures be taken in childhood to balance the negative effects of overstimulation.

How can I treat my overstimulation?

One must first ask: "How can I not treat it?" An overstimulated person might seek to relieve his or her suffering, which often disturbs sleep in a

most disastrous fashion, by reaching for tranquilizers and sleeping pills. This is not a treatment that affects the root cause of the problem. Even if no obvious addiction develops, as happens often enough, such remedies used continually will eventually result in the strengthening of what caused the nervousness in the first place. The person's activity will become more debilitated, and the ability of the mind and soul to keep in step more hindered. Tranquilization leads to a deadening that can, again, invite a much stronger state of agitation.

Other medications, the stimulants, do not bring about healing either. The temporary stimulation that the pill provides usually results in increased agitation over time. Yes, the thinking process is speeded up but it is also weakened in its intensity and clarity. Many studies have concluded that intelligence is not aided by these methods. When the effects of such medications have abated, then fatigue and mental dullness threaten to become that much stronger.

Overstimulated people should "enjoy" movies, radio, and television in very sparing doses. In cases of severe overstimulation, it is better to completely avoid them because they utterly encourage passivity in viewing and listening. For nervous people they can easily become intoxicants. The only forces one can depend upon to effectively treat overstimulation are those of the ego and soul, willing and feeling. Fundamentally, this treatment is truly a "self-treatment" like no other. Only in more severe cases must self-treatment be supported by appropriate medications and other applicable practices. Nervous people, who are carried away by a whirlwind of sense impressions and thoughts, must be able to get their feet on the ground again. They must relearn how to process what each day brings. The goal is: activate and "en-soul" the life of senses and thought by intensifying one's own willing and feeling forces.

Regulating the daily routine

In the morning, before someone steps into the day, he or she should gather his/her forces. One proven way is to mentally concentrate on something such as an important thought, a verse, a quote, or a prayer. Such an ingathering can radiate energy throughout the day.

Essentially, the day must be designed and shaped. It begins with the overstimulated person deciding what the challenges of the day will be. A morning preview, either in thought or by writing it down, helps a person to no longer feel manipulated and stressed by every challenge but rather to connect it with his or her willing 'I.' However, one must be careful to not take on too much. There is nothing that weakens the will more than not doing what one promised one's self to do.

While going about one's daily work a person should concentrate completely on the task at hand and forbid any thoughts about the next task, which many nervous people are not able to do.

Before bedtime the preview of the morning should be complemented by a review of the day. Now, the strong-willed taking-hold of the future becomes

a relaxed viewing of what is past. But even in this one must strive to be active. According to Steiner, the review should consist of going back over the events of the day in reverse order. One should begin with the evening and allow the memory pictures of the day to lead one back to the morning hours when one awoke. One soon realizes that in this way one can more or less protect oneself from an automatic flow of thought. As far as possible one should look at oneself in the remembered events. One should not tarry with single memories, become angry or happy again, and so forth, but rather view everything in a detached manner as if it had happened to someone else. Such an exercise can not only release the overstimulated person from memories of the past day which may disturb sleep but he or she also learns to gain distance from future impressions which could otherwise threaten to overwhelm. This is a very difficult exercise, and it is not recommended for extreme cases of nervousness.

At the end of the day one should sink anew into a spiritual or religious atmosphere that leads the mind out of the daily routine, out of the earthly world to connect to the spiritual-divine world. Before falling asleep, if one's mind and thoughts are gathered and open to being immersed into the spiritual-divine world, then it is able to absorb more energy for the following day than when one falls into a dulled sleep, torn and confused by all the thoughts of the day.

The effect of these described morning preview and evening review times can be deepened and improved through regular meditation exercises. However, during the day it is also necessary to create islands in the stream of daily experience, short periods of time in which one can relax and gather one's thoughts. In cases of more pronounced nervousness, rest periods should be introduced as a part of mealtimes. Some exhausted people benefit from a short nap after lunch. Others benefit more from a walk or finding a relaxing place to sit and do some light reading. During meals one should avoid all thoughts and conversations that might disturb the digestion. Highly spiritual topics should be avoided just as much as letting the events of the day roll by in one's mind. Nervous people, especially, should enjoy their meals. The food should taste good and all the different qualities of sweet, sour, salty, spicy, and so forth, should be markedly different. One should take care to eat food that can impart nature's energy in as unadulterated form as possible. Biodynamically-grown products are especially suited to this purpose. A nervous person must be aware that the healthy formation of the nervous system, more than that of the rest of the organism, is dependent upon a wholesome diet.

Over and above that, overstimulated people need still other breaks during the day which would allow them to perform the following special exercises:

The life of the senses is strengthened, for example, by practicing exact observation of nature in the loving style of Goethe. Feeling and willing stream into sense perceptions when one observes and absorbs the cloud formations

or the shape and color of the trees and their leaves during a walk. What has been perceived in this manner should then be compared to the respective shapes and colors the next day, the next week, or even the next month. In this way a daily walk (perhaps even a quarter of an hour is enough) supports acquiring spiritual content that is just as important as its healthful benefit to the physical body.

Thought life takes on new energy when the newly-gained pictorial aspect of the feeling life is also allowed to flow into the thought life. The exercise of reviewing the day is a way of practicing pictorial thought in which feeling and willing in thought become active. Always, when one concentrates on a thought that has been recalled from memory, fills it out and allows it to become vivid, one is working in this way. It becomes especially lively when one imagines, in one's own soul space, the creation of a flower from sprouting to blooming. In this way purely passive perception (such as television viewing) is replaced with active image experience. One's ability to retain is thereby also improved. This ability can be especially improved by something like this: when putting away an object such as a book, for instance, ask yourself, "What angle does the book form with the top of the shelf?" One absorbs the image of the relationship of the object to its surroundings. Likewise, every evening some object is "put away" like this, absorbing the image and then retrieving it in the morning upon awakening.

The ability to concentrate can be especially schooled through the following exercise: Pick up an object with your hand, call to mind all of its characteristics exactly, and in the next few minutes think only such thoughts that have to do with the object. For example, take a pencil and think about how its shape, size, and material are connected to its use. How is it made? Where does the material come from? Would a different shape work as well? The thought process should proceed in an absolutely logical manner. The thoughts themselves should be as exact and lively as possible and not crisscrossed with thoughts that do not belong. After a few days begin with a new object.

The life of feeling and willing can already be addressed by some of the above described exercises. The life of will itself can be exercised by performing every day at a certain time some small thing that does not already belong in the daily routine. For example, carry an object from one place to another, or tap three times with the left foot on the floor. Such exercises can be changed daily or weekly. Over a long period of time such seemingly insignificant exercises will make a person newly aware of his decisiveness and more confident in his actions. A strengthening of the will is also the result when one foregoes the fulfillment of a desire or when one weighs the pros and cons of an action before carrying it out.

In this way one gradually gains control over the illustrated overreaction of soul energy that is vented by agitation and anger. And, it is just this that strengthens the will at the same time. The overreaction that comes from

agitation and anger is not a sign of a strong will but just the opposite. Usually it is merely a smokescreen for the insecurity and indecisiveness of the overstimulated person. These kinds of exercises work like a dam in a river that harnesses the flow of water to make it available to an electrical power plant. By offering a foothold to our soul life we gain energy for the ego ('I') to serve the will.

In the physical, agitation and insecurity lead to stilted or cramped movement. In such cases curative eurythmy can have relaxing and revitalizing effects. If the fidgetiness affects a nervous person's writing, which is often the case, then it is helpful for that person to practice, over and over, writing single words and sentences very slowly, drawing each letter very carefully.

Artistic activities of all types (painting, sculpting, handicrafts, music, speech, and eurythmy) can call on an already awakened talent or one that is still sleeping and affect every aspect of the soul. Such exercises cause feeling and willing energy to flow into perceptions and thoughts in an especially intimate way while at the same time sublimating passionate and libidinal energies. This can lead to the beginning of sensible and curative use of free time which forms the valuable foundation from which we can explore the meaning of life.

Curing nervousness

The illustrated exercises for mental hygiene must be rhythmically repeated over a long period of time (although not all at the same time). From the viewpoint of the will, every person, even the most stressed person, is capable of doing these exercises. The more energy we put into regularly performing these exercises, the greater are their effects. After every illness that is cured, there is new, revitalized health. If a soul flaw has been successfully corrected, then there is room for a new ability. What ability is gained by curing nervousness? When we activate our sense, thought, and feeling life we learn to penetrate from the superficial aspects of an object into its essential aspects, into the essence of the world and our own lives. Overstimulated people who have been tossed to and fro from moment to moment, infuriated and agitated will become people whose spirit is present in every moment so that they can think and live out of their spirit. Prudence of soul and spiritual presence are the virtues we aspire to through the healing of nervousness.

Endnote:

1. Rudolf Steiner. *Nervosität und Ichheit*, Dornach: 1994, Rudolf Steiner Verlag, (*Nervousness and the Ego*).

The Restless Child – Advice for Parents and Teachers

by

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Translated by Nina Kuettel

Introduction

All those who interact with children – parents and teachers, but especially parents – can recognize in the restless boys and girls we are speaking of here a mirror of our times, our life today. In their way of being we see the haste, the disruptiveness, the tension, and the unhappiness that our way of life brings with it. At the same time an image of the destiny of our times is unrolled.

Efforts to describe the appearance of children who have concentration problems, are restless, and exhibit inappropriate behavior go back to the nineteenth century. They can be found in such books as the *Struwwelpeter* picture books (nineteenth century German children's books) and in practically unlimited amounts in the literature of the last few decades. One has the impression that the number of these restless children in highly developed countries is on the increase and that the associated problems are becoming more pressing. The questions about education, however, because of increasing uncertainty on the part of educators and parents, are becoming graver. Social ills and dysfunctional relationships are becoming more crude and often encroach upon a child's environment with far-reaching and continuous effects. Therefore, the author will attempt in this article to clarify, teach recognition, and develop ways to alleviate this situation.

Three to five percent of all [German] school children have problems with concentration, hyperactivity, and disruptive behavior. Many others have some kind of learning disability, but not severe enough to warrant special education. The suffering of these often very clever children is puzzling and seemingly insurmountable. Very often one is helpless in the face of these problems because one can not come to grips with them. They are opaque.

Encountering these children is challenging because they are not obviously sick; they are only so strange and hard to evaluate. Their behavior is little understood and they have little or no ability to explain themselves. That is also why it is so troublesome to live with them.

The basic requirements to help these children are understanding, empathy, and appropriate sympathy. In the end, help is only possible through engaged support from people who lovingly and unselfishly take on this task and remain engaged even when other helpful therapies are included. In order to guide

these children, abilities are necessary which can be learned and must be learned by those who have been entrusted with the destiny of these children.

What is written here is based on my many years of living with these children in families in a therapeutic community¹ as well as my medical, educational, and therapeutic experience. I will try to impart a deeper understanding of this integral developmental interference, also from an anthroposophical viewpoint, in the hope of paving the way for a comprehensive therapeutic-pedagogical point of departure.

Most of all, I shall give advice about recognizing, understanding, and interacting with these children in a healthy way. My hope is to prevent these disturbances from escalating into an unbearable sclerotic state. This is all the more important considering the fact that after the childhood developmental stage concludes, the nature of these afflictions becomes altered and wrong conclusions may be drawn. The result is that precious time for corrective treatment and education is lost.

What kind of strange symptoms are these?

The children we are speaking of here are not ill in the organic sense. They have no fever, no wounds, no diarrhea, but they do not give the impression of health. They are somehow imbalanced in their behavior, unharmonious, unhappy, too alert or too dull, too loud or too insecure. They have inappropriate reactions and are not really melancholy but yet not cheerful.

Closer interaction with them gives us the feeling that something is fundamentally “not right” because when we are healthy we have the measuring stick within us which we can then use to measure the state of health or illness in others. How can this be understood? Health can be seen as a communicative balance, dynamic-lively, similar to breathing in and out, alternating between activity and rest, sleeping and waking. And it is just this dynamic alternation, lending stability to a healthy person, which is mysteriously disturbed in these children. A disharmony that exudes from them can often be traced back to infancy and, in many cases, remains with them their entire lives.

However, the symptoms vary so widely and are so changed by multiple influences that it is often hard to recognize the commonalities in developmental disturbances. But all the shadings share aspects in common that can allow for the very early detection in infancy of developmental disturbances which may not appear significant at the time but which nevertheless can result in significant hindrances during later developmental stages.

There are many significant influences that can have harmful or healthful effects during the course of development. The progression and sequences of individual destinies depend upon these influences. So, developmental disturbances are not illnesses in and of themselves, but rather predispositions, so to say, that will not necessarily lead to serious illness and mental disturbances, even though that is a possibility.

Which known clinical conditions are we talking about here?

If one wishes to inform oneself about the complex clinical diseases found in literature on the subject then one will come across terms such as these:

Postencephalitis Syndrome
Hyperkinetic Syndrome
Early Childhood Exogenous Psycho-syndrome
Minimal Brain Damage
Minimal Cerebral Dysfunction
Infantile Psycho-organic Syndrome
Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
*Mania*²

Add to this list the secondary neurotic disturbances. The diagnoses come about after taking into account various aspects that are oriented to results from damage, to a clinical picture, or to an underlying causative disorder. These clinical pictures show varying degrees of severity. They include perceptual disorders, concentration problems, apraxia (difficulties with movement), learning disabilities, and emotional disturbances, all to varying degrees and sometimes as secondary aspects depending upon environmental influences. One finds, as an organic basis, different, distinct, anatomically recognizable formation deficits in the central nervous system that are of varying degrees of severity. Or, there are metabolic disorders present (partly only surmised, at first, such as sugar metabolism or neurotransmitter availability) that constitute the functional basis for our nerves and our conscious processes. With newer examination methods (nuclear magnetic resonance, positron emission tomography, and spectroscopy) it is hoped that the metabolic disorders can be more precisely researched. It is completely evident that reflected in all the phenomena are the distinctive features of our central organ, the brain, in which all life processes, all consciousness processes coalesce and are anatomically and functionally coordinated.

Disturbances in brain development have more comprehensive effects the earlier they appear! The development of the central nervous system and the brain is especially prevalent during pregnancy and the first two and one-half years of life so that environmental causes must be almost always sought within that time period. But developmental problems can also be inherited. From the perspective of time, these problems actually exist before the brain formation. From an anthroposophical viewpoint one can also look at totally individual aspects that can be traced back to the sensory activity in previous incarnations and which led to the situation where the instrument, the human body, can not be entirely permeated. If there is considerable formative disturbance then we are not surprised to find insufficient formation of the subtler human abilities because we can more clearly perceive other formative defects such as deformations, malformations, gross problems with movement,

intelligence defects, and so forth. The diagnosis for the clinical pictures we are referring to must be sought in a subtler, more differentiated, and more comprehensive manner than the outward aspects alone would indicate. For this reason we find here many opportunities for errors in perception, judgment, and conclusions which can have disastrous effects for the child and those in the child's surroundings.

Possible causes

Here we are only glossing over a few aspects. How much of the problems are inherited or genetically caused? One often finds in the circle of relatives of children with these kinds of developmental difficulties a noticeable number of busy, on-the-go, active people who are or were often not well-integrated in their social lives, or who are or were, also, enterprising, perhaps superficial, or difficult personalities.

Influences during pregnancy that have negative developmental effects are extraordinarily diverse. They can be created by illnesses of the mother, nutritional inadequacies, and poisons such as alcohol or nicotine, or by drugs such as heroin, morphine, methadone, or cocaine. Massive exposure to x-rays or atomic radioactivity is also a cause. Premature birth as well as prolonged pregnancy can affect development. Lack of oxygen during birth, cerebral hemorrhage (especially premature births) can also be causes. But even during infancy the disturbances still have a very holistic character as with encephalitis, dehydration during high fever, or massive diarrhea, for example. The consequences of whooping cough or damage from vaccinations can be causes.

Why are boys more often affected than girls?

The ratio of affected boys to girls is five to one. With girls, the outward restlessness is usually not so apparent and the learning problems not so pronounced.

It is a fact that the number of boys born is higher than the number of girls. The mortality rate for boys is higher and also their probability of becoming ill. In respect to their sensory and nerve development, girls are significantly less endangered than boys. This is an important indicator of the fundamentally different constitutions of the human organism. The differences in constitution can perhaps be compared to the right and left side of a picture; in every person polarities come together. A male exhibits a stronger emphasis on the nervous system (among other things, a man's brain weighs on the average more than that of a woman). Qualitative differences also show up in the way of thinking. A woman's intellectual powers are more synthetically conclusive, integrative, and perceptually focused whereas a man's are more analytical and detailed, drawing more on the senses. The latter appears to proceed more sequentially (logically) and the former has a more inclusive, surveying character. In this sense, our entire civilization exhibits male features with their emphasis on the sensory, separation, egoism, but also strife,

disorientation, and mechanization. On the whole, the male organism has less regenerative power and consequently less capacity for healing. We should keep this in mind when thinking about the constitution of the affected person.

Development of illness in infancy

Because the clinical picture during the first months of life displays itself in completely different areas than the behavioral disturbances and restraints found in the school-age child, one speaks of “bridging symptoms.” For instance, a child with problems with nutrition comes to one’s attention in this way: weak sucking; weak, hurried, and non-rhythmic sucking; further, swallowing a lot of air, erratic appetite, quick to tire, and frequent vomiting. Further observation and questioning also reveals a shrill, frequent crying that is not accompanied by pain, a disturbed sleeping-waking rhythm; unusual drowsiness, frequent waking, and difficulty in putting the child to sleep at night.

With other children through very delicate observation one can detect breathing problems. There may be breathing stoppages during sleep and noticeable changes in the breathing rhythm which can well lead to sleep apnea. This may possibly be one cause of the many cases of sudden infant death syndrome. The older the infant the more one can perceive the disturbances by observing how he moves. Often the only indications of disturbances are movement characterized by exaggerated speed and lack of control and precision. A child can learn to crawl and walk but perhaps he falls much more, stumbles, is accident-prone, or maybe he exhibits delayed speech development with inadequate comprehension skills. The nourishment problems, the problems with movement, the restlessness, or the problems with sleeping are never considered as single decisive factors by themselves because there are many other possible causes for all of these things. What is important is the general impression given by the seeming lack of healthy development, the disharmony, the imbalance, and the abnormal ill-humor. In these cases, the ability of a healthy mother to observe her child in the first few weeks after birth and, with instinctive certainty, “know what the child needs and what is wrong” is very helpful. This requires that the mother reflectively focuses on the child with inner tranquility and love. She will then be able to recognize what it is about the outward expressions and life processes that “somehow are just not right.”

If one thinks back to the time of infancy of a school-age child one often remembers, usually not spontaneously, the bridging symptoms we have described. In hindsight, a clear connection can be made. For this reason, we have increasingly endeavored to take the information from the mother seriously because her input can be very important in taking preventative measures against developmental disturbances. Therefore, we think it is important to encourage doctors, kindergarten teachers, and grades teachers to learn to seriously consider what the mothers are telling them even if it is sometimes awkwardly presented; follow-up vigilantly even if the normal

avenues of examination have turned up nothing concrete. For instance, one might find, through the help of computer tomography, hidden hemorrhaging after a difficult birth that is the cause of the constant vomiting in early infancy and not a nervous mother or the wrong nutrition. The doctor can help school the attentiveness of the mother and parents by encouraging them to keep a diary; not because of worry and concern but in order to lovingly accompany and aid the child. All people involved in the child's development must learn to experience this sensitivity to the child that is innate in the mother after birth. It is not directed at the details but rather at a differentiated, holistic perception.

How do such children appear as toddlers?

Henry was always on the go, his parents reported. Once he learned to walk there was no holding him back even though he had been especially quiet before. He was constantly on the move without showing tiredness, without relaxing. When all the toys were painstakingly put away he would immediately bring everything out again. "We had to give in to his desire for movement. We sent him outside so he could get it out of his system but he just got worse. There was almost constantly some kind of accident, fight, or screaming. He could not judge if something was dangerous, play with other children, play by himself for any period of time, and he could seldom do anything sensible or meaningful."

What are the outward signs in the school-age years?

The kindergarten teacher did not think he was socially ready for school yet at age six and a half, but because of his "good intelligence," he was sent to school anyway. There it was expected that he pay attention, concentrate, develop a long attention span, integrate and learn something. But his short attention span was not sufficient to follow along and make connections. Learning reading, writing, and arithmetic became more difficult. It was thought that he had a reading and writing disability because he always made "careless mistakes." He spoke without thinking and acted without considering the consequences. He had difficulty expressing himself because he would lose his train of thought and consequently rush through or forget what he was going to say. He interrupted constantly and could not keep his comments to himself during lessons. During recess he was out of control. He exploded onto the playground and became a danger to others. He could not explain himself or why there had been yet another incident on the playground. "We do not know what else to do! He is obviously overchallenged by every situation even though he is very intelligent." His mother showed school notebooks in which, after the first few words, everything was written out of the lines and the letter size and direction of the writing fluctuated. There were many "key mistakes." The writing became increasingly unclear until it was finally illegible. There are other pages written much better on the whole, without so many mistakes, but they are not from the same day. The parents

reported strong mood swings and also that his willingness to work and ability to work were very unpredictable from day to day.

Self-perception begins

During the first school years Sam had always noticed that he made more mistakes than his classmates, that he did not write so nicely, that one day his picture would turn out well but he could not repeat it the next day, that he could not sit still when the teacher asked him, that in spite of making an effort not to, he still made inappropriate remarks during the lessons, that because of restlessness and fussiness he became slower and more careless in his work, that he simply was always a disturbance. But, even though he really tried, why did he have no success? This question occupied and bothered him. He did not ask questions anymore in school because he was afraid the others would laugh at him. He feared that the teacher might embarrass him, that he could not justify himself. He noticed that his classmates no longer reacted enthusiastically to his antics. Sam felt he was a disturbance and a burden. The teacher did not know what to do and so he was often sent out of the classroom. Driven by restlessness, he looked through all the coat pockets hanging outside the classroom. Now he had stolen something; he would be involved in an investigation. He did not know how it had come to this! He asked: "Mom, why do I have to be like this? I have to be the bad guy now." He develops anxiety about his own impotence, his own repeated failures. He is also worried about all the consequences of his outbreaks of frustration: "No one understands me. It's no use. Why should I live?" Such thoughts can come over the child.

School-age children: What causes developmental disturbances to escalate into illness?

The first thing is *misunderstanding*: Is the child unable or unwilling? One thinks that he could if he were only willing. One experiences over and over that such a child can do good work on some days for short periods of time and with proper guidance. One concludes from this that the child is master of his "own will" and can self-direct. However, when that does not happen consistently, one categorizes the behavior as unwillingness. One says: "He just doesn't want to do it!" The difficulty the child has in meeting the demands upon him or her is to answer those demands with exaggerated defensiveness. The adult again reacts by not accepting such behavior. Finally the child erupts into explosive outbreaks that are brutal and angry. In the efforts to curb the child's behavior feelings and agitation are swinging back and forth more than ever. The parents complain: "We have fought against this all these years and it just got much worse." The dire situation of the child and parents' frustration results in further bad behavior and the "method of upbringing" that was born of this situation usually will strengthen the tendency.

Often a docile-enabling and/or a resigned-tough attitude of the parents and teachers will play into the situation. The adult is provoked and, depending on his or her mood, will react without humor, emotionally, angrily, with avoidance, uncertainty, or sentimentally: “You have disappointed me again.” Others may have a style that is military-like and draconian. They try to bring the child “to reason” through a hard regimen. The result is that no further exchange can take place; the only reactions will be brutal, unfeeling, and cold. Aggression increases to the point of violence. The disputes that result from one or the other of these behaviors which the parents have brought into being can cause the family life or the atmosphere in the classroom to become unbearable. One can probably not properly imagine just how much these children suffer and feel misunderstood!

There are many other components in this process that can have an escalating effect: for example, disordered social relationships, divorce situations, changes in the people who look after the children and who may have different child-rearing methods, dishonesty and unreliability, and lack of consistency in adults.

Challenges in school and elsewhere that the child does not feel capable of meeting can also come into the picture without the child being in a position to recognize or understand these burdens. The unrestrained access to videos, television, horror films, tape recorders, computer games and the like has an added, massively harmful effect. Honey, sugar, phosphates and other food “improvements” found in easily digested, carbohydrate-rich foods, and irregularities in the daily routine are burdensome.

What are the consequences in later life?

Often one’s entire behavior changes during puberty. The restlessness, discontinuity, and dissatisfaction can turn into resigned lack of motivation. This can happen as a result of previous poor development or because of the physical-mental developmental changes taking place at this time. Usually it goes something like this: The teacher complains, for instance, that the boy, Paul, is unreliable, unfocused, often willing but on other days unbearable again, and that he fails at everything. He talks big but his achievements do not match his talk! That led to several apprenticeships being terminated early. Paul is becoming convinced that he is a failure and a disliked outsider. Is it really surprising when these youths turn to drugs or alcohol in the face of such hopeless situations or try to commit suicide?

If no treatment is received, adult problems in marriage, friendship, and career can end in psychological illness, alcoholism, drug addiction, or criminality. It is very often those with so-called “difficult natures” who can not cope with life. A very dismal outlook! Under no circumstances can one count on a person “growing out of” these problems or excuse it as if it is only a crisis period, or that a simple medication can end the problem.

What can help? Understanding the problem in its entirety

First, let us look at some aspects of undisturbed development: The most important time of organ development in the central nervous system, i.e. brain, spinal cord, and sensory organs, is before birth and lasts up to the end of the second year of life. Outwardly, the head, with its ball-like roundness, is determinative for the infant's entire body formation. During formation, it is like the echo of the surrounding organs. Bubble-like and filled with liquid it keeps the baby in an almost weightless state in the womb. After birth, this state remains largely intact for the brain since it is swimming in cerebral fluid. For the small child, however, the "protections" of the mother, the family, the kindergarten, the household, classmates, a well-ordered daily routine, and so forth, still play a decisive role in influencing the child's physical, mental, and spiritual development. Under these "protections" the child's social abilities, academic learning capabilities, and interaction with others will develop. Healthy development is manifest physically by the stabilization of the organs for breathing and the heart-circulatory organs. Increasingly, especially towards puberty, more control over the limbs is gained, coordination, learning by interaction with the environment, with physical laws, and also mental perception in general, love and openness to the world and to other people are all formed during youth.

Like a common thread running through all the appearances in the clinical picture, also through the various levels and stages of development, is the fact that wholeness is never reached; the "coordinator," the head, the great "synthesizer," the lighthouse of the body, has not allowed the entire organism enough overview and calm security. Again and again efforts to achieve harmony and quietude are thwarted by outside influences, impulses, drives, and desires. Orientation is destroyed. We can see from the organization of the body that the limbs on the periphery of the body single themselves out in the form fingers, for instance, and that the individual organs in the body are clearly separated from one another, but their corresponding images in the brain are compressed and holistic in nature. If there is not enough balance between these two organ systems – the head-nervous system and the limb-metabolic system – then the person "loses his head," his energies are dissipated, and the holistic nature of his nervous system is lost.

This lack of balance shows up in our children in all three organ systems: the nerve-sensory organization, the limb-metabolic organization, and the rhythmic organization of the breathing and heart-circulatory system. Everywhere we find problems occurring during encounters with the environment that are rooted in this weakness of the individual's entire organization. This weakness becomes apparent in the lack of certainty of declarations, lack of harmony in movement, imbalance and inflexibility in feelings and perceptions, little ability for reflection, little self-control, inappropriateness of reactions, lack of ability to judge one's self, and many other fundamental human qualities.

Finally, a decisive factor is the way in which the higher-level spiritual faculty of the “I” handles the incompleteness of the physical functions, how the circumstances of life are individually mastered. However, there are various ways to intervene and help once the developmental disturbances are identified.

What are the prerequisites for help?

First, it is also good for children who have no noticeable developmental problems to gain abilities that serve the understanding of the child. Our usual feelings such as sympathy, antipathy, and, further, what one generally refers to as love and punishment, are really not enough for the upbringing and education of even so-called normal children! Our understanding is often too uncertain and our ability to appropriately handle situations has degenerated. As doctors and educators we must newly gain these abilities anew and thus contribute to mastering the life tasks of today.

1. First, we must learn to observe! One can practice by looking at an object such as a rock, a plant, or anything one chooses. Look at its form. Take it in, lovingly and precisely. Imagine it and perhaps even describe it. Practicing this for just one minute per day will have an astounding affect on a person’s ability to identify, which means to make something one’s own. A feeling of sympathy or antipathy for that which is observed does not play a role; it would be a hindrance. One will easily notice that the exercise is a precondition for commitment and that it leads to contemplation and tranquility.

2. Using this exercise I can observe the child and try to feel my way into his state of mind. This child interests me with all of his idiosyncrasies, without anger or frustration because I have gained a conscious distance and in time I will learn to pay attention to the signs, reactions, and “signals” and, finally, learn to read them.

3. I will take it upon myself to give this child my undivided attention for two minutes everyday. I will speak to the child, stand by him, and interest myself in his activities. I am not doing this so that I can “play the teacher” for another day, know everything better, and correct the child. No, I am doing this to accompany the child with loving attentiveness for a period of time of my choosing. Phone calls, cares and worries, and other duties should not prevent me from doing this. I must make this effort every day and it must not depend upon the spontaneous desire of the child for attention. This is a very effective exercise but very difficult. One will be amazed at one’s own unreliability and habitual reactions. However, one will learn to appreciate the effects as regularity increases.

The first results of daily practice

Through these efforts we can regain a sense of “what this child needs.” We learn how to “empathize” appropriately. We develop sensitivity to the

instructional way of interaction. We no longer react so readily to the “impossible” behavior. We learn, with increasing confidence, to have respect for the gradually developing personality of the child and give him guidance. It will not happen by following a recipe or some kind of “process.” Attitudes and behaviors will appear on an individual basis according to what is appropriate for the child and the situation.

How wonderful it will be for the child when he feels that he is really understood, that is, slowly becomes convinced that he is being carried by the help of adults. What courage the child will gain when he or she realizes that he can learn something and is not a failure. This also takes time. The mistrust can only disappear through experience, step by step, and also by the “happy hours” spent with adults who have learned to interact with the child in a new way.

What more can be done?

1. Changing the sense impressions

We do not need to wait upon the success of prescribed exercises. We can begin to change some other things through our newly gained insight. We have felt that too many and varied sense impressions are a great burden on our children. The forces they use to draw conclusions and integrate impressions are overtaxed since our children have only a limited amount of those forces available to them. Therefore, one of our main duties is to *limit the sense impressions around the child*. The sense organs and their functions are appropriate for the human body. That means we can only really perceive so much. When we are walking and running we can only perceive a limited amount with our eyes. We can bear brightness only so long before it blinds us or noise only so long until it pains us. The body communicates its thoughts to us.

With our children we often see that they themselves have already closed their eyes and held their hands to their ears. They become more restless, fidgety, and excitable. Sometimes they become completely apathetic and ill-humored. The body is speaking to these children in a different way than it does to ourselves because we have, in the meantime, armed ourselves with a “thick skin” against sensory overload. Therefore, one should limit or eliminate, all sources of sensory impressions that one can and which are not sustainable such as videos, television, tapes and compact discs, computer games, iPods, radios, movies, and so forth. Many mothers visit the doctor with their children because the children are so restless, agitated, and unable to concentrate. At the same time media and entertainment technology are readily available in order to “meet the needs” of the children. One symptom of the illness is that the children can no longer understand what their bodies are trying to tell them (sensory overload). The habits and desires of the children often support the illness and not health. One can become very quickly used to a state of illness. One will not master an illness when one allows factors that support it to remain in the environment. Should one limit the

perceptual capabilities of a child through medication? If one closely observes the effects of everyday life, then one sees that every bike ride, automobile ride, shopping trip, visit to the city, amusement park visit, and the like, are all too much for children in the way of too many sense impressions. Everything like this can be reduced with a little forethought and planning. One must also consider therapy sessions that involve a long trip to the city, for instance. Are the effects of the therapy cancelled out by the corresponding burden of getting there? Even the healthful effects of Waldorf education are called into question when such a child must be in a large classroom and perhaps experience the lessons in an atmosphere of chaos. The following maxim applies:

The right of the ears to have silence!
The right of the eyes to gaze!

Taking this viewpoint into consideration, one will have to weigh all the different burdening factors. In this case one should rather do more than less.

That does not mean, however, that the child should be prevented from all exposure to these sense impressions. One should consciously intensify a few impressions. An adult leads a child to one thing or the other and helps the child to have a deeper experience just as the adult has tried to do in the above-described exercises. During the course of weeks one will notice that the children perceive more, ask more questions, and that their own mental well-being is improving.

2. Changes in nutrition

Sugar, honey, easily digested carbohydrates like pudding, cake, sweets, and lemonade-type drinks should never be given to children as they are with no other foods on the table. They are suitable as dessert after a meal. Hot dogs, cola, and other foods rich in additives should be avoided. They have an incendiary effect because of their quick conversion to energy and influence on the metabolism. They feed impulsiveness that has become a problem for our children. Please note, however, that strict avoidance of these substances, anxiety about “dietary mistakes” and the guilty conscience that goes with it can be just as bad as the “mistake” itself. One should point out such things to the child and try to change habits through perseverance.

In this sense, even a phosphate-free diet that is fanatically adhered to can be harmful. Strict vegetarianism and too much whole grains can also have rather an undesired effect! Experience has shown that a balanced diet that sometimes may include meat is completely adequate.

Further, one can pay attention that children do not stuff themselves on pasta and ignore vegetables at any given meal, for instance. Something of each the foods on the table should be eaten even if one makes allowances when it comes to the amounts. Of course, the adults must set a good example and perhaps even a family council can take place in which all members

seriously commit to some rules. Children love to know the rules of the game because they can orient themselves that way.

3. Maintaining rhythm

This is a further decisive factor. Not only the rhythm of meals during the day, which should include regular mealtimes plus mid-morning and afternoon snacks, but also the regulation of times of sleeping and waking, of activity and relaxation, of levity and earnestness, and of times of challenges and of play. For example, a midday break after lunch is so extraordinarily important for today's often thin and agitated children. This half-hour (not more) of complete silence with perhaps a warm stomach compress or a back rub with some massage oil, will very quickly become a valued part of the day if an adult will take this on as a regular duty. When one thinks that one could otherwise spend entire hours in strife and arguing, then this seems like a worthwhile effort. One will also notice that after such a midday interlude, homework, practicing musical instruments and similar activities are accomplished more quickly and with better concentration. The child will soon joyfully realize this themselves and it also presents a good opportunity to praise the child.

A nap taken sometimes and at any given time of day is disturbing to the rhythm of sleeping and waking. At bedtime in the evening another important help is an adult who will listen to all the large and small cares of the day so the child can "get things off his chest." A bedtime prayer is also something that may be helpful.

4. The importance of humor and earnestness

Must we stand before these children with bitterness, correction, and disapproval for every little misdeed? Is not a humorous remark (not ironic or sarcastic) sometimes very successful? Is it not a good feeling to be drawn away from our tense, provocative relationship? In that case, we may not react instinctively to every attack, but rather learn to overlook some things. We point out something interesting, speak to the children indirectly. This engages the intelligence of the children and leads them away from their bitterness about the situation. One can make up little pedagogical stories that specially and cheerfully spotlight the children's behavior but without a confrontation. It is also important that one does not downplay everything and not take it seriously. It is important to have a counterbalance of earnestness, significance, and certainty. Children really do lose their orientation if one were to make an off-hand remark about a tragic accident of a close relative, for example. The children must experience that adults carry deep, religious seriousness within themselves. They orient their feelings and perceptions on these capabilities of adults and one will discover that even the most "insufferable" children will listen devotedly to something with religious content. They even "fall asleep" during the story. Perhaps one must be prepared for an inappropriate remark but this can be understood in the

context of their small capacity for remaining quiet and still. If one questions them afterward then often one finds that the content has been forgotten. It is therefore important that we sometimes pause, explain, and awaken in order to get their attention again.

4. Avoid boredom!

Unstructured and unplanned time during the day has a negative effect on our restless children. They seldom know what to do with themselves. They do not know what to do, they “hang around,” listlessly, lethargic and dissatisfied. They may sit in front of “the tube” or listen to the iPod in their beds. Then they will ride aimlessly around the neighborhood on their bicycles sometimes looking for a fight. With time such things will “make them wild.” Therefore, it is sensible to plan out such an afternoon or a weekend with the children, taking into consideration their own suggestions and organizing their own time. This formative help will be gladly accepted by the children if one will only do it with them. One is often successful if one offers to help children make their own plans as long as we pay attention to their obvious errors in judgment and make appropriate alternative suggestions. Regular practice on a musical instrument is very helpful. However, the child must also be capable of mastering the instrument. Perhaps for some children who have problems with the fine motor skills a violin would not be a good choice.

It also does not make sense for parents to force children to spend hours at home “learning something” if the child spends the hours drowsy, unfulfilled, and in a bad humor. One could name this the “stupefying effect.” That does not mean that a child should do no homework. One must take into consideration that the child has a lessened ability to concentrate and tires easily and may perhaps be already convinced of failure before the work is begun. What rejuvenation can take place when something small is a success; when gradually the idea gets through: “It’s fun to work at something and be successful!”

How can one bring activity and rest into a rhythmic alternation?

It is decisively important to find several small jobs, housework for instance, that the child can do during the day. It could be something like sweeping the steps, preparing drinks (making tea is better than opening a can or bottle because it is a more meaningful activity), setting or clearing the table, water the plants (after some practice first), make the bed, put away toys, and so forth. Of course, jobs like these can be done quickly by adults but then the child would lose the opportunity of experiencing a sense of accomplishment. Homework from school is not really suitable for this purpose because it is often associated with negative experiences. The regularity of these small tasks and the necessary fortitude to accomplish them are the essential elements. They support the ability to do what is necessary when asked, exactly the same as is required for learning in school and later for success in a career.

Endnotes:

1. Therapeutische Gemeinschaft für Kinder-und Jugendpsychiatrie (Therapeutic Community for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry) in Neuenweg, Germany.
2. Older description found in the curative education course given by Rudolf Steiner.

Sugar – The Sweet Addiction

The Unheeded Consequences of Sugar and Sugar Consumption

by

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Translated by Nina Kuettel

Over the last few years sugar has been increasingly blamed as the cause of various illnesses. Until recently the only two accepted truths healthwise about sugar were that diabetics should not eat it because they cannot adequately metabolize it, and that sugar promotes tooth decay. Additionally it has been written in numerous publications¹ that sugar is a pathogenic factor in triggering nearly every illness and can be the cause of an illness worsening. Dr. M.O. Bruker has pointed out repeatedly in many publications in the German speaking world that refined sugar can not only cause illnesses and their worsening, but that it can also be the cause of food intolerances and various metabolic disorders.

There is so much emotion and fanaticism involved with food, and while there are those who reject even the smallest amount of sugar consumption, there are others who recommend it. This conflict will not be solved through passionate beliefs or through observation and experimentation alone. However, an examination of sugar and its special relationship to the human being is worthy of our attention. In order to reach a basis for judgment, I will start by looking at its essential nature.

Human beings are dependent upon their blood sugar, which contains approximately one hundred milligrams glucose per one hundred milliliters of blood. Glucose is of the utmost importance for the metabolism of every cell, especially nerve cells. If blood sugar levels sink significantly, nearly all functions of the organism grow weaker. Among other responses, an overall weakness arises leading to susceptibility to infections and lack of self-control. If the levels sink still further, unconsciousness ensues and, later, death. This emergency of the body can usually be reversed within a few minutes if sugar is given in time. It should now be obvious just how important sugar is to maintaining life.

Sugar, or to be more exact, glucose, is necessary to life and can be found in every plant, every animal, and all human beings. Even though it is possible to isolate sugar out of every life form, an economic profit can naturally only be realized from sugar-rich plants such as sugar beets and sugar cane. Both of these plants, however, do not contain glucose but rather the sweeter sucrose which we normally refer to as sugar. In the market it appears in its highly processed crystalline form as the sugar with which we are all familiar. The so-called grape sugar (glucose) is not in the least refined from grapes. That would be much too expensive. Most often cornstarch or potato starch is broken down into glucose. This is what is available in its purified form as “grape sugar.”

For the past few years, fruit sugar (fructose) has been available in stores in its “pure,” crystalline form. It is sweeter than glucose, more easily metabolized and is therefore better tolerated by diabetics. This processed fruit sugar is also not taken from fruit. As in all of these sugars, there is no legal requirement to declare their origin because this seems superfluous since in these highly purified, isolated substances it is only the chemically standardized form at issue. And in these cases, these descriptions are misleading to consumers who are unaware that the labels refer to a chemically defined substance, not to the source of the substance.

The chemistry of sugar

Sugar, in the customary sense, is the purified, sweet essence derived from sugar cane or sugar beets. Chemists describe this substance as sucrose—a disaccharide, a compound made up of glucose and fructose that is bonded in such a way that it contains virtually a balled-up charge of energy. From a chemical point of view, there are a large number of sugars and they taste very different from one another. For example, fructose is three times as sweet as glucose. Lactose, also a disaccharide, but a compound of glucose and galactose, does not taste very sweet at all. Beyond that, there are very few kinds of chemically recognized sugars that do not taste sweet to human beings. Nature has also provided rare plants that produce substances that taste much sweeter than sugar. Synthetic substances have been produced that taste up to four thousand times sweeter than sugar but contain no sugar at all and lack any nutritional value. These substances will not be dealt with in this article.

It is important to be clear that sugar in its isolated form absolutely does not exist in nature. It appears in the relatively few sweet plants, such as fruits, but always in association with other substances. The only substance in nature that contains concentrated sugar is honey.

Milk sugar (lactose), as the name suggests, is found exclusively in milk. Fruit sugar (fructose) is found above all in fruit but also in flower nectar and therefore makes up to fifty percent of the content of honey. Grape sugar (glucose) is found not only in grapes but in just about every plant juice as well as in human and animal blood (even though the amounts in the latter cases are minimal, they are significant). Glucose makes up the other fifty percent of the sugar content in nectar and honey. Glucose is the most widely present sugar found in nature.

All sugars have the common characteristic of being able to form crystals. This process is used during the purification process whereby sugar cane or sugar beet juice is thickened to the point of crystallization and then further “purified.” Through this process, the two sugars become similar to the point that only with great difficulty is it possible to tell if the sugar is from sugar cane or sugar beets. Interestingly, cane or beet sugar, the white, processed sugar available in stores (99.9% “pure”), is very easy to crystallize. It is possible to produce giant crystals from cane or beet sugar. Rock candy is made from such crystals. Let’s examine what this phenomenon tells us.

Crystals are an expression of the dead mineral world. Life can never stem from crystals. Since sugar always has its origin in life, then the living aspect, at least for the purpose of crystal formation, must be eliminated. In order to avoid any misunderstandings, we should acknowledge that it is possible today to produce protein crystals, amino acid crystals, and vitamin crystals. Nevertheless, they are able to produce life-like effects upon the living. However, when a protein goes into a crystallized form it is no longer the carrier of actual life processes, just as a slaughtered animal is no longer alive. Its meat still contains enough life that it can serve as food. Generally, one must differentiate between the kinds of crystals. Vitamin crystals are very delicate and bushy. They are never really large crystals like rock candy or quartz.

One can determine how far removed from life the crystals are by their formation. This is especially apparent with processed sugar and its giant crystals. It is not so apparent with fruit sugar which is difficult to crystallize and then has only very small crystals. In spite of this, the fact remains that every “pure” sugar is an isolated substance that has a tendency to form crystals. But every isolated substance is dead. There is never a living organism that consists of one, single substance. As far as that goes, the words “to purify” in a chemical sense, when used in a biological sense means “to kill.”

Pathologies

Herein lies the source of many misunderstandings. For example, because it is possible to quickly and easily counteract the fatigue of low blood sugar caused, for instance, by overwork, one believes that it is all right to repeat this process as often as desired. One even looks at it as a necessity to take care of an actual “need” for sugar. In reality, what happens is the following. As opposed to all other nutritional substances, sugar is immediately absorbed into the blood (glucose and regular processed sugar work the quickest). Because of the quick absorption rate, a large amount of sugar overwhelms the organism. There is a relatively sharp increase in blood sugar that the organism counteracts by producing insulin. This leads, however, to a hypoglycemic reaction, that is, low blood sugar that one thinks must be relieved through the intake of sugar. In this way a real addiction is established. By satisfying one “need” a new, usually stronger need is created. That is why the long term treatment for hypoglycemic episodes does not consist of

supplying sugar (even though it's immediately effective), but rather in avoiding all sugar. In principle, it is the same process as the treatment of an addiction.

For this reason, one could describe people who believe they are absolutely dependent on sweets at certain times, because they could not work otherwise, as "addicted" to sugar. They even exhibit symptoms of withdrawal! There is no doubt that the fine line between health and illness has been obscured. Need and gratification then require repetition and, in the end, have mastery over the entire person. Addiction to a substance or an object is the result. This leads to physical disturbances, especially in the metabolic system, as well as a weakening of the personality.

In reality, constantly repeated and overindulgent sugar consumption can be such a burden to the organism that it can no longer control sugar metabolism. The organism becomes unable to withstand the constant influx. Too much sugar results in an attempted equalizing reaction that leads to low blood sugar. Today, we know that these episodes are precursors to diabetes.

As opposed to giving in to the desire for the pleasure of an addiction, real searching, which is a spiritual undertaking, often requires great effort. It can lead to a strengthening of the personality through mastering the addiction.

Hypoglycemia – low blood sugar

The symptoms of low blood sugar (hypoglycemia) are extraordinarily varied. They can appear as fatigue, sleep disturbances, cold sweats, shaking, headache, and a desire for sweets or stimulants such as coffee or alcohol. Furthermore, there are significant fluctuations in blood pressure, dizziness, and disturbances of the liver and eyesight, mood swings, depression, anxiety, aggression, hyperactivity, and associated problems with school or work! Finally, an inability to concentrate, forgetfulness, and irritability can occur. However, all of these symptoms may not necessarily be noticeable at first.

It should be made clear that certain of these symptoms, such as chronic fatigue, depression, or a sudden decline in performance, are very widespread. In these instances very few people (and doctors) think first of a blood sugar problem. The last consequence of very low blood sugar levels is a serious difficulty with conscious awareness, potentially going so far as rendering a person unconscious. If help is not received immediately, the person will die. A one-time measuring of blood sugar levels does not tell us very much. A good picture can be gained first by a sugar-tolerance test and a daily profile. Among many causes of low blood sugar, the most common are due to hunger, shock, emotional stress, and overwork. Today, the widespread, thoughtless consumption of sugar adds one more cause. The following research shows that not only sugar metabolism is affected from being overburdened, but also fat metabolism is adversely affected. For instance, when dogs are fed a sugar-rich diet over a long period of time they develop gallstones, something that does not normally occur in dogs. Such an experiment is clearly against the nature of dogs since they are meat eaters, but it does show that gallstone

formation is in no way only a fat problem as it is usually presented, and that sugar can also negatively influence other metabolic processes. Likewise, it was found that hamsters also formed gallstones when fed a fat-free but sugar-rich diet. The truth that sugar negatively influences fat metabolism can also be seen by the fact that sugar consumption increases fat as well as cholesterol in the blood. The “high blood cholesterol” which is feared by so many people today is in no way an isolated fat problem, but just as much a sugar problem! Unfortunately, the combination of sugar with fat or eggs is the basis for pastries and other palate-delighting confections. It has already been emphatically stated that it is not our objective to thoroughly discredit these substances but rather to be attentive to their consumption in acceptable quantities.

Healthy sugar production

If bread and vegetables are eaten, instead of sugar, then the starches that the former contain (which are, in reality, the stored life of plants) are gradually transformed into sugar through the digestive process. They are transformed into glucose or blood sugar. There is no abrupt rise or corresponding sharp decline in blood sugar levels. Normally, a healthy liver has a large amount of stored glycogen, the equivalent to starch, and there is enough present that can be broken down at any time to assure that adequate amounts of sugar are present in the blood. Therefore, in the normal course of things, the direct intake of sugar is absolutely never a necessity.

Our food can only nourish us in so far as it still contains life and is therefore able to feed life. Only foods that nourish have the right to be considered nourishment. Only a life-sustaining diet has the right to be called “food.” All other edibles are nutritional substances, such as salt, which are necessary to life, but do not contain life. The same is true of other pleasure foods such as coffee, tea, or sugar. A crystalline substance is dead and lacks any life. Sugar still contains calories that can quickly deliver energy to people, but no life.

Life is destroyed when we break food down into isolated substances. In natural products containing sugar one finds exactly those vitamins (B-complex), minerals, and trace elements that the organism needs in order to process the sugar. Human beings, however, are fond of the pure, sweet, sugar, and so it is isolated out. The process requires following certain steps. The fresh sap of a plant is still, almost, an organism. It is more or less only the structure-giving cellulose that has been omitted. During the incremental purification process, all of the “superfluous material” that carries the plant’s specific life force is removed until finally only the pure substance sugar remains. If it is really pure, then no more plant substance can be found within it. The plant’s specific, life-carrying substances have been removed. That is the reason it makes no difference if the white, highly purified sugar comes from sugar cane or sugar beets.

Many people prefer brown sugar, thinking that it still has some life in it. Certainly it does still contain a little “plant.” However, comparing it to white

sugar, we find that the little bit of plant substance remaining is so miniscule that we may as well do without it. Add to this the fact that impurities as well as undesirable byproducts of decomposition resulting from the chemical production can inadvertently find their way in.

The situation is different with molasses. Whether from sugar beets or cane sugar, it is concentrated plant juice. This also applies to whole cane sugar which is produced through a concentration process. These products still have the unique taste and essence of the plant, the sugar cane, which must be taken into consideration when preparing certain recipes. Purified, white sugar, on the other hand, has a neutral, “purely sweet” taste.

Without doubt, concentrated juices do not have the disadvantages of purified substances. However, in every form of food preservation, including dehydration, the living aspect of the food is only partially kept in spite of the fact that the vitamin content may remain completely intact. This is, of course, not the case with fresh products. It should be emphasized that a fresh product always takes biological precedence over a processed product.

Energy versus life

Based upon information in the previous pages it may now be stated that sugar can deliver energy but it cannot deliver life. And life is exactly what people and animals need from their food in order to stimulate their own life forces. It is the task of the liver to form new, lively, even individual body substance from life forces which can serve as a foundation for the respective life. In other words, the liver needs life, but not energy! Strong will forces can be a prominent characteristic of an energetic person, but that does not mean that the person has real vitality, in other words, a lot of etheric life forces. No one can live from this drive, this energy, alone. The energetic drive uses the life force, closely associated with gall formation, that is naturally present in food and which the liver requires to form its own, individual body substance. For this reason, a sick or damaged liver, which needs life, cannot do anything with sugar. It does not deliver the life force that the liver needs to form living substance. It is for this reason that people with liver disease or a weak liver (estimated to be eighty percent of the population in industrialized nations) should, at least for a certain period of time (four weeks as a healing cure), completely abstain from *every* form of sugar in their food. Most people note very significant improvement during this time. Unfortunately, little attention is paid to the fact that increased sugar consumption can burden a (still) healthy liver. Hypoglycemic conditions damage the liver by using a large part of its reserves of glycogen.

Sugar contains a certain number of calories that can be exactly measured, 4.1 calories per gram, but it contains no life. A physically exhausted person, such as a mountain climber, for example, can quickly gain the needed energy to support his fatigued muscles by eating sugar. In such cases sugar can even be life-saving. However, it is an illusion to think that one can take this “substitute energy” for as long as one desires because human beings and

animals continuously need plant or animal substances that contain life in order to live themselves. Energy is expired life.

No human being or animal can exist on sugar alone. Even bees can be fed sugar only for a limited amount of time. Science explains this by saying that sugar is a pure substance that contains no vitamins or minerals. But even if these things are added to sugar, still no living substance has been created. An isolated substance must always have a variety of supports in order to support life. In today's biology, life is not seen as being really self-supporting. In order for life to appear, a variety of substances are required. However, the sum of these substances still cannot form life. Just as the whole is more than the sum of the parts, so is life much more than energy plus vitamins, trace elements, and so on.

It can be seen just how far removed processed sugar is from life by the fact that it is used as a preservative for other life. Sugar is used in the production of marmalades and jams, fruit juices, candied fruits, and so forth. When these products contain at least sixty percent sugar, there is an absolute guarantee of their preserved quality. No microorganisms can thrive in this environment, thus insuring that there is no fermentation. Homemakers produce jams using a "pound for pound" formula, that is, one pound sugar for every pound fruit, which is adequate for household use. Commercial products usually contain sixty percent sugar just to guarantee the shelf life. If the product contains less than fifty percent sugar it must be sterilized or kept refrigerated for use within a short period of time.

If one gives a person sugar, in reality, one is giving that person a stone instead of bread, namely, a crystallized, dead substance that no longer contains life. The situation is completely different if the person eats a sweet piece of fruit. One could argue that fruit also contains sugar. But that argument is misleading because fruit is not made of "components" that have been put together, but is itself an organism that comes from life and still contains life.

Today when people greatly reduce their sugar consumption or abstain temporarily, either by their own volition or on a doctor's advice, they usually do not want to give up the sweet taste they have become accustomed to in their food. Many people believe that honey can be easily substituted for sugar because, after all, it is "so healthy." This error requires closer examination. Likewise, replacing sugar with one of the synthetic sweeteners – for fear of too much calorie intake – as is done in all of the "fat free or light products," does not solve the problem of being addicted to the sweet taste.

Honey

Honey originates from the living organisms of a flower and a bee and represents a unit, not an imposed connection like the insertion of processed sugar into artificial honey. Bee honey is one of nature's most precious products and is therefore more expensive than sugar, and rightly so. Along with glucose and fructose, honey contains a wide variety of highly active substances that have deep-working effects such as enzymes, amino acids, trace elements,

vitamins, and other active ingredients. Since it is an organism emanating from life, honey should not be heated above fifty degrees centigrade. This is not to protect the sugar content, but because the other substances, especially the enzymes, largely associated with honey's germicidal effects, are either damaged or destroyed by heat. Honey was already used in antiquity, for instance, in treating throat infections, diphtheria, and angina. Slowly swallowing small amounts of honey usually brought immediate relief for these conditions. Honey was also used externally on wounds that would not heal. Through its unique structure, honey not only became a food, but also a medicine. For this reason, it should not be consumed in unlimited quantities but rather in small doses like a medicine.

Due to these characteristics, honey is not appropriate for infants! Not only does it easily cause diarrhea, it also has other effects that are not tolerated by infants, unlike lactose, the sugar that is present in milk. It is true that human milk, with seven percent sugar content, is much sweeter than animal milk, but milk sugar has special tasks that are especially important for infants, such as supporting brain development. It can be shown to the smallest detail that the fruit sugar found in honey has exactly the opposite qualities of the galactose which is found only in milk sugar. It deserves serious consideration that milk sugar is found nowhere else except in milk. It has certain tasks that other sugars cannot perform unless they are transformed by the organism, which would mean a developmentally inappropriate burden for an infant.

In earlier times people still knew that milk was for infants and honey was for old people! Infants or small children can connect themselves to the earth with the help of milk, and older people, by eating honey, can free themselves from being too strongly connected to the earth, allowing a reconnection with the spirit. Today we have almost the opposite situation in which infants are being fed honey instead of sugar and old people are being advised to drink a lot of milk as a "protection against osteoporosis." The far-reaching consequences of this practice for the entire development of humankind are presently being absolutely ignored.

Why do human beings—and some animals—have a pronounced desire for sweets? In every case, a "sugar craving" is something that is artificially produced because there is no such thing as pure sugar existing in nature. Truly sweet products are a rarity, and there is certainly a reason for this! The previously mentioned physiological effects of sugar (glucose, not white, processed sugar, to be more exact) that are necessary to life are an expression of another task that has been identified through spiritual-scientific research. Sugar has significance for humankind that reaches far beyond the biological realm. And this touches on the sweet taste. Only a few animals, such as ants and horses, are attracted to it while the majority of the animals, especially goats, prefer salt. For many people, the sweet taste is highly attractive and synonymous with pleasure. In this connection, we are dealing with a spiritual-soul issue! It is significant that we can observe sugar having opposite effects. For as long as sugar has been around, it has been known that a glass of sugar

water or relaxing herbal tea with honey before bed was a harmless, yet effective sleeping potion. But the exact same amount of sugar eaten during the day has a stimulating effect! On the one hand, this contradiction is connected with the rhythm of the liver, whereby it is more active during the night and better able to process sugar than during the day. On the other hand, the prerequisite for the “stimulating” effect of sugar is that the person is active! However, there are people, who, after eating a sweet breakfast, as is the norm today, practically collapse from tiredness two or three hours later. This is again a problem with the liver that demands that these people absolutely refrain from sugar and all sweet foods in the morning.

Ego power

It can be said that, in general, when people eat sugar, they immediately feel a certain increase in strength. The reason for this is not only that energy is made available. Above all, the feeling of increased strength has to do with the fact that people feel that they have an expanded basis for their activity. They not only feel more physical capability, but are also more alert and spiritually stronger because the sugar gives their ‘I’ a significantly larger foundation. The ‘I’ (ego) feels superior and stronger. But it is a fateful misunderstanding to think that the ‘I’ itself has become stronger in the sense that sugar has strengthened it. It is not possible that the human individuality, the ego, could be so easily strengthened by using such a simple good-tasting substance, a luxury food, like sugar. The individuality can certainly experience advancement, but only through life-long practice, work, effort, learning, and even a certain amount of self-denial. Human abilities can be developed only through repeated practice, through an effort of the will. This begins with a toddler’s learning to walk and continues right through all the abilities that must be gained along the path of spiritual development.

Sugar certainly does strengthen the ‘I’-feeling, the impression of being strong, but this is completely independent from one’s actual strength. It has to do, more or less, with an illusion, a “borrowed” and not an earned strength. That is the reason why children, especially, like sweet things. Sugar makes it possible for them to “feel right at home” in their organism. It even gives them a feeling of strength and superiority, which children need to a certain degree, but must develop on their own. For this same reason, older people also have an increased desire for sweets. They feel their waning strength and realize they can no longer keep pace with younger people in many areas. Sugar energizes them again and allows them to feel like strong individuals so that they can maintain themselves in their bodies.

It should be emphasized once more that we are dealing with an acute, temporary increase in physical energy but not with a strengthening of the ‘I.’ It is only a strengthened feeling of the presence of spirit. Sugar does not support the ‘I,’ but rather the ‘I’-organization. Rudolf Steiner clearly distinguished the two in his written works. Although I cannot go into detail here, for the sake of clarity let it just be said that the ‘I’-organization is the

spiritual instrument for the 'I.'² It is what differentiates us as human beings and gives us all the qualities that the animals do not have: walking upright, speaking, and thinking. Also, human beings must learn these things, something not required of animals.

For example, it is well-known that enormous problems arise when a great deal of money, a fast car, or an important position come into the hands of weak-willed, or not yet fully developed individuals who cannot (yet) control themselves. They are itching to demonstrate "their" power, to "show-off." Whether this is exhibited through speeding, bragging, or abuse of power, it is at the expense of the surrounding environment. These people are under the illusion that they themselves are strong and powerful. This is exactly how sugar affects the 'I'-organization in human beings. It can create a false egoism with feelings of strength based on illusion. A truly strong 'I' is always modest and unassuming.

Even though people are dependent upon blood sugar as a substance that is necessary for life and for support of the 'I'-organization, there is no biological need for refined sugar consumption. If carbohydrates, vegetables, and fruits are eaten, then metabolic activity is required in order to digest the starch contained in these foods and transform it into blood sugar. If refined sugar is eaten directly, then this inner activity does not occur; the finished product is received without the least bit of effort. It is the same with the soul aspect. It is known that we do not really do a child any favors when we excuse the child from putting forth effort or doing an activity such as learning new skills, hiking, practicing, and even voluntarily doing without some desired object. The results of this well-intentioned "help" often show up later in life as serious problems, such as a lack of an ability when it is needed, or a weakness in the digestive system, the immune system, or as an emotional or spiritual weakness. These insufficiencies recall when a child was not given the possibility of facing challenges, which could have resulted in a true strengthening of the 'I' and the development of inner capacities. All direct introduction of "finished" products – vitamin D, sugar, as well as play with "finished" dolls or pictures – dampens self-activity and weakens the 'I.' Finished products provide the illusion of strength, of being able to do anything, have anything, and master anything. Sugar supports this feeling through a quick, but temporary, "borrowed" increase in strength, but at the same time the 'I' does not gain any ability to cope with it! The 'I' can develop only through practice and by overcoming adversity.

The result in youth is that an undeveloped, or not completely competent 'I' will not be able to use this increased 'I'-feeling sensibly. If someone hikes up a mountain and another person takes a cable car, both have reached the top. They have achieved the same thing, the mountaintop, but only in appearance. The significance of the inner experience as well as muscle development are greatly different for each.

The ideal in our entire way of life today seems to be to gain as much as possible (money, pleasure, success) with as little effort as possible. Opportunity for inner development gained only through self-activity is, of

necessity, left behind. In this regard, sugar has an empowering effect because it quickly and easily lends a feeling of “energy” and “pleasure.”

Earthly circumstances

Rudolf Steiner pointed out that civilization’s development (not culture) runs parallel to sugar consumption because sugar makes possible a “stronger independence of our thinking capacity.”³ “One could say that through sugar consumption a kind of innocent egoism is created that can form a counterbalance against the necessary selflessness in the area of the moral-spiritual. Otherwise the temptation would be too great that people would not only be selfless but also dreamy and full of fantasies. They would lose connection with a healthy ability to judge earthly circumstances. In this respect, a certain addition of sugar to the diet contributes to giving us the possibility, despite our rising up into the spiritual realms, to stand with both feet planted firmly on the ground. We have the opportunity to cultivate within ourselves a certain healthy, earthly view. On the whole, one can say that eating sugar physically raises the quality of a person’s personality.”⁴

These statements were made in 1913 and in the past eighty years general sugar consumption has increased considerably. The danger that a person would become only “selfless, dreamy and fantasy-filled” is hardly the case today. Today’s humanity stands much more “with both feet on the ground,” usually too much so.

In another lecture he gave in 1923 Steiner said: “Sugar is that which keeps human beings strong inside if, at the same time, it is carried over into the organism in the right way.”⁵ He foretells that populations with high sugar consumption will become self-confident and egoistic and that populations with little sugar consumption will become non-egoistic and weaker. It should be made clear that Steiner’s use of the word “weaker” does not refer to physical or spiritual strength, but rather that the “quality within the personality” does not make a very strong appearance. The ‘I’ is more contained and not aggressive, nor is it strongly egoistic. Here, again, we should take into consideration that world conditions were much different in 1923.

The point stands, however, that the way of life demanded by civilization awakens a desire for sugar because the pace of life is ever quickening and requires ever more performance capacity and energy. The quantities of sugar used by the average human being today is significantly more than at the turn of the century. Increased sugar consumption further stimulates the feeling of superiority and advantage which further stimulate life’s tempo. The pressure to achieve increases; we meet that pressure with sugar which, for its part, supports more productivity, and we have a never-ending cycle that finally ends in exhaustion because no real life-containing substances are consumed. It is a fact that many people today believe they would not have enough energy to get through the day without sugar. What that means, however, is that they are addicted to sugar.

Sugar consumption

The following table shows world-wide sugar production starting in the nineteenth century:

1800	0.25 million tons
1850	1.50 million tons
1900	over 11.00 million tons
1980-90	70 – 80.00 million tons

While world population has increased from 900 million in 1800 to 1.6 billion in 1900 and 5.6 billion in 1990, the relative sugar consumption has increased disproportionately:

1800 in Europe	1 kilogram = approx. 2.7 gr./day
1850 in Europe	2.5 kg 7.0 gr./day
1980 in Europe	40.3 kg 110.0 gr./day
1980 in USA	50.3 kg 137.0 gr./day
1980 in Australia	55.3 kg 151.0 gr./day
1980 in Ireland	69.1 kg 189.0 gr./day

After World War II, during which there was a reduction in sugar production, there followed a rapid increase which has declined in the last few years. For example, in the 1980s in Switzerland, 48 kilograms of sugar were consumed per person per year. In 1990, that number decreased to 41 kilograms. In Germany it went from 132 grams per day down to 112 grams.

Before World War II, children were given sweets only rarely as a reward. Today, on the other hand, it is taken for granted to indulge, often many times a day. Children even demand sweets, and the vast assortment that is available in all the stores makes it tempting to give in to those demands. A study in the USA showed that the largest amounts of sweets were consumed by youth between the ages of twelve and fourteen. They eat 140 to 150 pounds of sugar per year, or approximately 178 grams per day.

As for the consumption of ice cream in Europe, it varies by geographic areas, but the maximum consumption is not in nations with hot climates, but in Sweden. In 1993, the Swedes consumed 13.8 liters of ice cream per person followed by Denmark with 9.7 liters. Next in line were Italy, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, and the Netherlands with 8–9 liters. The populations of Spain and Greece consumed the least amount of ice cream with approximately 4 liters per person. It becomes clear that the cooling effect of ice cream is not the attraction but rather a desire for quick eating pleasure and sweet taste that obviously varies among the different nations.

The increased desire for sweets in our time certainly has various causes. Infants receive processed sugar already in their formula, which is significantly sweeter than natural lactose found in breast milk. (The possibility of putting

natural lactose into infant formula has been thoroughly researched but that is another subject that I can not deal with in this paper.) Young children are thoughtlessly fed sugar whereby their healthy appetites further deteriorate. Furthermore, sugar, like salt, enhances the flavor of foods (more specifically it heightens the pleasure sensation), and so sugar is a popular additive even in salty foods. (Tomato catsup is 14% sugar!). Pickles, canned fish (!), salads, and, in the USA, every loaf of bread are sweetened with sugar, syrup, honey, molasses, or artificial sweeteners. Through this, eating habits are changed and healthy appetites ruined.

Additionally an increased desire for sweets can be caused by an actual need: the organism is missing something and it searches for what is missing. Among other things, the desire for sweets can be caused by a need for minerals (calcium, iron, trace elements, and so forth) that are not often present in the diet anymore and are then unconsciously, but incorrectly, replaced by the “mineral” sugar. If one nourishes this need for minerals with a whole-foods diet (whole grain bread and fresh organic fruits and vegetables) and completely refrains from refined sugar, then the desire for sugar will disappear when one’s blunted sense of healthy appetite becomes normalized, in about four to six weeks. During this time one must “stay the course” through insight and will.

What else is missing? Affection, contact, or love. Sugar can be a satisfying replacement for emotional emptiness. Actually, a lack of affection does not always mean that, for instance, a mother does not love her child. On the contrary, an overabundance of tenderness or a parent’s best intentions in fulfilling a child’s every wish can cause defensiveness in the child. In spite of everything, or perhaps because of it, the child does not feel understood, is disappointed, and turns to sugar as a surrogate. It is not only children who do this! Often, partners or friends are pampered and given gifts instead of love and understanding. Nutritionally this is offering sugar instead of life. In these cases, emotional-soul or organic-physical emptiness is the result and, furthermore, the substitute that gives satisfaction demands repetition.

Fungus infections

The consumption of refined sugar lays fertile ground for fungal infection and infection in general, and during the past decades yeast or fungus infections have become a widespread problem. Sugar feeds the yeast.

I am referring not to the cultured yeasts, harmless and of great benefit, but to “wild” yeasts that are pathogenic for humans because they cause illness. There are different genera such as blastomycetes, especially *candida albicans*, which is the most widespread. It can be found in various skin diseases, in digestive tract or bronchial disorders, or in other internal organs. Today, almost everyone has had some kind of foot fungus, which is itself not very bothersome, but can affect large areas of skin or internal organs.

The “imperfect fungus” *candida albicans* has been known for a long time and often appears as a white coating in the mouth of weakened infants

or diabetics. It was considered harmless and “only” a sign that there was a weakness present. A few decades ago it was discovered that *candida albicans* was not only present in the mouth but tended to proliferate throughout the intestinal tract (from mouth to anus), especially in the mucous membranes, and from there could infect other systems and lead to serious health problems. Sugar that has not been metabolized (diabetics) is especially appealing to sugar-loving yeast, and *candida albicans* is the most prominent in this group. The cause of propagation then, is not any sort of “determination” of the microorganisms to spread. It is the same cause as the original infection, namely a general weakness present which has extended into various other regions of the body. It is clear that a fertile breeding ground for these microorganisms plays a decisive role in this process.

Granted, not every person will become infected with a fungus. A weakened immune system must be present, as occurs after a treatment with antibiotics, for example, in which healthy intestinal bacteria is also destroyed. A disturbance of the “healthy” bacteria found in the intestinal flora can also appear after palliative treatments or from taking birth control pills for longer periods of time. Very overweight people and diabetics are also in danger of being infected with a fungus or yeast bacteria.

The symptoms of a fungal infection range from chronic fatigue to digestive complaints to depression. Even some lung problems such as chronic bronchitis and asthma can be rooted in fungal infections.

The prerequisite for becoming “infected” this way is a certain susceptibility to illness, a “breeding ground” for fungi that is, in reality, a weakness. Metabolic failures occur when the influx of sugar, for example, becomes so great that the organism can no longer deal with it.

Since sugar consumption in the last few decades has increased, then these yeast cultures can easily degenerate because of excess sugar that has not been properly metabolized leaving them free rein because the controlling force of the organism is too weak.

The metabolism of these “wild” strains is different from that of the cultured strains. In addition to alcohol, they also produce completely different byproducts, some of which are poisonous. This can also be the result in the manufacture of fermented products, especially cheap distillations to which the human organism can react with headache, fatigue, or various metabolic disorders. In other words, they can create symptoms similar to a hangover from drinking too much alcohol.

Certainly, these symptoms are relatively harmless in the beginning. But a chronic continuance can become a serious hindrance to a person. If this condition continues for a long period of time, then the organism becomes resigned, the immune system becomes weaker, and the fungus can then infect other organs outside of the intestines. It is estimated that in Germany approximately eight to ten thousand people die per year as a result of fungal yeast infections, in most cases *candida albicans*.

As is the way of our times, special medicines have been developed to kill these fungal yeasts. Often the symptoms disappear quickly but return after a while because the conditions in which the yeast thrives (sugar) are still present. Real treatment of the cause can not simply be the destroying the yeast but rather must include a diet that is sugar-free as well as white-flour free (the so-called anti-yeast diet). White flour products are baked with yeast and present the organism with an easily digestible starch that quickly becomes sugar, which in turn becomes the breeding ground for more yeast.

Bread baking

Bread baking has completely changed in the last decades. Until fairly recent times, rye was the preferred grain for bread. For millennia it was baked with sourdough. Sourdough also contains yeast but its yeast does not create alcohol but rather lactic acid. The processes used to make these natural, lactic acid products have been known since antiquity. In very recent times the significance of lactic acid to a healthy metabolism has been rediscovered but the concept has not yet broken through into general practice.

Since the sourdough starter had to be saved until the next baking, it was sometimes not stored properly and would spoil, resulting in the bread not rising or other acids and products being formed which would create a bad taste. It was found that all of it could be avoided by using yeast and so baking became more practical, much quicker, and more certain in its outcome. Bread baked with yeast was also lighter and more easily digested. That is why yeast gradually gained preference over sourdough.

However, what was not considered was the importance of the dough preparation before baking. Preparation of the dough introduces a breaking-down process in which a predigestion takes place making later digestion easier. There are, however, two different ways in which this can take place. *Yeast* influences the starch in the bread to actually begin the process of fermenting alcohol, although this should not occur in the human organism. In contrast to this, the lactic acid formation in *sourdough* fosters the breaking down of sugar as is appropriate for the human organism. Within a healthy human metabolism, glucose is broken down into lactic acid which has special functions. For example, it can be easily re-formed into glycogen. It also creates the proper foundation for the growth of microorganisms that are essential to good health.

It should become clear that the path of alcohol fermentation is very problematic for human beings. It is not the alcohol created by yeast during bread-baking that is decisive, since it almost completely disappears during baking because of the heat. Much more important is the path of digestion the organism is prompted to take. On the one hand, there is the path that is compatible with the original, natural digestive process, that is, lactic acid formation. In contrast to this is the “alcohol path” which leads the sugar metabolism in a completely different direction (yeast fermentation) and which the organism must correct. In other words, using yeast supports one form of

digestion, and the organism is prompted to continue this path in its own process. Here, then, we find two possibilities presented. A healthy person can accomplish this without problem, but the important factor is the long-term effect. Such “small disturbances” are compensated for over time. However, if this goes on for decades or even generations and it is encouraged through a certain product (in this case, sugar), then the metabolism is guided into a false direction. This is now the case the whole world over.

These changes are rooted in trying to make something easier, in this case, bread production. However, in the end it is harmful to the digestive process. For instance, digesting white bread requires hardly any effort and digesting sugars requires none at all.

Today, wheat is the grain most often used in baking bread. The word “wheat” is almost interchangeable with the word “grain” in our modern language usage. Approximately one hundred years ago, people ate double the amount of rye than wheat. Today there is three times more wheat consumed than rye, and that tendency is on the increase. Whole wheat is very easily digested but its lack of lysine makes it incomplete. White bread made with yeast is the most easily digested and its transformation into sugar happens much faster than with rye.

That is why, in order to cure fungal yeast infections, it is necessary to make the transition from wheat bread to rye bread. One must be careful to use natural sourdough starter. Today even so-called sourdough bread is made using mostly yeast, or an artificial sourdough, or “sour ingredients” such as vinegar and other products. This allows the dough to rise faster or gives it the appropriate taste but it does not guide the digestion down the same path as real sourdough.

The human desire to have everything as quickly as possible, as simply as possible, and as “certain” as possible is probably the underlying cause of the development of a preference for yeast bread over sourdough. As we know not everything that is easier is also better. Yeasted breads have been around for only about a hundred years. Baking bread from sourdough has gone on for thousands of years. (It is spoken of in the Bible.) The fact that over time the entire metabolism has been reprogrammed is noticed only after years, decades, and perhaps not even then. It is very difficult to change well-loved and widely accepted habits such as sugar and white bread consumption. Naturally, this does not mean that people must give up eating sugar completely! Rather, it should be recognized that the root cause of many weaknesses, illnesses, and aberrations can be found in excessive and long-term consumption of sugar and refined carbohydrates. Over time, creating an easier process for the sake of economics, with its implications in the digestion process, will become a burden.

Sugar today is not only a pathogenic factor able to cause physical harm with long term use. A much more serious problem is found at the soul-spiritual level whereby a person’s development is influenced through an illusionary strength attained by a temporary gain in energy. It does not make sense to avoid sugar altogether, but one must return sugar consumption to a more

moderate and acceptable level than is the case today. This especially applies to those with already weakened constitutions, as is so prevalent worldwide, and the tendency is on the rise.

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Sunlight

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Introduction

When we go outside on a sunny day, in a short period of time we feel relaxed, calm, and refreshed. Sunlight creates a cheerful, calm mood; it increases our efficiency and brings joy to our work. Why this happens will be understood if we remain mindful how human beings stand united with their environment.



Head: Sense organs and nerves

Light

Chest: Heart and lungs

Air

Abdomen: Inner organs, organs of digestion

Liquids and solids

Sunlight provides our main source of sensory perception because sight, the taking in of light through the eyes, is the sense upon which we most heavily rely. The light we take in from the environment is just as important as the air that goes into our lungs and the liquids and solids that go into our mouth. The human organism takes in light not only through the eyes but also through the skin and even through the lungs when air, permeated with the sunlight of a bright summer day, is inhaled. It is essential to life that we “nourish” ourselves with light.

Today, however, getting the necessary exposure to the sun cannot be taken for granted. First of all, fashion dictates a tanned skin tone that gives people a fresh, vital, and youthful appearance. Unfortunately, the way in

which a tan is achieved is often unhealthy. Secondly, the quality of sunlight has changed in the last decades. Through a thinning of the ozone layer in the stratosphere, more ultraviolet light is making its way to the earth's surface; sunlight is now more "aggressive." Both aspects, the demands of fashion and the changed quality of sunlight, have led to an increase in chronic sun damage to the skin such as premature aging and skin cancer.

The two-sided nature of sunlight with its positive and negative effects on plants, animals, and human beings, can be graphically illustrated in the German word for light, *Licht*.

L - ich - t

Leben (life) <—————> Tod (death)

The German word "ich" means I or ego.

Light means life. An especially important example of this is the photosynthesis of green plants. The chlorophyll in plants uses sunlight to form sugar from the carbon dioxide found in the air and the water in the ground. Human beings owe our existence upon the earth to the presence of sunlight. But light also means death. For instance, it is possible to keep an operating room free of bacteria when ultraviolet lamps are left on overnight because the light kills bacteria. Human beings must find a middle ground between the life-giving and the life-destructive effects of sunlight by maintaining our 'I' between both extremes. The effects of sunlight on human beings, whether helpful to physical development and activating at a soul-spiritual level, or harmful to the body and soul, depend upon the common sense of the person exposed to it.

The following is intended as a presentation about the effects of light on the bodies and souls of human beings and a short guide for finding the proper exposure to sunlight. A series of practical tips follows for dealing with sunlight. Readers should then be in a position to use sunlight to the best advantage for their health and well-being.

The quality of sunlight

First, let us look at sunlight itself.

Viewed from the physical aspect, sunlight has three different parts:

- *Ultraviolet Rays* (UVA and UVB)—They have the most intense effect upon organic nature (plants, animals, humans). They are necessary for photosynthesis in plants. They cause tanning of the skin in people and, in the case of overexposure, sunburn, chronic sun damage, and skin cancer.
- *Visible Light*—It forms the greatest part of sunlight on the Earth's surface and can be perceived with the eyes.

The *intensity of sunlight* and the relationship of the different components of light to one another are dependent upon:

- *Position of the sun*: This varies according to geographic latitude, time of year, and time of day.
- *Elevation*: For example, the plains or the mountains
- *Degree of cloudiness*
- *Degree of air pollution*: Badly polluted layers of air allow less light to penetrate so that the smog cloud over a large city paradoxically provides protection from the sun.
- *Condition of the earth's surface*: For example, snow or sand

The ozone layer

The most important protective shield against the ultraviolet radiation of the sun that life has on the earth is the *ozone layer* in the stratosphere (six to thirty-one miles above sea level). In the last ten years there has been a two to five percent measured decrease in the stratospheric ozone over the northern hemisphere. This decrease has been the result mostly of human activity. Chlorine from chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) rises into the stratosphere and destroys the ozone there. These substances are commonly used as cooling agents in refrigerators and air conditioners, as propellants in aerosol sprays, and in the manufacture of synthetic foam materials used in insulation and packing, and in such common items as disposable plates and cups. The chlorine gas that is propelled high into the atmosphere by volcanic eruptions is a secondary cause of depletion of the ozone layer.

Changes in light quality

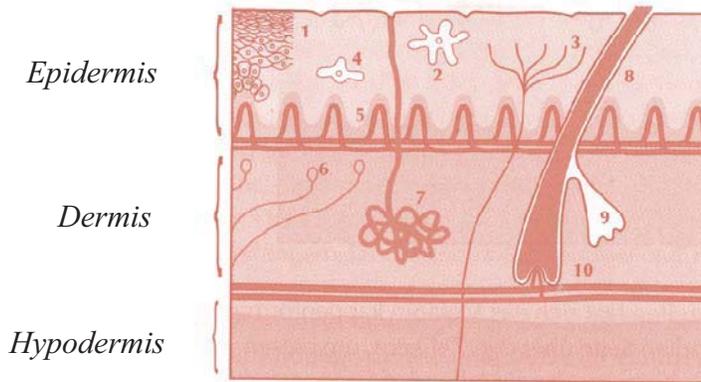
The main effect of the thinner ozone layer is in the *quality of sunlight*. There is an increase in biologically active ultraviolet radiation (UVB). This can be objectively measured, and subjectively, it is clearly perceptible. For instance, older people who have been working in agriculture their entire lives notice that sunlight has become “more aggressive” in the last few years. Various consequences, covered later in this article, emphasize the increasing importance of developing a conscious relationship with sunlight and the necessity of effectively protecting ourselves from it.

The protective function of the skin

Skin Formation

If one looks at a skin specimen under the microscope, one will see three layers. The outermost layer is the epidermis with its many protective cells. Next is the dermis made up of connective tissue that is a mesh of tough fibers that give the skin its firmness and elasticity. The bottom layer is the hypodermis or subcutaneous layer; it contains fatty tissue and gives the body its round form, acts as padding, and provides warmth. The epidermis is closely interconnected with the dermis. The innermost layer of the dermis is where

the protective cells of the epidermis are constantly dividing and forming new cells. During their migration to the skin surface, protective substances and fat develop and finally mature to the point where they are sluffed off as dead skin cells.



1. Horny Cell 2. Immune Cell 3. Nerve (hot/cold, pain) 4. Melanocyte (pigment producer)
5. Blood vessel 6. Nerve ending (pressure) 7. Sweat Gland 8. Hair 9. Sebaceous Gland
10. Hair follicle

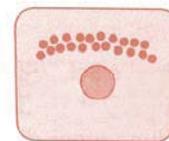
Protective layer

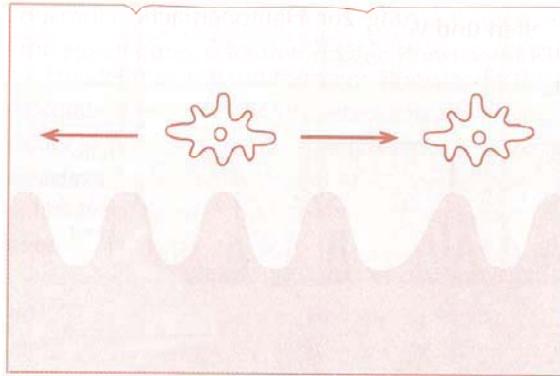
It is the epidermis that protects the skin against sunlight. The UVB portion of sunlight activates the epidermis to form a thicker protective layer that reflects, filters and diffuses the sun rays. If a person gradually increases his time spent in the sun each day without getting sunburn, it will take about two to three weeks for the protective layer of the epidermis to completely form. A well-formed protective outer skin layer can be exposed to the sun four times longer without sunburning than skin that does not have this protective layer.

Tanning

The second and more effective protective function of the skin is the tanning of the skin. The epidermis contains melanocytes, cells which produce pigment. They are quite mobile and move back and forth in a horizontal direction between the protective horny cells. By their rather hose-like motion they are able to “fill” the protective cells with pigment (melanin). Melanin is draped like an umbrella over the nuclei of the horny cells in the epidermis on the side that faces the sunlight, thus shading them from the penetrating rays of the sun.

*Epidermal Cell
with Pigment*





*Pigment Production
in the Epidermis*

Because the cell nucleus contains the genetic information of the cell which could be damaged by outside light, it needs protection. Sunlight damage to the cell nucleus marks the beginning of skin cancer.

UVB rays activate the pigment producers and start the process of skin tanning. The melanocytes react slowly to UVB rays and reach their maximum output of pigment only after ten to twenty days. In contrast, UVA rays can effect an immediate tan, but it is significantly weaker protection than the slowly built up tan induced by UVB rays.

The length of sun exposure without burning increases up to ten-fold when the skin has been maximally tanned during a two- to three- week gradual process. It should be emphasized that the epidermis does not react immediately with an increase in tolerance. Rather, developing good tolerance to sunlight proceeds slowly. Just like every other process in the kingdom of life, it needs time!

By daily increasing the amount of exposure and avoiding sunburn, an individual's tolerance of the sun can be optimally improved over two to three weeks. In this way, people with light complexions can increase the length of time between exposure and reddening of the skin up to forty-fold. That means that tolerance can be built up from ten minutes to five hours after a three-week period without complications.

Sunburn

The widely accepted assumption, "No tan without a sunburn!" is false. Melanin production in the melanocytes reaches its maximum before UVB rays cause reddening. Reddening can be evaluated as a "cry from the skin." It signifies the beginning of sunburn which in turn causes the shedding of skin cells and the loss of any tan or protective layer. Therefore, sunburn actually prolongs the time it takes to build up optimal tolerance.

Skin type

The skin's sensitivity to UVB and UVA varies from person to person. It is mainly dependent upon the amount of pigment in the skin. In Europe people have been grouped into four different pigmentation types, each with a different level of sensitivity:

- Skin Type 1: Celtic Type (two percent of the population)
Pale skin tone, red hair, freckles, blue or green eyes, seldom brown eyes, extremely sensitive skin.
Reaction to sunlight: Immediate, intense reddening, exposure lasting more than five or ten minutes causes increasing sunburn, no tanning.
- Skin Type 2: Light-skinned Europeans (twelve percent of the population)
Light skin tone, blond hair, seldom freckles, blue, green, or gray eyes, sensitive skin.
Reaction to sunlight: Sunburn when exposure is longer than ten to twenty minutes, light tanning.
- Skin Type 3: Dark-skinned Europeans (seventy-eight percent of the population)
Light brown skin tone, dark blond to brown hair, gray or brown eyes, and good tolerance for sunlight.
Reaction to sunlight: Sunburn is seldom, good tanning.
- Skin Type 4: Mediterranean Type (eight percent of the population)
Brown to dark brown skin tone, dark brown to black hair, skin is most tolerant of sunlight.
Reaction to sunlight: Never sunburn, tan quickly and deeply.

Obviously, people with Skin Types 1 or 2 must be especially careful.

Beneficial effects of sunlight

Sunlight is just as important to human beings daily as the air we breathe and the food and water we consume. A measured amount of sunlight increases physical ability. Physicians credit sunlight with an improved exchange of oxygen from red blood cells and improved blood circulation. It also precipitates the production of vitamin D in the skin. (Vitamin D is responsible for regulation of calcium metabolism and is therefore important for bone mineralization and density.) From sunlight, people take in formative forces through their skin all the way to the innermost regions, into the bones, where they help with form and density.

Most everyone has probably experienced how a cold that has gone on for weeks and just does not improve will suddenly disappear when one can sit in the early spring sunshine for a half-hour after lunch. That happens because the sunlight stimulates the immune system. Here too, it is a blessing when the sunlight is enjoyed in the right measure.

Last but not least, another of the beneficial effects of sunlight is therapy for skin diseases in combination with climate therapy by the ocean or in the mountains. Treatment with sunlight exposure has proven especially effective for neurodermatitis and psoriasis.

Harmful effects of sunlight

Just as with everything else that is taken in through the mouth and gastrointestinal tract: “The dose makes the poison.” (Paracelsus) The amount of sunlight exposure determines the good or bad effects to the human organism.

Too much long-wave UVA exposure can cause:

- Skin infections through the interaction of light with chemical substances on the skin resulting in a poisoning effect or allergy.
- Sun allergy
- Chronic sun damage to the skin

Since UVA rays can penetrate window glass, it is advisable to protect oneself from sunlight in an automobile if a person is susceptible to a sun allergy. UVB rays are only partially filtered out by window glass.

Too much short-wave UVB exposure can cause:

- Sunburn
- Eye infections
- Suppression of the immune system
- Chronic skin damage: skin cancer and pigmented lesions
- Skin moles
- Cataracts

The infrared portion of sunlight with its intense warming effect can cause:

- Sunstroke
- Heat Cramps
- Heat Stroke

Infrared rays can also intensify the harmful effects of UVB rays, especially sunburn.

The following is a short description of the harmful effects of sunlight from its acute to its chronic effects.

Sunburn: Sunburn is in degrees a reddening of the skin all the way to a full burning accompanied by swelling to the point and including blistering. In this case, the amount and intensity of sunlight exposure has led to a skin infection. The skin itches and feels tight and painful. Fever may also ensue. The end result is loss of skin cells and tissue.

Eye Infection: The protective and connective tissues of the eyes can also be burned and react to too much sunlight with an infection. The eyes become reddened and one has the feeling that some foreign object has landed in them.

Sun Allergy: Sun allergies usually appear after the first, intensive exposure to the sun (for example, in the spring or during a vacation in a sunny, warm climate in the winter). Itchy, red spots or bumps appear everywhere the skin was exposed to the sun. The cause is most often the body’s own metabolic

products that lead to a skin reaction when they are exposed to sunlight. Substances added to the skin, such as sunscreen lotion, might become poisonous or cause an allergic reaction when exposed to sunlight.

Mallorca acne: One example of this kind of reaction is an acne-like rash with red bumps and pustules, most often caused by perfumes and emulsifiers found in sunscreen lotions that react with sunlight. Sun allergies can be imitated by a whole array of different skin diseases that are instigated or exacerbated by sunlight.

Sunstroke: Infrared rays of the sun penetrate deeply and can even irritate the cortex of the brain when the head and neck are exposed to the sun. This is how sunstroke occurs with headache, nausea, fever, and dizziness even to the point of a complete collapse.

Heat cramps: Long, hard, physical labor in the bright sunshine causes sweating resulting in the lowering of the salt content in the body. This can cause heat cramps.

Overheating: In conditions of great heat and high humidity perspiration can not evaporate properly and the body can overheat. The body tries to give off heat by increasing blood circulation to the skin, which causes a drop in blood pressure. A heat collapse is accompanied by dizziness, problems with vision, buzzing in the ears, and an increase in the pulse and breathing rate.

Sun poisoning: If a person goes for a hike on a glacier, for instance, and is exposed to the intensive sun, it can happen that a blister appears on the lips. The cause is a suppression of the immune system in the sun-exposed skin and also in the entire body. An appropriate amount of sunlight stimulates the immune system, but too much sunlight suppresses it.

Chronic sun damage: Normal aging of the skin involves a decrease in the connective tissue of the dermis. That is why the skin of older people is thin, dry, and wrinkled with even tanning. This aging process can be accelerated by overexposure to sunlight. The normal aging process can also be exaggerated. The sum total of the effect of too much sunlight over decades is an extremely dry, flaky, yellow-white skin tone with deep lines and wrinkles. Facial skin especially loses its elasticity and sags as if it is too big for the face.

Cataracts: In the eye, damage from sunlight can result in a clouding of the lens and a cataract. The aging individual sees as if through a gray veil and will eventually grow blind.

Age spots: Age spots often appear on the skin of older people who have chronic sun damage. They are concentrations of pigment, brown and usually on the face, the backs of the hands, and the lower arms, areas whenever the most sunlight has reached the skin.

Skin cancer: Skin cancers that begin in the protective cells of the epidermis are relatively benign because they usually do not metastasize. However, they can grow slowly over a period of years or decades into the under layers of the skin and destroy the tissue in that area, and eventually bone tissue. These types of skin cancers should be surgically removed as soon as possible.

Melanoma: Much more dangerous is the malignant melanoma, the black skin cancer that starts in the pigment-producing cells of the dermis and can quickly metastasize into the lymph nodes and the inner organs. Cases of this type of melanoma are increasing at the greatest rate in middle Europe. Over eight thousand people a year in Germany become ill with malignant melanoma. If it is detected early and surgery is performed immediately, the chances of a cure are good. However, those chances rapidly decline when detected at a later stage.

What are the signs of melanoma? There are four characteristics of which one should be aware that would make a mole on the skin suspect:

- diameter of the brown spot is more than five millimeters
- irregular outline, sometimes clearly delineated, sometimes not
- no symmetry; that is, the form is not round or oval but rather loose
- mottled pigmentation; the mole has dark and light parts next to each other

If a person finds a pigmented mole on the skin that exhibits one or more of these characteristics, he should have it checked by a dermatologist. These characteristics usually do not indicate melanoma but they can highlight an unstable structure of a mole which could be an indication of a person's susceptibility to melanoma.

Medical science points to increased sun exposure as the major cause of the enormous increase of malignant melanoma. People especially in danger of developing malignant melanoma are those of light skin type, who have more than fifty skin moles or many age spots, or experienced several sunburns in childhood and youth (before the age of twenty). Sunburns in early life increase the risk of developing melanoma later in life. After five sunburns in childhood the melanoma risk increases three-fold. Sunlight advances skin cancer formation in the epidermal cells at the places where sunlight exposure has been most intense during the course of a life. On the other hand, it acts differently in causing melanoma. Repeated sunburns during the first three decades of life can weaken the formative forces in the skin for one's entire life. Melanoma can appear anywhere in the skin, even in the mucous membranes.

Moles: The more moles the higher the risk of melanoma. The connection is that the majority of melanomas begin where a mole exists. The number of moles that exhibit an unstable structure is also on the increase (dysplastic moles).

A recently published study of first-graders in middle and southern Europe showed that children who often used sunscreen developed more skin moles. Children who seldom used sunscreen and often had sunburn had an especially high number of moles. According to the study, the same was true for children who very often used sunscreen and had never had sunburn. Children who wore shirts and pants as protection from too much sun had fewer moles. Apparently the use of sunscreens that filter out UVA and UVB rays to prevent

sunburn is not an adequate measure. *We must effectively protect ourselves from all of the rays of the sun.* Use of sunscreen prevents sunburn by filtering out UV rays but it also leads to longer exposure times since the warning signs of sunburn are missing. Therefore, a person is exposed much too long to the many other aspects of sunlight that also affect people.

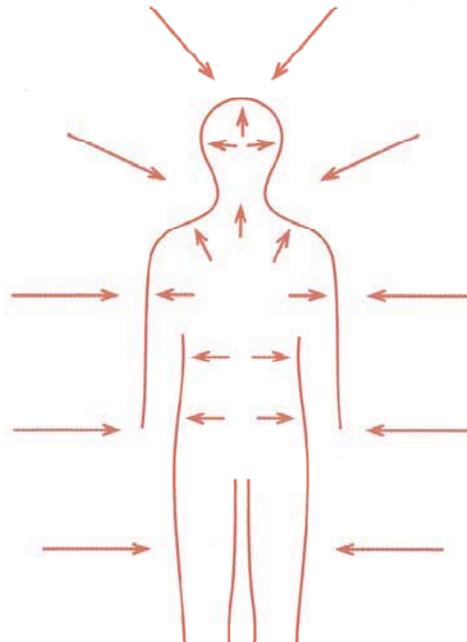
The effects of sunlight at the soul-spiritual level

On the first sunny day after a long period of rain and dark clouds we can experience what sunlight means for our soul. A person takes in the longed-for sunlight so intensely as if quenching a deep thirst. The light supports and improves our general feeling of well-being. We find joy in our work again and problems that before seemed unsolvable are swept away by new energy and ideas. Just as sunlight enjoyed in the right measure can stimulate us physically, the same applies to our soul. The quality of light is a common thread in all of our sensory perceptions. For instance, one speaks of a “light tone” in music. Light nourishes all of our senses.

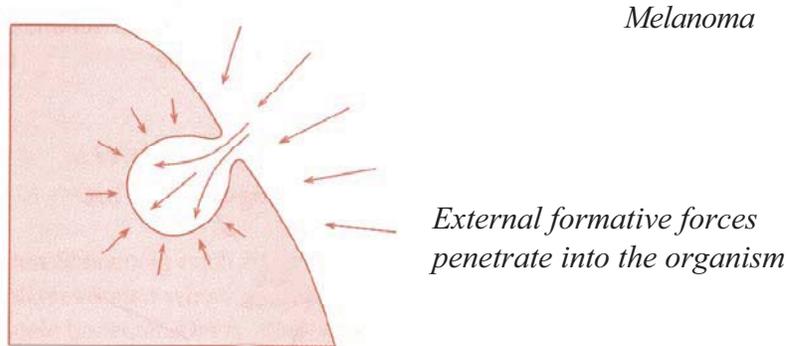
Inner Light: Human beings must digest the light that they absorb. In the evening they must *consciously* work through the events that occurred in the light of the day and in the night work through the day’s events *in their sleep*. This *spiritual digestive process* takes the absorbed outer light and releases the *inner light* from it in the form of thought. By the *inner activity of thought* the outer light is transformed into inner light (“a light went on in my head”). In this way human beings can use inner forces, inner light, to offset the intense stream of outer sensory stimulations.

The American poet and philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson said: “The heavens are the daily bread of the eyes.” One could misconstrue this statement and sit as much as possible in the sun under a clear blue sky. But, for the good of the soul’s health one ought to seek a balance, as Angelus Silesius very aptly expressed: “We do not live by bread alone. What feeds us is God’s eternal Word, His life and His spirit.”

Inner Activity: Through inner activity one is able to take in the ‘bread’ in such a way that it also nourishes one’s higher soul-spiritual being. If one remains internally active, one is able to see divine thought in sunlight. The living creation of the spirit is then revealed to us through the light.



Disturbed Balance: For an individual who remains internally passive in regards to sunlight, the *balance between inner light*, which appears as a formative force at the organic level, and *external light*, which, under healthy circumstances, must always be present, is endangered. A worst case scenario is that the external light forces coming from the outside gain the upper hand, overcome the body's barriers and penetrate into the organism. At first and for a relatively long period of time these occurrences can be contained at the functional level. However, increased exposure can cause physical illness, for instance, in the form of malignant melanoma.



Too much sunlight, even too much sense stimulation in general, can work harmful effects at the soul-spiritual level without delivering any blows at a physical level. When someone allows himself to be exposed only to that which can be taken in by the sense organs, the soul becomes a barren desert. Too much sunshine not only burns the skin, but also, to put it simply, the brain. In such a state a person is hardly capable of soul-spiritual activity. If some time for thoughtful contemplation does not follow the time spent in the sunshine, then a soul-spiritual flattening can occur. By taking in a disproportionately large amount of external light without a corresponding opportunity to form inner light, human beings run the risk of becoming like the animals who are only capable of a soul life based on reactions to external stimuli.

Developing the right relationship with sunlight

Due to the quality of the sun today, the question is raised as to how we can sensibly deal with it so that its healthy and healing effects can be enjoyed and its harmful effects avoided. The following describes possibilities for outer protection from the sunlight in order to then allow for the inner possibilities.

Preventive measures

It should be clear that sunburns should be avoided at all costs. It is especially important that children and young people up to the age of twenty

do everything possible to avoid getting sunburned. Since sunburn begins with a reddening of the skin, then it is clear that every skin reddening after being in the sun is a sign that the skin has received too much light. We must learn to understand the reddening of the skin after a sunny day to be a warning signal, and, actually, never even let it get to that point.

One must use measures that are, in reality, going to be effective since we know that too much sun is generally unhealthy and that the use of sunscreen can prevent sunburn but can not prevent the further negative effects of intense exposure.

The skin's natural defences: The most effective protection is the skin's own natural strengthening when it is allowed to slowly become accustomed to sun exposure. The slower this takes place, the deeper and more-lasting is the sun tan. Getting used to the sun is the most beneficial when it happens at a careful pace over a two to three week period. The gentlest method that produces the deepest tan takes place in the shade. It takes longer to achieve but also lasts longer. If one travels to a sunny place in the south, then in the beginning one should, for the most part, stay in the shade.

Clothing: Clothing is the healthiest, most effective protection against ultraviolet rays. Cotton is the most comfortable, but it should not be too loosely woven so that sunlight can reach the skin, nor does translucent material prevent sunburn. Wet clothing also allows a great deal of sunlight to penetrate. Light-colored clothing reflects the sun's rays and takes in less heat than dark-colored clothing. It should fit loosely and allow for plenty of air flow.

Hats: A wide-brimmed hat is also recommended, preferably a straw hat. It will prevent strong UV rays from reaching the face as well as the infrared rays on the back of the head and neck which can cause sunstroke.

Sunglasses: Sunglasses are needed only in places where the light conditions are extreme such as high in the mountains, on the water, or on snow slopes. Do not think that wearing sunglasses at all times while outdoors in the sun is healthy for the eyes. When the organism takes in light through the eyes only through the artificial medium of sunglasses then the quality of the light is adulterated and diminished. Some people experience eye strain in bright, direct sunlight. These people usually are light-skinned or have dry skin and a susceptibility to neurodermatitis. For these people sunglasses are, of course, a welcome relief.

Shoes: Shoes should also be chosen with care. Since the tops of the feet are usually less tanned at the beginning of a vacation, sandals are not adequate because they leave large parts of the foot uncovered and therefore susceptible to sunburn. Rather one can wear a lightweight linen shoe, for example, something that covers the top of the foot.

Umbrellas: Umbrellas and awnings provide good protection against direct sunlight. Because of the reflection from objects and the ground's surface, the skin still gets enough sunlight that one can get a tan even while under an umbrella. Reflected sunlight is especially intense on glaciers or in a light fog. Paradoxically, a light fog intensifies sunlight. Light-colored sand, snow,

water surfaces, light-colored stone, and cement have a similar effect and sunburns can occur quickly and intensely, especially since the body stays cool in the shade.

What to avoid

Avoid the midday sun. In the summer, especially in southern climates, and also in the mountains in winter, the midday sun should be avoided. That means between the hours of 10:00 AM and 2:00 PM (11:00 AM and 3:00 PM daylight savings time) one should not be in the sun. The habit of a siesta after midday is exactly the right thing.

Sunbathing, where one is lying or sitting exposed to direct sunlight over a long period of time, is unhealthy. The fashionable ideal of a dark tan can be tempered with the following saying: “The bronze beauty of today is the dried-up prune of tomorrow.” Passively lying in the blazing sun should be avoided completely. There are two reasons why the sun is better tolerated if someone is walking or working in the sun. First, movement causes the areas of skin that are exposed to the sun to constantly change. Second, through muscle activity a person is developing inner counterbalance to the sunlight. Intense physical exertion in the blazing sun should be avoided because of the heat effects of sunlight. Liquids and salts that are lost through heavy perspiration should be replaced by drinking mineral-rich drinks such as mineral water with fruit or vegetable juice.

Vacations in southern climates during the winter months are generally unhealthy for central Europeans. Maybe two weeks in the Canary Islands in December is relaxing to the mind, but such a trip is not helpful in gaining physical energy and therefore can not be recommended from a physician’s (especially a dermatologist’s) point of view. During the winter the skin is not used to sunlight. Sudden exposure to the intense, southern sun comes at this time when the body is completely unprepared for it. When the vacationer returns home to the cold temperatures, he or she often must pay for it with a bad cold. On top of that, trips to warmer regions during the winter interfere with the natural rhythm of the seasons with which the rhythms of various functions of the human organism are in harmony. For these reasons, trips to far-off destinations actually reduce one’s overall vitality.

Tanning salons for cosmetic reasons are harmful to one’s health. In light of the fact that the ozone layer is thinning and we can look forward to a future with more intense sun rays reaching the earth’s surface, every artificial tanning method involving even more exposure is not advisable. (The use of artificial light for the treatment of skin diseases should be at the discretion of a dermatologist.)

The sun should be particularly avoided while taking allopathic medicines. With many allopathic substances there is a danger that they can interact with sunlight and have a poisonous effect on the skin or produce an allergic reaction. Since many perfumes contain substances that can become sensitized in sunlight, they should also be avoided before sun exposure.

Protection before and after exposure to sunlight

To summarize, hats and clothing are the most effective protection from the sun. Sunscreen should not be the primary protection. The danger of developing skin cancer increases when sunscreen is used often. The use of preparations with lower protection factors still allows for a reddening of the skin to be recognized as a warning signal, and allows the skin to build up its own protection undisturbed. For the extremities and face of adults we recommend sunscreen lotion from Weleda with a factor eight that contains a chemical UV filter or the sun lotion from Dr. Hauschka that contains micro pigments. The protection factor number indicates the time one can remain in the sunlight before skin reddening occurs. For instance, if unprotected skin shows signs of reddening after ten minutes then sunscreen with a factor eight would allow that person to stay in the sun for eighty minutes before reddening begins. Sunscreens with protection factors of more than ten are recommended in situations where sunlight exposure is extreme.

UVB rays are especially intense:

- during the midday hours in the summer
- in southern climates
- in snow, on the water or near other reflective surfaces
- at higher elevations

Dr. Hauschka offers sun lotions with factors fifteen and twenty, both of which are water resistant. Since sunscreens are in general harmful to the skin, for the body as a whole, as well as for the soul, it makes no sense to use a sunscreen with a higher factor than ten just so one can “fry” in the sun for a longer period of time.

Especially sensitive parts of the body, such as the lips and the bridge of the nose, should be protected by a sunscreen with a high protection factor such as Dr. Hauschka’s sun block stick with a factor thirty. Other parts of the body that can be especially sensitive are the shoulders, back, breasts, buttocks, tops of the feet, and the inner sides of the arms and legs. A temporary increased sensitivity to the sun appears at the places where the skin has freshly healed from wounds or burns that had blisters. Also, an area of skin that has had a cosmetic peeling treatment or previous sunburn is more susceptible to sunburn.

In conclusion, here are a few tips for the correct usage of sunscreen preparations:

- The lighter the skin tone and the more intense the sunlight the higher protection factor required or recommended.
- Oily skin needs a lotion or gel; dry skin needs a moisturizing cream.
- Clean the skin thoroughly before applying sunscreen.
- Apply sunscreen one-half hour before going into the sun.
- Reapply sunscreen after swimming or bathing.

- Reapplication of sunscreen does not lengthen its time of effectiveness
- If one is susceptible to developing an acne-like rash from sun exposure, then a watery gel or a preparation with a high protection factor should be used.
- When swimming in the ocean use waterproof sunscreen. UV radiation penetrates the water and is still present at a high percentage in water that is several feet deep.

After sun exposure the skin requires care that is cooling and mildly moisturizing. Dr. Hauschka's After Sun Lotion or Citrus Skin Gel (fat-free), Weleda's Wild Rose Milk, or Calendula Baby Lotion from Weleda (both lightly moisturizing) are recommended. When some reddening has occurred, then the Skin Tonic from Weleda is helpful. With full-blown sunburn one can use a compress of Combudoron from Weleda. The liquid should be diluted with nine times the amount of water, the compress kept constantly moist so that it does not become dry. Less serious sunburns can be treated with Combudoron gel or the Wound or Burn Gel from Wala.

After being in the water for a long time, the outer skin is saturated and more sensitive to sunlight. For this reason, dry off immediately after getting out of the water. Drops of water left on the skin can increase the effects of sunlight, as do salt crystals from seawater that are left on the skin after air-drying. Skin that has been washed with soap is more sensitive to light because soap removes the oily layer on the skin. High temperatures outdoors cause the skin to be more absorbent and therefore more sensitive to light than when the outside temperature is cooler.

Children and the sun

During the first twelve months of life no direct sunlight should reach the infant's skin. Having an infant outside on a sunny day for just one-half hour a day is enough to provide the skin's light requirements to synthesize vitamin D, thus preventing the danger of rickets. Toddlers between the ages of one and two years should always have their heads and buttocks covered by clothing. When spending time at the beach, for instance, their faces, arms, and legs should be protected with a sunscreen containing micro pigments and a high protection factor such as Dr. Hauschka's Sun Cream for Children with a factor twenty-two. To put small children into the sun without protection is physical abuse. Children's skin has a thinner epidermis that is only one-fifth the thickness of adult skin. Also, children's skin has not yet fully developed its own protective mechanisms such as tanning. Their thinner skin absorbs more material from the outside and is more easily penetrated. That is why applying sunscreen preparations containing artificial ingredients to the entire body can eventually have a burdensome impact on the metabolism of the child. Toddlers should remain in the shade whenever possible. The play area (a sandbox for instance) is best located under a shady tree.

Following are guidelines for older children:

- Hats, shirts, and pants should be worn even in cloudy weather
- At the beach use a sunscreen with a minimum protection factor of fifteen on the face, arms, and legs.
- Sunglasses should be worn in the mountains, on the water, or wherever there is an abundance of light.
- A tee-shirt should be worn in the water as well as waterproof sunscreen.

Who should not be in the sun?

People with the following illnesses or health problems should avoid direct sunlight completely, or at least be very careful about their exposure to sunlight:

- Weak blood circulation, heart or circulatory diseases
- Acute infections with fever
- General weakness
- All conditions where tumors are present, especially skin cancer
- Conditions resulting from chemotherapy
- Metabolic disorders such as severe diabetes
- Organ transplants
- Skin diseases that could be precipitated by sunlight, or skin diseases in an acute phase of shedding skin
- Suppressed immune system (HIV infection, for example)

Women should be careful with their sun exposure before their period and during pregnancy because their skin is much more sensitive during those times. In general, a person is less sensitive to sunlight during puberty and in old age.

Internal protection

There is also the possibility of protecting the skin from sunlight from the inside. Beta-carotene is a natural substance well-suited to this task. It can be found in carrots, pumpkins, cabbage, and spinach. If one wishes to use carrot juice for protection from sunlight, then it is necessary to drink one-half to one full bottle of juice daily. Since beta-carotene is fat soluble and can only be absorbed by the intestines together with fat, then it is advisable to add something such as cream to the carrot juice.

If we actively participate in the impressions fleeting before our eyes, and internally work through them, then we put our conscious awareness in a position to be able to withstand the intense sunlight of, say, a Greek landscape. For instance, if we observe the ruins of an ancient Greek temple in the blazing Mediterranean sunshine and see reflected in the architecture the way of thinking in ancient Greek culture, then we are internally active in such a way so as to become more resistant to the light. A travel journal and a good tour guide can also help us activate our internal, conscious light protection.

Conclusion

Just fifty years ago people were still able to draw upon helpful knowledge and habits that had been developed over a very long period of time. For instance, if one visits a history museum exhibiting displays about the daily life of rural populations, then one can see that they wore wide-brimmed straw hats when working the fields and the women wore head scarves that shaded their faces. What was in earlier times a common standard of precaution in regard to sun exposure is now completely at the individual level. Today people are easily influenced by fashion trends and advertising from the cosmetic industry which are interested only in their own business development.

In order to behave in a reasonable manner in regard to sun exposure one must have personal knowledge of its effects on the human organism. Human beings must maintain a position in the middle between the enlivening and the deadening effects of sunlight. Then sunlight becomes something great, streaming with life and love, enriching our human lives both physically and spiritually and giving us healthful benefits. In his last conversation with Eckermann before his death, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe said it this way: “If one asks me if it is in my nature to revere the sun, then I say once again: absolutely! For the sun is a revelation of both the highest and the most powerful that has been granted to us children of earth to perceive. I worship in the sun the light and the creative forces of God by which alone we live, act, and have our being, and all the plants and animals with us.”

The Healing Power of Lively Thought

by

Walter Bühler

Translated by Nina Kuettel

The training of thought and memory

We need only look around a living room and it is soon clear that for all of the perceptible objects, from the table and chairs to the simplest things used on a daily basis, we owe our thanks to the creative activities of human hands. However, their work would not have been possible without a hidden inner activity. It points us to the mental-spiritual place where human thinking happens and we see that it is a wellspring of all outer creativity. The purposeful order in someone's kitchen is thanks to the power of thinking just as much as the answer to the question of why the oven quit or the construction of a bridge over a river. People try, with their thinking, to penetrate the atomic structure of a grain of sand. Through thinking, one is placed within the polarity between the sense world and the extrasensory world. Within this expanse one tries to justify one's inner standpoint in the same way that one stands with both feet on the ground in the sense world. Thinking imparts to people a consciousness that goes beyond mere self awareness. It is the gift of reason that first allowed human beings to take a personal stand in the world; to find their world view.

Thinking is a prerequisite for every human encounter because it is the source for understanding, trust, and common activity. We should ask ourselves once: Are we really conscious enough of the importance of thought to our humanity and our way of life? Some people get a clear message that the shining light of the power of thought is not something to be taken for granted – when they meet a mentally handicapped child or an old senile person whose thinking capacity has become severely limited and dulled. What a chasm opens up between us when, for whatever reason, someone is not able to follow our words with their own thought processes. What an uplifting feeling comes over us when we feel we are understood.

The way in which each person masters his/her thought life is an important measure for the degree of development and maturity of his/her personality. Thinking must also develop. It must be learned and practiced. And, since one can only educate oneself through thinking, this training must be seen as an important duty. Every advance in creative thought of an individual brings about a corresponding advance in all of humanity.

Is there a connection between thinking and health?

This connection is really very deep. Clear, concentrated, logical, and yet flexible thinking is one of the most necessary qualities, a prerequisite even, for one's mental-spiritual health. The opposite is apparent in the mental retardation of a child who is brain damaged by encephalitis, the loss of thinking ability of a sclerotic, or the insanity of a schizophrenic. All of these things show how important thinking is to our physical instrument. In an earlier article in this Waldorf Journal Project it was pointed out that the widespread condition of overstimulation so apparent today also attacks our thinking. The personality may become weakened in the center of its being. The individual who exhibits a lack of concentration and nervous, jumpy thinking is obviously no longer capable of assuming large responsibilities at work. He may also become more insecure and less capable of carrying on healthy personal relationships.

Inflexible and one-sided thinking not only limits one's horizons, but it also carries the danger of early hardening of the thinking instrument, even brain sclerosis. People who work in highly specialized, technical, or abstract fields are at risk for this, especially if there are other developmental challenges: if one started school too early, experienced a one-sided intellectual training, or been given high doses of vitamin D in childhood to prevent rickets. Blurry, unclear, and fantasy-filled thinking also bring other problems and dangers that affect one's mental and physical health.

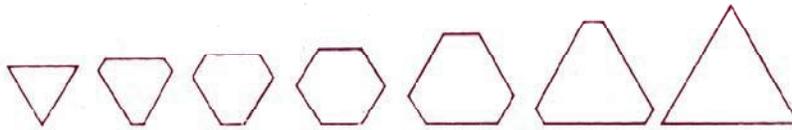
The following shows how every person can care for his or her thinking ability through concrete exercises which awaken one to activity and school one in gaining conclusiveness and clarity of thought.

Concentration exercises

Today the waning of the ability to concentrate and remember is so widespread that more and more people are seeking help for this problem. It is a fact that accurate retrieval of a memory and unerring retention are requirements for right thinking. Without the ability to concentrate, we lose our train of thought and it will, in time, become erratic, imprecise, and inconsequential. Therefore, we begin with a simple exercise that will help us to take the inner reins in hand. For such exercises it is recommended that one have inner and outer quiet, sit in a relaxed position, and shield oneself from outer sense impressions.

We start by imagining an equilateral triangle and begin to equally blunt the three corners with three straight lines which we push further and further to the inside. We now have a continually changing hexagon that goes through a stage of being a symmetrical hexagon and finally transforms into a small triangle standing on its point. We can repeat the process with this new triangle over and over until the form shrinks into infinity. If anyone is disturbed by the triangle becoming smaller, then he can just enlarge the end triangle until it is a comfortable size to begin again. The same exercise, although more difficult, can be undertaken using a square or a pentagram. Or, we give

ourselves the task of finding all the possible diagonals in a square, pentagram, hexagon, etc. that is inside a circle. Whatever the imagined figures, they must be brought clearly into our consciousness.



A different challenge is presented by using spatial figures. Think of a figure made of four equilateral triangles (tetragon) or six squares (dice). Connect the center points of the planes within the figure using straight lines. Inside the tetragon a new, smaller tetragonal appears and in the cube, a new figure with eight sides, the octahedron. One can repeat this process with the octahedron until the cube “disappears,” whereby within the same a second, smaller die appears. When we take the same and stretch it out to the size of the starting figure, we can continue the exercise in rhythmic repetitions for a few minutes. The important thing is that we keep all other thoughts from our minds and concentrate only on the imagery of the lines.

Another concentration exercise consists of retrieving certain images from our memory, something like on different days the forms of different flowers or trees that we have actually seen. We allow our inner gaze to rest for a few minutes upon a particular oak tree, the next day a beech tree, the day after that a poplar or a pine tree. The next step can be directing our inner gaze to a well-known plant, perhaps a marigold, and letting it sprout from seed and grow into bloom. After one week of this exercise, we can start with the fully bloomed plant and follow it through all the stages of wilting. In the third phase of this exercise we let both processes flow into each other. After we have practiced these concentration exercises, we can go on to actual thinking exercises.

Training objective and logical thought

We differentiate between objective or nonobjective, logical or illogical thought processes and the corresponding clear or unclear, well-defined or blurred thoughts. Not only scientists, but every person in everyday life needs objectivity of thought for acquiring real knowledge and reality-based, sensible behavior.

To school our thinking in objectivity, clarity, and logical consistency, Rudolf Steiner recommended making use of a simple, everyday object such as a pencil. One could also use a match, a nail, a pair of scissors, or anything similar. First of all, we describe to ourselves the material used to make this object, the size, form and color. Then we make a clear connection of these qualities with the use and function of the object. Third, we try to imagine where and from what this comes and how it is produced. We may find that

our lack of knowledge prevents us from going any further with our thoughts on the object. Perhaps we do not know enough about the production of this object and that could be an impetus to look into it further. We can “think about” the same object over a period of several days or we can take related objects in a series such as a safety pin, a knitting needle, an injection needle, and a crochet hook. Here again, we must avoid all distracting thoughts and concentrate on developing only those thoughts that have to do with the objects.

Working puzzles is a thinking sport. Solving puzzles stimulates concentration, sharpness of thought, imagination. It would be wonderful if once a week or once a month the television was turned off in favor of working on a puzzle.

Crossword puzzles, however, often have a corrupting influence on logically consistent thought. Searching out words that have no innate connection and pressing them into an abstract graphic scheme while consciously shutting out their content of thought, represents the opposite of a meaningful train of thought and a mutilation of the words. Certain destructive tendencies in the mind are thereby encouraged. Instead there are many examples of meaningful, imaginative, challenging, enjoyable and humorous puzzles.

Cultivating attentiveness

Human thought starts with perception and goes through the senses. These deliver the various raw materials that, stored in memory, can be processed by thought and which we will want to penetrate with the light of knowledge. In a manufacturing plant substandard raw materials make processing more difficult or devalue the product. This metaphor can be applied to the mind. That is why we should pay careful attention to the quality of our sense perceptions through exact visual observations and alert listening. Here, also, we can proceed with exercises. During a walk we try to observe all the nuances of green in a leaf. Another time we look at the forms of different leaves in all their variety, or we listen to the birds and consciously differentiate between all the different songs. On the street we can unobtrusively make ourselves aware of all the different clothing, eye colors, or ear forms of the people that we see. Such attentiveness during observation is good for our thinking because it requires the same power of mind that we use internally to follow a train of thought. Within this bridging connection between perception and thinking is also the explanation of superficial perceptions will eventually dull our thinking.

Because of the conditions of today’s civilization, it is a challenge for people to enliven their sensory impressions with attentiveness, awe, or interest. How often one must close one’s ears to the cacophony of a big city, or one’s eyes to the plethora of media images. To achieve a healing balance to this situation one must make opportunities for quiet observation and listening. In this way, meaningful, concentrated thought can be cultivated.

One should become aware of the wisdom of nature that is inherent in the formation of a crystal, or a plant, in the movement of an animal, or a planet!

If Tycho Brahe had not retained the thousands of single precise observations of the movement of Mars in its orbit, Kepler's thoughts on this material could not have resulted in his discovery of the three great laws that rule our planetary system. We must encounter the things of the world with a sense of trust that they are wisely formed and that, while practicing attentive observation, our unconscious mind is meeting this wisdom which then steps into the light of consciousness by our thoughts.

For this reason we should not try to quickly understand or analyze a sense perception, but rather through repeated, relaxed observation, cultivate this sense of trust. Rudolf Steiner recommended the daily observation of the sunset with all of the accompanying meteorological facts. Practicing withholding judgment about, say, the weather for the coming day, will help form a new, inner sense.

Cultivating memory

The life of our conscious mind is based on the foundation of our memory. Every act of thought is supported by the ability to remember. A dependable and true memory is the central characteristic of spiritual health. The increasing number of complaints about a "bad memory" is a serious symptom of the overstimulation that is threatening our inner existence and may even be at the heart of premature aging.

Memory is not strengthened when one tries to memorize a poem, for example, by "devouring" it ten times over any more than a flower can be brought to bloom by watering it ten times a day. Memory is deeply connected to life activity and the mysterious rhythm of our organism. Reading a poem every morning and evening in quiet devotion for one week will result in the poem suddenly "being there" in one's memory with seemingly no effort.

Experiences that move our soul, in which we take a lively interest, remain more easily in our memory. Strengthening the memory is therefore not only a question of one's intellectual alertness and the ability to concentrate, but, to a high degree, depends upon the ability to be amazed, upon one's strength of devotion; that is, upon the qualities of the heart. The more intensively we take something in with "our whole soul," the more definitely we will own it internally. All of the exercises described above can therefore also be considered good for consciously cultivating the memory. We begin always with careful, practiced, and conscious attentiveness to all of our sense perceptions. Whoever does not allow enough time to mentally connect with their experiences will, in time, spoil their memories. That is why it is so harmful to let the radio blare while doing something else such as writing a letter, or engaging in some other activity while eating, such as reading the newspaper.

To school the memory – and thinking – it is furthermore useful when reading a book to concisely and clearly summarize in one's mind what was read previously before picking up the book again. For those who are unpracticed at this it may help to write out a short summary. Beyond this,

there are two further important basic exercises taken from the *Study of Man* by Rudolf Steiner.

Purposely putting an object away: Every evening before bed put some object (jewelry, a wristwatch, or glasses) in a place where it usually would not be so that you can retrieve it the next morning. Say to yourself while doing this: “I have put this object in this place.” Further, hold the image in mind of where the object is and what the surroundings look like (for instance, parallel and two inches away from the edge of the rug). “This bringing together of the mental-spiritual core of one’s being, as it is referred to with the word ‘I,’ with the imagery, is that which can . . . very effectively sharpen our memory.” (Munich, January 11, 1912). Such an exercise, carried out consistently for years, contributes to a high degree to the consolidation of our being. Through this discipline our “I” will be more “in the picture” about what it does and experiences. Among other things, this exercise prevents the somewhat neurotic behavior characterized by someone having to look twice to make sure they have turned off the lights in the basement or if they have really locked the front door.

Thinking in reverse order: When remembering something the mind turns inward and immerses itself in its own unconscious depths similar to what a pearl diver does in the sea. Our mind is strengthened if we think of something such as a poem, a story, an act in a play, or a walk and then go through it in the reverse order. It is especially useful if every evening before going to sleep we do such an exercise while recalling some event during the day or the course of the day itself. The effort required to turn around all those images and recall them true to memory strengthens the memory capacity.

All of the exercises will only give the desired results if they are done with patience, perseverance, and in rhythmic repetitions over a long period of time. A yearly appointment calendar can make it easier to plan, alternate, review the progress (or lack thereof!), and also increase the degree of difficulty.

The healing power of lively thought

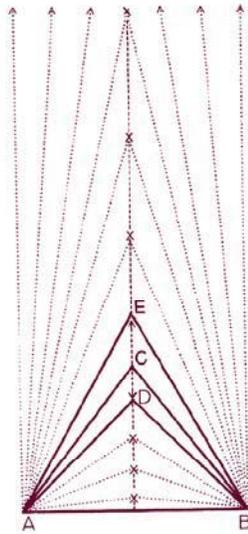
Being blessed with the “heavenly light” of reason is the greatest gift that lifts human beings out of the realm of the animals. Through reason’s activity, human beings have become the most conscious beings in creation allowing them to think about themselves. In the earlier part of this article we discussed the logical objective side of thought. In this second part we will be dealing more with the creative nature of thought in connection with the mental-soul being of all humanity.

Education for flexible thinking

It is imperative that every person during his life have certain fixed tenets in order to draw upon a standpoint in any given situation. How often, however, do we encounter people whose thinking appears to be rigid and unbending, who allow no objections, hold their opinion to be the only true and correct

one, and can not, internally, even make the attempt to meet another person. Here we see the evidence of stubbornness and rigidity of thought, which can result in natural, physiological ailments such as calcification or early mental aging process. How can we remain young and elastic in our thinking?

We must be clear about this in our own minds and try to experience how every thought is capable of countless variations. We must never mistake the often accidental or subjective formation of single thoughts with their ideal, truth-gripping core. An example may help to clarify this. When looking at a house gable we can form in our mind the image of an equilateral triangle.



But nobody would ever think that this triangle is the only correct and possible design for a house gable and that all houses must be built according to this design. Healthy and true thinking teaches us that there are at least two kinds of such triangles; namely, the acute triangle and the obtuse triangle. But if we really think through the idea “equilateral triangle” and try to look at it “from all sides,” then we realize that there is an endless number of such triangles (see drawing).

Our fixed idea of the gable house has now been brought into flux and point C moves up and down on the center perpendicular baseline of AB. The closer point C gets to the baseline the more obtuse will our triangle become. Our thinking can, at any time during this process, halt the flowing form and cause some specific form to crystallize out, perhaps when it has reached a certain stage in its relationship to the other triangles. Perhaps when the right-angled triangle (D) is recognized as the transitional form between the acute and obtuse triangles, or when during the formation of the equilateral triangle (E), the concept of the triangle as an ideal form is illuminated.

When point C reaches the baseline, the base angles of A and B, which are becoming ever more acute, will equal zero and the obtuse angle of C will end at 180 degrees. The triangle stiffens at the limitation of line AB. But by following all the possible acute triangles, point C finally ends up at an enormous distance whereby the acute angle becomes smaller and smaller. When it has reached zero degrees then the two angles of A and B are ninety degrees and the sides of the triangle are parallel. Our triangle has become an open form connected to the infinitely far away periphery of the world.

There is much to be learned from this thinking game. Actually there should be no comprehensively-thinking and contemplative people who do not know the difference between the general idea and specially designed thought forms; that is, between *imagination* and *idea*. This differentiation is of fundamental importance for our thinking. Many people mistake their personal imaginations for the fundamental idea they are based upon. They believe they are in possession of the whole truth thereby actually losing

sight of the truth as a higher-ordered totality, as a source of the creative dynamic. Or, they may believe that a thought is exhausted after considering two or three aspects of it. Then thinking becomes narrow and rigid. The tendency of people to want to come to a clearly defined or conclusive idea as quickly as possible is understandable. It not only meets the tendency to what is most comfortable, but also the desire for a dependable hold and a secure possession. However, the “idea” of something draws away from the well-defined objectivity of the sense world on which our thought capacity is based and leads our thinking into the nebulous unknown. But that is just what energizes our thinking and gives it elasticity and flexibility, its temporary freedom from the “dead” thought form and its inner lifting into the dynamic of the pure idea (to which all individual ideas are subject), and its crossover into the inner stream of ideas as the creative principle from which everything flows. Only by first thoroughly thinking about the equilateral triangle did a deeper understanding open up of the special case of the flat, obtuse triangle (seen in the Greek Parthenon) or for the acute angled quasi infinity-seeking of the triangles in the roof of a Gothic cathedral.

We can certainly not come up with a true-to-life idea of the apple by looking at only one apple. We must get to know the apple as large and small, ripe and unripe, all the different varieties, as a bloom, after it has decayed into seed, and how it compares to other fruits in the same family. In a similar way our idea of the “split-hoofed cud-chewers” must be so rich and lively that it can be changed into a goat on a steep, overhanging cliff, or into a proud elk in the mountain forest, a deer on a grassy meadow at the edge of the woods, or a fat cow grazing the juicy grass of a pasture. We can bring every opinion, every thought, and every judgment into the flow and try to illuminate the problem up for discussion from as many sides as possible, and use thoughts discovered in different situations, before we become fixed on a specific, limited idea.

The courage to rethink something and the readiness to give up one’s thoughts as mental possessions and smelt them in the fire of ideas make us mentally elastic and allow us to grow out of a subjectively colored, all too limited self, towards the truth. Such action makes us feel internally connected to the spirituality of the world, something which many thinkers of the Middle Ages were experiencing when they spoke of ideas as the universal language. They understood it to be and they experienced it as spiritual reality.

Thinking as a source of self control

There are people who can not get some thoughts out of their heads. Their ideas have become quasi independent and press in on the mind like strange, unwelcome guests. This is one of the many forms of compulsive nervous disorders. All neurotic symptoms are, in the final analysis, expressions of a weakened or darkened ‘I,’ which is the central core of our being. Someone who can no longer control his ‘I,’ and therefore himself, is in great danger, as can be seen with all the different kinds of neuroses that have made appearance.

But how do we find the way to our ‘I’ in its true form? No matter what uplifting experiences may strengthen our self confidence, the only way we can find our true ‘I’ consciousness is through thought. Mere definitions or philosophical speculations are of little value and possibly even a hindrance. Only one’s own experience can be of help.

We want to once again activate our ‘I’ through thought in order to observe it during this activity. We think of a number of points scattered over a surface and assign one of them the special role of fixed point A (see figure 2). Now all the other points can be arranged so that their distance from point A is equal to the line AB. To do this we must make the points move. Some must be pushed away and other brought closer (see figure 3). Point A becomes the center point of a drawn circle, enclosed in a line upon which, as we soon see, there is place for countless more points that could meet the same conditions (see figure 4).

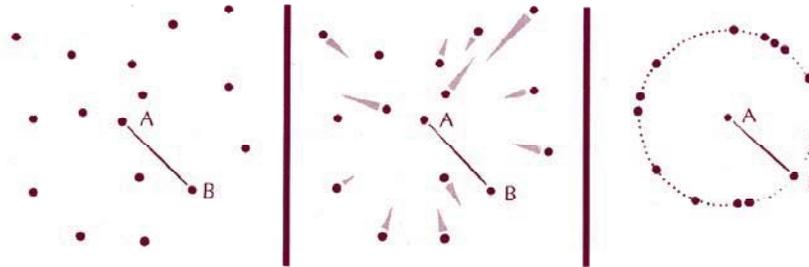


Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

What has happened? We have designated one single point to be the main point and arranged all the other points in a relationship. We discover within ourselves an instance of ordering that turns out to be a controlling, leading element in our mind’s realm of thought. This mysterious element shows itself to be an active, organized being in that it brings the points into movement and arranges them into a form. And, the fact that it creates the form (the circle) which was not previously there and understands its nature, this element shows itself to be a creative principle that enriches our minds. It is the same principle that not only ordered and arranged the points, but also is the source of all order in our lives. It connects all thoughts, groups them around itself, gathers or lets fall away, and regulates the thought process. This element that controls the points would like to control everything that happens in the mental realm: perceptions, memories, feelings, drives and urges, and passions. In observing our thinking during our little geometric example we encounter our ‘I’ as the element that is above all activity, centralized, creative, and master over the mental realm.

One can hardly be too conscious of this ‘I’ as one’s true, central core of being which forms the actual substantial center point of one’s personality. With the triangle we had first to work through the limited imagination to the

living idea. In this way everyone can and should leave their habitual and certainly limited view of the 'I' and come to the real idea of the 'I.' One should try to penetrate it from all sides and through this gain a deeper understanding of one's own truth, of one's own being. One will awaken the source of all concentration, be energized for self control, and gain a new, conscious anchoring in one's eternal core of being. To grasp the 'I' in thinking leads to a healthy increase in self confidence that has nothing to do with arrogance but only with real self knowledge. The security in oneself that is created permeates one's entire mental life and protects against many dangers that appear out of our spiritually deprived civilization.

The healing aspect of truth

In thinking through what is in our consciousness, we turn away from the perceptible outside world towards the inside. We leave the outer reality and simply live in images which pale in our thoughts and ideas to thin, unlively abstractions such as the mathematical forms of a natural law, for example. Thinking gives the appearance of withdrawing into the loneliness of one's mind behind the bones in our skull like a snail crawling into its shell. Behind this understanding of thought lies a complete misunderstanding of the true nature of thinking and its function, even a misunderstanding of the human being as a whole. This victory of this kind of understanding has led, in the development of Western civilization, to the belief that ideas themselves have no objective reality. Today it has become a fundamental tenet of ruling materialism that all spiritual facts are mere "ideological exaggerations." With that we stand before a fateful one-sidedness in human thinking, its complete rigor mortis, its mortal sin.

Goethe said: "The intellect is oriented to what has become; reason to what is becoming." The nominalist experiences that his "already become" thoughts are illuminated in his consciousness, that is, created by him. However, he is unable to penetrate to the experience of the idea as the rich source of his thoughts. That is why he is caught in the web of his own intellectual activity. When now this purely abstract way of thinking is turned to the idea of the human 'I,' it has disastrous results for humanity. Since the 'I' in its spiritual nature can never be perceived from the outside but only understood through thinking, to intellectual understanding it pales into a shadow, to a mere "label." According to the nominalist point of view people have no independent core being that can lift them up out of reach of the power of heredity. A human being is merely a member of the species known as higher mammals. The conviction that one is an individuality is rejected by nominalism as mere fantasy.

There are serious consequences of the one-sidedness of such thinking that is lost in materialism, for religion, ethics, and social interactions among human beings. Seen from a physician's perspective, however, it has a sickening effect on the mental life of human beings and finally, also on their physical health. Because it does not recognize, and even denies, the spiritual

core being, it keeps humanity from making full use of its 'I' forces and reason, and robs individuals of the knowledge about the central anchor and point of rest in their being. It carves out one's insides. Materialism, with its 'I' weakening effect, is the actual breeding ground for all kinds of nervousness and mental weaknesses up to and including neuroses and mental illnesses.

For this reason we are especially interested in leading the reader of these pages to an experience of the 'I' in such a way that he/she gets to know the inner source of activity with its dynamic character of reality. An individual who comes upon the real 'I' as the inner principle of becoming, as opposed to the usual, blasé notion, this person has just founded him/herself as a totality. One brings into one's organization a God-given principle without whose intervention in thinking one would remain only half a person. The materialist who believes that he/she must rationally deny the 'I' cuts him/herself from the world spirit and is likewise threatened with sinking down to a subhuman level.

People who make the effort at lively thought can experience the idea of the "I" as an active spirit in humanity. They can also see objective reality in the other ideas that come into their thinking. People do not create truth, but rather they enlighten others when they, through thought, internally overcome the limitations of their being. That is why the Greeks spoke of the ideas as the things that are "viewed." Herein lies the reason of why, for example, the Pythagorean Theorem has not become obsolete, or why, regardless of the differences in the brains of females or males, young or old, white or black, people can concur with each other in thought. The content of our thoughts is based upon the spirituality of the world itself. Those who connect in their thoughts the center points of the hexagon may believe that they have created the idea of the octahedron themselves, but the same octahedron has existed for thousands of years as a structure already in crystals. The ellipse, which we believed "discovered" by our thinking, is the path of the planets' orbits around the Sun. "For those who wish to reach the correct feeling about thinking, I must say: When I can think about things, when I can fathom things through thinking about them, then the thoughts must first be inside the things. The things must be formed according to the thoughts. Only then can I also retrieve thoughts from the things." (Rudolf Steiner)

In thought the mind steps out of the narrowness of subjective limitation into the wide, spiritual horizon. In thought the spirit opens the way out of darkness into the light of truth. In thought the mind, with its own insecurities, encounters the direction-giving powers of the divine foundation of the world. As a thinker, the person steps out of the loneliness of the mind into the universal life of the world and its ideas. This process produces healing energy in our whole life of mind which works against inner insecurity and nervousness, prevents neuroses and schizophrenic symptoms, and drives away depression and anxiety. In the renewal of this original connection of the 'I' to the world spirit lies the prerequisite and foundation for healthy mental-spiritual growth of humanity. "The acceptance of idea as reality is the true communion of humanity." (Rudolf Steiner)

Training the will in thinking

The use of reason as a prerequisite for creative thinking not only challenges the thought capacity of the intellect but also requires the engagement of the whole person. Lively thinking appeals to the feeling for truth and strongly calls to the inner will. Making an effort to achieve clear inner knowledge is a feat of the will. Even in such an insignificant activity as gathering points and rearranging them into a circle we can, at any time experience the will of the human 'I.' Here the will is not active on the outside like when it moves the limbs; it has turned its activity to the inside, to thinking. The thinking-will has removed itself from the body. We experience this when we involuntarily keep the body still while intensively thinking about something. In order to internally understand something we must first "stand still" on the outside. Training of the thinking-will is at the center of all training of thinking and the prerequisite for maintaining and increasing creative energy. This will is called to action in even the simplest concentration exercise. The exercises described here are training for the thinking-will to keep thinking flexible and many-faceted. Rigid or abstract thinking an indication of a weakened thinking-will, one that will not be able to meet today's reality successfully. One who shies away from basic questions such as the meaning of life, weakens himself in the core of their personality.

This will is strengthened when we go through familiar thoughts in reverse order, such as a poem, a song, or an experience. This will is strengthened when we, as often as possible, decide to change a habit. A right-handed person could do one activity with the left hand, a driver could decide to drive only 30 m.p.h. down a stretch of road that is usually traveled at high speed, or one could try to not read the newspaper on a particular day, or not put sugar in the coffee for a few days or a week, or change some other eating habit. Since giving up bad habits has a strengthening effect on the 'I,' it is one of the most satisfying experiences a person can have.

Forming judgments

The ability to form judgments is the highest and most comprehensive function of human thinking. This ability largely determines our attitude about life, our behavior, and our practical activity. For this reason judgments, as well as prejudices, or complete lack of judgment, play a decisive role in human destiny. How difficult can it be to rightly judge a situation, a person, the development of a child, a party, a plan, or a business? It has to do with the fact that judging is a question of thinking but in no way involves only logic or intellectual prowess. The whole person is challenged. We orient ourselves on our experiences accompanied by the uniqueness of our character, and especially our ability to feel. And along with the feeling for truth and truthfulness the ability for intuition must develop so that right judgments and decisions can be made. It all requires exact thinking that clarifies the facts and situations, and, to a certain degree, makes things transparent.

Because of the far reaching effects of our judgments on ourselves as well as on our environment, one should proceed very carefully and avoid making

quick decisions. “But there is nothing in life that does not have a *for* and *against*. It is good when we accustom ourselves to considering not only the *for* or *against* but also the *for and against*. Also as to the things that we do, it is good to consider why, under certain circumstances we would be better off not doing it or . . . to make clear to oneself that there are also reasons against it. This is something that one should not consider uncomfortable.” (Steiner) Our readiness to entertain opposing viewpoints frees us from the subjective, increases our inner flexibility, and strengthens the will.

A further strengthening of the ‘I’ is attained when we withhold our judgment about our fellow human beings and, above all, do not let our personal sympathies and antipathies enter into a judgment. All too often our power of judgment is dimmed and hardens into a prejudice, perhaps because of a flaw in our character, subjective sympathy, or a one-time, accidental experience. “If one was on the receiving end of only one-tenth, let us say, of the judgments he made about the world, if one really experienced them in the soul, it would be more than enough for a lifetime!” (Steiner) We should not judge, out of our feelings of antipathy, others who have perhaps lied to us or made us angry in some way, but rather withhold judgment, wait and observe. Then we can make an objective judgment and maintain our humanity with real presence of spirit.

Is thinking an enemy of the heart?

One can encounter the viewpoint that thinking is some kind of enemy of the soul and that its training represents danger to the development of real feelings. This fear only applies to thinking that is intellectualized, cold, and not truly connected to the reality of life. Actually, just the opposite is true – it is our thoughts that stimulate our feelings. The mere thought of a possible danger releases the feeling of fear.

But thinking is also capable of functioning as a calming, ordering, and transforming force in our feelings and passions. After we have been overrun by an outbreak of feelings, our thinking asks us: How did you come to such a meltdown? What was the reason that this experience affected you so?

With the power of thinking we can objectify our feelings. The fear of a threatening event, like death, for instance, can be transformed by thinking about the immortality of the soul, into feelings of comfort and hope for a higher form of life. There is no feeling that we might have that can not be calmed, explained, stimulated, or impassioned by the light of a new thought.

Those who recognize how important our thoughts are to our life of feeling will proceed all the more carefully with the training and gaining control of their thoughts. Narrow, rigid thinking blunts our experience of feeling. Spiritless thinking is a breeding ground for anxiety. In the expanse of our spiritual horizon and the clarity of lively thinking, our heart also expands.

The reader may realize that the exploration of the theme and the question of self-training raised in this writing are nearly inexhaustible, just like the possibilities for development of the human soul. In conclusion, let it be

emphasized that lively thought is important not only for the mental and physical health of single individuals but can also lead to healing of the social organism. People do not live together as the animals do, ruled by instinct or natural laws. Formation of social life requires creative ideas that are true to life and spirit. Lively thought that is warmed by a heart for truth and given freedom by a genuine quest for knowledge will always open the door to our true, divine-spiritual home.

The Healing Power of Quiet Contemplation and Prayer

by

Hans-Werner Schroeder

Translated by Nina Kuettel

Questions concerning health and illness have played a large role in public discussions in the past few years now because of the enormous increase in healthcare costs. Today, it is often necessary to seek extraordinary medical interventions in order to get help and relief from illness. Cancer, heart and circulatory diseases, allergies of all kinds that have recently appeared, are just a few examples of the serious health problems that are increasingly threatening the physical well-being of human beings.

This applies not only to physical ailments. There are also diseases and ailments growing at an alarming rate that have their origins in the soul-spiritual aspect of human beings. It is not only that one has learned to more clearly recognize the soul aspect of many diseases such as where mental and spiritual behaviors and weaknesses work as catalysts for physical ailments or increase their severity (psychosomatic illnesses). Alcoholism, nicotine addiction, other drug addictions, physical-mental instability, depression, and angst, all the way to the more severe mental disorders (schizophrenia and schizoid disorders) have come like an ever-increasing avalanche that is breaking over us. We cannot deny its soul-spiritual origins.

Other articles in the Waldorf Journal Projects have already said much about the effectiveness of curative, healing help. Now, here is a special look at *The Healing Power of Prayer* to add to the list. In this article the word “prayer” is simply a general term for people’s efforts in searching out ways to harmonize and internalize their soul life. Of course, prayer is, in a special sense, the most important foundation of all religious life and it will be expressly discussed. But also, for those who have no special religious ties or are not searching for any, there will perhaps be times when the power of balance, the kingdom of inner tranquility, maybe even an upward gaze to something greater than one’s self will be sought. Here, we would like to discuss methods and means available that instill tranquility and balance, and thereby stimulate the forces within human beings that contribute to their mental and spiritual health.

Imbalance – losing the center

The phrase “losing the center” (Sedlmayr) coined decades ago, was already then a strikingly appropriate expression for our inner situation. Today one can hardly add anything except perhaps that this loss has become more radical. Today we see ourselves even more strongly pushed to the outside, and the power of tranquility, contemplation, and meditation have been torn further from us. But it does not make sense to merely complain about the situation. It is a fact and condition of life today, just like our daily bread and the air we breathe. It makes more sense to ask about the possibilities for achieving balance, a cure for the one-sidedness that has come about in our lives.

Therefore, let us rather speak of one-sidedness or the loss of our “inner balance.” There are two aspects present in this picture. Not only do we experience a strong pull to the outside in our lives, but through this the possibility is taken from us that we can *stand erect* internally. With the loss of inner “balance” we threaten to fall. We lose the ability to move ourselves forward just like it happens when someone physically loses their balance.

The second clear aspect in this picture is that in order to restore balance something can be put on the other end of the scale to add weight. “Losing the center” – certainly, but still no possibility of healing is visible in this phrase. “Threatened balance” – this picture presents us with the possibility of healing. It says to us: “*Pay attention to the other side of the scale, which always makes it possible to achieve balance again!*”

Conditions of life which rob us of our inner balance will generally not be so quickly removed. Many times stress, disquiet, and haste during our daily activities are unavoidable. Today, pictures and events in the world are delivered to our homes everyday via the media. Often enough, when we need some rest and relaxation at home, we are instead tense, worried, or even fearful. This is a part of our lives today and casual criticism is of no use and should not be pursued.¹

We *must* ask, when we wish to “hold ourselves erect” as human beings: What can I put on the other side of the scale? Must I not seriously and thoroughly inspect my mental/soul source of vitality and think what is possible and necessary for me to do to maintain the health of my inner self, the balance of my soul? This is the beginning point. We investigate the possibilities of creating moments of contemplation and quiet in the middle of the outer and inner restless circumstances of our lives. We attempt to fill those moments with meaningful content that gives us inner strength and support.

Caution: Do not want too much!

Immediately the first objection arises: “I have no time for such moments of quiet contemplation.” In most cases this objection is no more than an excuse to save ourselves from the inner effort required to create such meditative moments!

Think about the following: The approximately sixteen hours that we are normally awake contain about one-thousand minutes. We cannot spare about five minutes per day in order to put them on the opposite side of the scale containing the other nine-hundred-ninety-five minutes? Every day we spend hours, or perhaps only minutes, on many less important matters.

Naturally, in the beginning one will need energy and especially planning in order to create some free space every day. The first question is: “*When* during the day am I most likely able to make such quiet moments? For many people the evening is the only time available when the busyness of the day naturally winds down. Others may be too tired in the evening and will find the best time to be in the morning after a good night’s rest. For a mother it could be in the morning when the children have just left the house and some quiet time is possible. One has to find out for one’s self what is best.

One mistake often made with such attempts to take one’s inner life into one’s own hands is that one takes on too much all at once. This rule applies: After a thorough weighing of the possibilities, at first, take only short periods of time – three to five minutes per day – but these few minutes should be sacrosanct. It has also proven effective to limit the intention to a certain amount of time, for example: I will take three to five minutes (always at the same time of day when possible) for quiet contemplation and I will stick to it for two weeks. Then I will review these two weeks and ask: How did it go with me during this time? Was it a well-chosen time of day or should I change it? Did I get along all right with the trial and did I carry it out exactly as planned or in a changed form? Were the three to five minutes too long or long enough? (They can be very long if one is not used to it.) Or, do I feel the strength to ask more of myself? Should I add a second session in the morning or evening?

In short: When one has thoroughly reviewed the trial period, then one should set one’s self in *freedom* again and make the decision to begin *anew* but this time based upon experience. One continues for another limited period of time and does a similar review until finally experience and rhythm have been established which make such precautions unnecessary.

Success?

The second common objection that can be made to the suggestions here is: What could possibly be gained from only three to five minutes per day?! It is not even enough to overcome my daily cares and inner unrest, let alone that something meaningful can come alive in such a short time.

Do not be deceived. Such initial attempts might not result in immediate success. It is much more important that one gains inner strength by sticking to something over a period of time, even if it is not met with much success, than to begin with a powerful effort and then stop after a short time. The real, important, and essential success is that one is actually searching for tranquility and is learning to practice it. This is decisive for the inner growth of the soul.

One always meets people who have made many attempts and then have become discouraged and break it off after a short time because they wanted

to achieve too much too quickly. For this reason I repeat the advice: In the beginning, not too long, not too much, but stick to it! Secondly, always restore your own freedom through review and new impulse to prepare for the next leg of the journey! Through such efforts the power of the soul grows slowly and thereby the moments of contemplation are lengthened and deepened.

One should also consider the following: Usually in the beginning when everything is new and interesting, a certain feeling of satisfaction occurs which helps one to get through the first difficulties. However, it disappears after a time and the initial eagerness slackens. Then one needs more of one's *own* energy in order to continue. One must realize that it is not only one's own inner weakness that is responsible, but also that one has stumbled upon a spiritual law that is bound to every honest spiritual endeavor: To make the person who is earnestly striving must depend upon his own *self* and his *own* determination. There is a real chance in this more difficult challenge to find in one's self the necessary inner energy.

Tranquility

There is no mistaking the fact that with the first steps onto this path today we are met with challenges that are simply unfamiliar at first. There is the danger that we will become discouraged after a few failures. Nothing could be more wrong! When we are especially, intensively confronted with the challenges to our intention in the beginning, all the more important it is for us to continue. And continue we can when we can accept that there is no other way to regain the desired balance. Therefore, we continue our attempt just as someone continues taking a bitter medicine because they know it can only help.

The first challenge that arises is being able to actually enter into a state of inner tranquility. It can be a significant help if one can find a place free from outside noise. One begins in a relaxed, but not too-relaxed, posture. For many people the quality of light plays a role. Bright light from the sun or a lamp is not recommended. It is better to have the room somewhat dim. In the evening it is helpful to light a candle that shines on some object that imparts a feeling of tranquility such as a crystal, a flower, or a painting.

Once everything is arranged, the decisive step has arrived. It is now much more important to quiet the *inside*, usually more difficult than one imagines because just when the *outer* situation has been quieted, then the *inner* disquiet that fills us comes forth all the stronger. We have not before now learned how to act when there is nothing stimulating us from the outside. The whole day long we are at the mercy of some demand or obligation beginning with the alarm clock that awakens us in the morning, then the traffic on the way to work, the noise that constantly surrounds us, all the way to evening when we have "homework" or perhaps a book has us "glued to the page," or we watch television. There is always something coming at us from outside, and our civilization has become great through this method of living with the world.

But what happens when the outer stimulation stops and we find ourselves completely alone? Everyone knows the driving force of thoughts and perceptions that then come about and we are hardly able to withstand them. This is the point of the first assignment; find real quiet, deep tranquility!

I will say once again that we are not used to this. No one has taught us and so this beginning turns out to be an adventure that we must survive. Experience shows that the worst way is to want to quasi “press out” tranquil quiet. That only leads to new stress. Perhaps a few deep breaths will help at first. Then one directs the mind to times when one has already experienced the sensation of deep peace; remember such experiences as well as one can. Perhaps it is a quiet sunny day in the mountains or on the seashore, a walk in the woods, or a peaceful evening of a warm summer’s day, lying in a meadow looking up at a cloudless sky, or the powerful serenity of the starry firmament at night.

The deeper and more concrete such experiences can become, the more deeply we can penetrate into their peacefulness. For some such serenity will stream out during contemplation of artwork or remembering a few bars of music. Even the word “quiet,” reflectively spoken a few times can call forth in us something like the word itself. An example of this is a poem by Christian Morgenstern which begins:

Quiet, quiet, deep quiet,
People, animals, silently sleep.

(Taken from “Wir fanden einen Pfad”)

One courageously tries again until one finds an appropriate starting point. The principle is the same: inwardly connect to an experience where one has experienced concentrated quiet. When such experiences have not been had, then they should be sought out at the next opportunity. They can really help to quiet us over and over again.

Here is one example of a place to start: The things around me are breathing quietness, the table in front of me, the walls surrounding me, the floor underneath me, the chair I sit upon – they are not filled with haste or nervousness but with a deep serenity. I can make myself conscious of this and allow the “embodied” quiet contained in these things to work in me.

I open my eyes and see the table before me and perceive its serenity. Then I close my eyes and “inhale” this serenity. As soon as the inner experience connected with this fades, open your eyes again, renew the perception and see the table – or another object of one’s choosing – take in its serenity again, close your eyes and let the quietness descend. This alternating between quiet experience in the sensory perceptions and internal quiet can be continued until the inner serenity becomes strong enough.

The *memory* of a strong experience of serenity or the *immediate sensory experience* can also help me to find the corresponding region of serenity in *myself*. It is almost always present within me even though I usually overlook it and it is not always easy to find. Searching out the experiences from the outside that serve as memories or the actual sense-perceptions of quiet allows

me to let this quiet stream flow into me, I can “inhale” it. Then I can also perceive the deeper layers of my mind where the quietness has really taken hold that I can then consciously reach for in this way. Some words of meditation by Rudolf Steiner begin with this state of mind that is important for us:

*I carry serenity within myself.
I carry within myself
The energy that will strengthen me!*

These words contain inspiration for the effort to find peaceful quietude. Naturally, the smallest amount of time in our day is spent living in this layer of our being that the above words address. But a human being is something akin to a “multi-storied building.” One usually spends most of one’s time in the upper floors, and it is not always easy to locate the “stairs” with which to “descend” into the deeper levels of one’s being. However, within these deeper levels sovereign quietude is master. To reach it is the first task of the moments of contemplation.²

Those who begin the meditative exercise in this way will have varying experiences day to day. Sometimes one will be quite successful in reaching the place of inner quiet. On other days one’s own restlessness will not be overcome even with the most intensive effort. One should remain unperturbed (not apathetic!) and not strain to accomplish something on *this* particular day that is perhaps just not possible. One calmly ceases the effort at that particular time in the sure knowledge that the next day is also a new beginning. When one is honest with one’s self it can be easily determined if one has given up because of inner laxness or because this time it really did not work even after an earnest effort.

By the way, a failed attempt in the evening is usually not dependent upon whether one is under tension or tired any more than if one is more or less well-rested in the morning after a night’s sleep. One can accomplish much more than one may think in the beginning when such outward difficulties and circumstances are not avoided but rather confronted with determination. That one sometimes does not achieve a state of quietude usually has deeper reasons – besides the difficulties experienced in the beginning – that vary greatly according to the individual and must sometimes simply be accepted.

The quiet can *increase*. When I have been really at peace something else can appear: Worry and anxiety that had plagued me retreats. In its place, deep *trust* in life, in destiny, in the powers dormant within me, can bloom. Many things can create worry and anxiety within me: What the day will bring, what the future holds, what connects me others, and much more. On the other side, trust lies in the deeper levels of the mind as quietude, to which we can now penetrate. Basically, this trust is always present within us. It lets us know that everything that happens, even the critical, the difficult, or

instances of failure, has a meaning or can be meaningfully integrated into the unfolding of my destiny.

It may sound very theoretical when we indicate the still deeper-lying experiences here. However, they can become increasingly clearer the deeper we penetrate into the experience of quietude. Yes, one could say: Quietude is enlivened in us at a deep enough level when these experiences can be embedded within us.

Now a second step is possible: *Love* for the tasks of our destiny can grow from quietude and trust. We learn to feel that there is wisdom in what destiny requires of us that will, in the end, lead us to ourselves even through the difficulties our life. We will revisit these last two themes: Trust in destiny and love of daily duties.

Constructive forces

We have gained a point of departure that should now revive the soul with peaceful prayer and meditation. The serene quiet is only the “outer covering” into which some other essential can be immersed.

It is not our intention in this article to speak about the significance and practice of *meditation*, which can also benefit from this point of departure. But before we get to the subject of prayer specifically, we will include some things that are of general human interest in content for those who have no religious presuppositions. The following text is an example of this:

Create for yourself moments of inner tranquility and learn in these moments to differentiate between the essential and the non-essential. One should withdraw from daily life for a short time in order to address something completely different than the things involved in daily activities! Those who search for such withdrawn moments in the right way will soon notice that only afterward have they come into their full strength to go about their daily activities! If someone really does not have much time available, then only five minutes per day is enough! One should let one's joys, sorrows, cares, experiences, and acts run through one's mind. And, one should take the attitude that everything that is otherwise experienced should be looked at from a higher viewpoint. The student must try to find the strength to stand before one's self at certain times as a stranger. One must approach one's self with the inner quiet of a judge. If one is successful, then some of the new experiences will show themselves in a new light! If one comes to the state of inner tranquility with a detached overview, then the essential will separate from the non-essential. Worry and joy, every thought, every decision appears different when one confronts one's self in this way.

This is how Steiner expressed himself on the subject of “inner tranquility” in his book *Knowledge of Higher Worlds* which can be described as a basic tutorial, even for those who are not striving for knowledge of higher worlds. Here, also, the gaining of inner quiet stands as the starting point.

Another possibility of filling the quiet mind is to allow a saying or a poem to become alive for a moment. It could perhaps be something that is already very familiar and to which one has already ascribed a certain uplifting or directional energy for one's own mind. Or, it could also be something sought specifically for this purpose and becomes the center of one's contemplation. There are many possibilities and the most effective will be that chosen yourself to be the content of your contemplation exercise.

Living in the words

Much will have been accomplished when we have successfully produced tranquility of mind and now simply speak our chosen words out loud, perhaps a few times in a row. Between times we allow a short pause in which the already attained quiet can flow. The deeper and more meaningful the words we use, the more lasting and concrete will the energy be that they produce in us. This shows that words contain their own inner liveliness that is much more than mere "information." They can have something that radiates. We come closer to this radiating energy through seeking quietude.

We can do more when we not only speak the words out loud, but also try to make every single word come alive within us, for example: "the light of the sun." Try to bring these words alive for a moment by imagining the awesome, flowing fullness of sunlight associated with the words that we never perceive concretely enough. We live for a moment in the inner outlook of light. We can do something similar with the words "the energy of the mind," so that here also we see something of the rich fullness and diversity of our mind. In this way one can make all the important contents of a text come alive and allow it to concretely affect the inner outlook.

At first this exercise leads to considerable *contemplation*. It can then be transitioned into *speaking* the words as we have indicated. Now, however, the speaking has become more lively and meaningful than it could have been before. In this way we gradually come to real living in the words.

Both of the previously described steps, entering into inner quietude and immersion into an appropriate meaningful content, require no more than three to five minutes in the beginning, as we have stated previously, in order to not overtax our power of concentration. However, if one feels that lengthening the time somewhat would not be problematic, there is no reason not to go ahead. One will have to observe this freshly day by day. There will also be days when outside circumstances will not allow even three minutes. On those days it is good if one does not completely forget about the exercise but tries to do a shortened version or at least think about it. With time one learns to correctly handle these fluctuations from day to day.

Prayer is no longer a common occurrence

Now we will transition into the actual focus of this article: Prayer. We hardly need to mention that prayer, which a short time ago (at least in Christianized West) was very common, is now rarely practiced. Even when

one still “learns” to pray as a child – which is also less and less the case today – this is given up for the most part when one reaches puberty because one can no longer see the sense in it. One no longer experiences that something really happens during prayer. One cannot imagine that someone hears the prayers or, going further, that they will be “answered.”

It is all very understandable. Since the beginning of the twentieth century we have fallen into a deep crisis in all our religious notions. The fundamentals of religious life have been called into question from any sides. Everything previously taken for granted is now unhinged. But, the advantage is that we now can freely work through those fundamentals ourselves and build upon them in our own way.

Today there are many things that can assist us. The new catholic and evangelical theology in many cases handles the question of God in a modern way that can open up new lines of communication. For those who wish to go beyond traditional theology, the living anthroposophy of Rudolf Steiner contains knowledge and understanding of the spiritual world affecting humankind and can be a path to a new understanding of God. The Christian Community has given rise to much literature that also leads to the depths of Christianity in a new way without denying the modern person’s need for knowledge.

We point out such helps because we cannot discuss fundamental religious questions within the confines of this article, even though they form the foundation of prayer. Perhaps some readers have not lost contact with religion or have newly found it.

Prayer is a personal turning to a higher being. Prayer goes a definite step further than everything we have described up to this point, but this does not diminish what was discussed previously. We will come in contact with the creative power of the Divine when we begin to live in the certainty that the world is not depleting itself within a myriad of meaningless, materialistic configurations and events but rather that the world expresses much more than a purely materialistic existence in the grandiose beauty of nature, for example, in the wisdom-filled conformation of the human body, and in the great creations of the human spirit, just to name a few. By implementing the facilitators that have been previously discussed an image of the Divinity can also be enlivened within our critical faculties of consciousness today that is not only a wellspring and supporting foundation for the world, but also for myself since I am a part of the world.

Wellspring and supporting foundation of my life

The reason prayer has such important significance for human beings is because it leads us daily to the wellspring and supporting foundation of our lives. The certainty that God exists and that I have something to do with Him slowly forms within me. However, it will only become *real* and *effective* in one’s personal devotion to God in prayer. By praying, I *activate* this certitude. I step into the region of my inner self which brings me close to the

reality of the Divine, thus reinforcing the certainty and understanding that I have from God. So, in prayer I come in contact with the actual wellspring of my life, the foundation of my being.

Human beings can be diverted out of their natural existence only in part. Certainly, with our physical bodies the natural, physical existence protrudes into our being as if coming from “below,” a trait we partly or similarly share with animals. But the actual human part of human beings comes from “above.” It lives with idealistic and spiritual aims. Conscience and responsibility are innate within it. It strives for humaneness. It can feel selfless love. It senses and feels that there must be a purpose to existence. All of these human forces do not come from nature – but from where do they come? They come from “above, out of the Godhead.” As it says in the Bible, we are created in their image from the forces of their own Being.

The fact that such higher forces are “dormant” within human beings is proven by the great creations of the human spirit: great works of art, music, poetry, painting, sculpture, and architecture as well as the genius of acting or the talent of a dancer, to name only a few. It is also shown in the large and small acts of the human heart: selfless love, a willingness to help in acts of true brotherhood and sacrifice. It shines from the eyes of a small child. Sometimes it is visible in the eyes of a dying person. It lives in the comforting hand of a mother, in the gesture of love between a man and a woman, and in alleviating the suffering of the sick. It is often at work in the longing of our hearts for more humanity among humans, for real peace on Earth, and for healing of the world.

The Spanish poet, Juan Ramon Jimenez (1881-1958) spoke of this mystery in a very modern and original way in the following poem:

*I am not I.
I am the one
Who walks by my side,
Without a glance from me,
Who I often visit,
Who I often forget.
The one who is serenely silent, when I speak,
Who gently forgives, when I hate,
Who wanders to where I am not,
Who will stand tall when I die.*

The human in human beings: Friedrich Schiller touched on this mystery with words written in his *Letters on Esthetic Education of Mankind* (the fourth letter) which are perhaps no longer so familiar to us. He said: “Every individual person, one can say, carries within themselves the asset and disposition of a pure, idealistic person whose highest duty of existence is to come into harmony with the unchangeable oneness that is in everything transitory.”

And Steiner commented: “Because, next to his everyday self – we will call it that – every person carries within another *higher self*. This higher self stays hidden until it is awakened. And this higher self can only be awakened by one’s own self.”³

With that we have indicated something of the “higher aspect” in us that does not come from below but from above which we can use during prayer to contact the wellspring and foundation of our higher selves. For this reason there is something enormously tragic about the fact that many people today seem to be blocked from the way to prayer. It is as if they are cut off from the region of their own origin and are threatened with losing the foundation of their own existence. The “anchoring” of human existence is missing and every crisis threatens to put people completely off balance with nothing to hold onto for support, throwing them into inner chaos and driving them into frustration. It is often then late, but never too late, to search for the inner support and refuge of prayer.

“Distress teaches prayer.” This old saying certainly contains some truth. Emergency situations often point people toward the “last resort” which actually should not be the “last” resort but perhaps the “first.” Where is the true origin of my being? That is a question whose answer will determine all of my behavior. When I am in distress, turning to God in prayer must always contain an element of *egoism*, if I am at all able to bring about an inner connection. It should not be an inner or outer state of distress that makes us turn to prayer, but rather the voluntary understanding that with love and reverence we are drawing closer to the Highest in the World, connecting with Him, and allowing His strength to work in us.

Egoism in prayer

It is not only the impossibility of making a meaningful connection to religious concepts that keeps many people far from prayer today. Another reason may be that often one has the healthy feeling of just how much prayer is in danger of becoming egotistical.

“Distress teaches prayer.” That is right, but very quickly egoism comes into play. This danger underlies every personal supplication in prayer, i.e., when I pray in order to *get* this or that.

It is wonderful that in the “Lord’s Prayer,” the deepest prayer that we have, which comes from Christ himself, *before* the personal “supplication” the “Thy will be done” is spoken that counteracts all egoism. Not that which *I*, in my limited view, wish to occur but rather that which from a higher viewpoint and from a higher will wishes to occur in my life. With that the danger of egoism is mitigated as long as I endeavor to speak these words in their entire meaning and strength.

Also, the fact that I can never really pray the Lord’s Prayer with only myself in mind but must include at least one other person works against egoism: I do not say “my” but “our,” not “me” but “us,” and so forth. From the outset there is something thoroughly social that carries me beyond the

limitations of my own ego. And, on the other hand, this is often a special help in being able to actually devote one's self to prayer. It is much easier for many people to pray for another person than it is to pray for themselves. If I can have the conviction that forces are connected with every genuine prayer that can have a positive effect on the destiny of another person that I care about, then it is more likely that I will feel inclined to pray than if I were merely praying for myself.

Prayers of supplication

But is it not here that the dangers of egoism and, especially, subjectivism are lurking? How can I know, in praying for another person, what is good for that person?

Here also the phrase "Thy will be done" should be the basic thought behind the prayer. During World War I, Steiner formulated a prayer for those in combat that was addressed to the "genius," the angel of a man which takes up the love of the praying person and carries it to the other person with the hope of providing strengthening forces of destiny:

*Spirit of your soul,
Effective Guardian!
May your vibration
Carry my soul's
Suppliant love,
Your protection,
To those known to you.*

*That with your
Power combined,
My prayer
Helpfully radiates
To the soul
It lovingly seeks.*

In this case something is not being prayed for that someone wishes to "attain." Whether it is for another person or many other people (the prayer can also be used in the plural) the person is calling on "suppliant love" and, at the same time, appealing to the angel of the other person to transform this love into helpful, strengthening power according to what is important for the destiny of the other person.

This inner focus is exemplary: It avoids egoism and subjectivity in prayer. I really can not know if, for instance, a serious illness is exactly the right thing to happen in the destiny of another through which much can be learned and accomplished that is important for the other person. It would be completely wrong to pray for a quick recovery in this case. However, I can pray that the sick or distressed person be given strength to get through it and

experience the growth that destiny has in store. I can participate in bringing *supplementary* love and assistance into the situation of the suffering person. It may not be *physical* relief and healing, but there will be *internal* strengthening and comfort.

This is also the right and appropriate way for one's own situation. I should not pray for the fulfillment of my (egoistical) desires but for the strengthening of my inner connection to the Godhead. However, for the rest, I must desire that my destiny also brings me the difficulties and tests that I need so that I perhaps do not become lazy, complacent, or too soft, thus wasting the forces that have been given to me.

There is something in the prayer of supplication or in the Lord's Prayer with the words "Thy will be done" that leads us away from egoism in prayer. When that is successful then prayer becomes what it actually is and should be: devotion to God in love and freedom, encounters with the foundation and origin of my being and, conversations with that which supports me, envelops my initial existence in love and completes me. Friedrich Hoelderlin wrote something about this towards the end of his life:

The paths of life vary,
What they are like and how the mountains limit them.
What we are here, there a God can complete
With harmony and eternal comfort and peace.

The Lord's Prayer I

Those who wish to begin again with prayer that they perhaps learned earlier, or those who are beginning for the first time, the question of texts will arise. Of course, silent devotion to the Godhead is possible, wordless worship stemming from the inner quietude, as we have discussed. Another possibility is a wholly free formulation, spontaneously arising from the mood of the moment that puts into words what is in my heart at that moment. Everyone will find a way that suits them best.

However, there are prayers originating from deeper insight that are more than a random gathering of words. They are much more like a compendium of spiritual forces, a concentrate of spiritual energy in words. The foremost example is the Lord's Prayer. It comes from Christ himself. The disciples – as is reported in the Gospels – had experienced the special power of His prayers. They asked Him to teach them how to pray (Luke 11:1). He gave them the Lord's Prayer. Let us turn a moment to the words without going into lengthy detail.

A fundamental remark been made already: Just the words of the Lord's Prayer, earnestly spoken, work against egoism in prayer. One can never say this prayer only for one's self. Something of that is already present in its construction, its sentence structure. It does not begin with our human interests that are so near and dear, but rather with the fundamental gesture of every

genuine prayer which is our devotion to the Godhead. Our concerns are not pushed to the forefront. First, a relationship to God is sought.

*Our Father, who art in Heaven*⁴

At the beginning of this prayer I call to mind the “Father.” I seek to imagine Him in His omnipresence, in His divine omnipotence, and also in His fatherly proximity to me. I quasi step into His presence. The word “heaven” does not point me to an unreachable other-worldliness, but rather to the Divine omnipresence – no place on Earth without Heaven! – but which is, at the same time, over and above everything earthly.

The Lord’s Prayer begins with an inner *upsurge*. Just that aspect alone can mean something healing for me, to take me for a moment away from my own limitedness and smallness, to free me from the pressures of daily life and allow me to look upward and in so doing to perceive that for me there really is something greater and higher than that which keeps me bound within my own limits. At that moment I begin to experience how I *belong* to this greater, higher, and eternal, how it is not unfamiliar, how there is an internal relationship to the eternal Divine, how I may call it “Father.”

It is possible that today for many people it is difficult to perceive it in this way. There are some hindrances that show themselves in us. That is quite understandable. It may not be possible to begin immediately with the Lord’s Prayer. One can begin with other texts and perhaps slowly work towards the Lord’s Prayer through deeper insight in general religious questions.

On the other hand, there is also the possibility of “jumping into the water” with the words of this prayer and gradually feeling how through the “rightness” of it a strengthening power unfolds in the soul and shores it up so that the hindrances become unimportant because the experiences slowly develop that are connected with this prayer. It is true that one learns to swim only when one decides to give one’s self over to the water. Dry land practices are of limited value. With prayer, it is the same.

A classic example

A classic example of experiences with prayer comes to us from Simone Weil (1909–1943). She was a French socialist, philosopher, and mystic. She was born to Jewish parents, raised in a humanistic atmosphere, and lived at first as a complete agnostic. Barbara Nordmeyer wrote the following about Simone Weil’s encounter with the world of prayer.⁵ “She met a young Englishman in Solesmes who gave her a poem by George Herbert (1593–1633) called “Love”⁶ Here is the text of the poem:

Love bade me welcome; yet my soul drew back,
Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
If I lacked anything.

“A guest,” I answered, “Worthy to be here.”
Love said, “You shall be he.”
“I, the unkind, ungrateful? Ah, my dear,
I cannot look on Thee.”

Love took my hand, and smiling did reply.

She learned it by heart so that she would always have it available within her when the terrible headaches overcame her. “I thought I was only saying a lovely poem. But this poem, without my knowing it, had the power of a prayer. One time, while I was saying it, Christ himself descended and clasped me. Through the malady I sensed throughout the presence of a love that was like that found in the smile of a loved one!”

It could not fail that Simone Weil, because she had experienced for herself the existence of a Divine World. M. Thibon, a landowner in Southern France and also an author for whom she worked for a while, was a Christian. He taught her the Lord’s Prayer in Greek. Partly because she adored the beauty of the language and partly because of a promise, she memorized it and said it every morning during the grape harvest and sometimes also while she worked. “Since then I have promised myself to say it once every morning with unconditional attention. If my attention wanders or becomes dulled during the prayer, then I begin again until I have reached the point of complete, pure mindfulness. Sometimes it happens that I say it once more just for the pleasure of it, but only if I feel the need. The power of this exercise is extraordinary and it surprises me every time because whether or not I experience it every time, it always exceeds my expectations! During the prayer, or at other moments, Christ is also present in person, but with an endlessly more real, clear, and loving presence than the first time.” These considerations about the Lord’s Prayer in Greek are among the most precious writings of Simone Weil.

Such an experience seems especially precious because it did not grow out of any religious tradition but completely uncoerced from first-hand experience of an awake, consciously-living person of our times, and because this experience was not a one-time occurrence but was ongoing and repetitive.

The Lord’s Prayer II

Let us now continue our consideration of the Lord’s Prayer. We have already brought up the fact that we start out with the upward gaze, the upswing in our inner devotion to the “Father in the Heavens” thereby releasing us from the pressure of our earthly existence. We also begin to *remember* our own eternal being, to become *intimately familiar* with it.

The next three sentences are likewise completely oriented to the Being of God:

Hallowed be *Thy* name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done
On Earth as it is in Heaven.

We see how in the Lord's Prayer the first thing is that we are consequently diverted from the human situation and, through this, the experience of the Divine can be that much more clearly sought. In prayer we do not seek the increase of our own *earthly*, egotistical personality, not the hallowing of *our* name (The problem of seeking personal honor and glory rings in here as the opposing motif), not the enlargement of *our* kingdom (Lust for power is the opposing motif here), and, not the implementing of *our* will. With the first sentences of the Lord's Prayer we learn to feel that in such devotion to God, in such release from our personal desires, we do not lose ourselves but rather find ourselves because we have been released from the clutches of egoism. By stepping into the viewpoint of the *eternal*, the *temporal* in which we live takes on the right "perspective." It is not rejected nor pushed away, but it is put in the right place. The inner "orientation" of the first sentences contains something extraordinarily curative for us. They form a counterbalance to much that we do, and often must do, in life. With them, we put something on the other side of the scale of our lives in order to achieve the *balance* we spoke of at the beginning of this article.

Then with the following sentences, our earthly destiny is brought completely into the picture:

Give us this day *our* daily bread,
And forgive us *our* trespasses
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead *us* not into temptation,
But deliver *us* from evil.

Here also we can not go into much detail. Every sentence points to fundamental questions of our earthly existence and brings them into connection with Divine working, quasi *lifting* them up to a higher level: The daily *bread* (by which more is meant than merely physical nutrition, also everything that nourishes our inner being as in the words: "Man does not live by bread alone"). The *trespass (or guilt)* that we can not avoid (not only that for which we are actively indebted, but also where we remain indebted to something or someone) and finally, *evil*, the abysmal threat we are all faced with in this earthly existence. We bring God everything that causes us concern, everything that is suffocating us so that in the fight for our daily bread – or in seeking enjoyment of earthly goods – we do not fall to the earthly, so that we are not destroyed by our debt but rather may have hope for forgiveness and balance through that which presides over every human destiny so that evil does not pull us in the abyss.

The sentence about "temptation" offers special difficulties in understanding. Should God lead us into temptation? The following seems to be especially enlightening: Turning to God brings temptation with it such as the temptation to practice religious devotion in a one-sided manner, for instance. We run the danger of neglecting our practical life, the daily

obligations, and our earthly duties. Basking in religious feelings or religious fanaticism and dogmatic self-importance are often the results of a one-sided religious life. Therefore, we pray that our devotion to the Divine will not lead to such one-sidedness that could be quasi released in the soul by the magnetism of God.

If we have turned to God with the most devotion of which we are capable in the first part and have “directed” our internal selves to the eternal, then we can feel in the second part that God will not leave us alone in our earthly cares and dangers. The conclusion of the Lord’s Prayer brings us back again to the Godhead:

*For Thine is the Kingdom,
And the Power,
And the Glory
Forever and ever.*

This conclusion was not given to us by Christ. It appeared in the first centuries after Christ as an answer of the gathered community to the Lord’s Prayer during a service. But, it is certainly a worthy ending to what precedes it.

Are our prayers heard?

This question indicates one of the most significant hindrances to prayer. It is hard to imagine that there is someone out there who *hears* our prayers and certainly very hard to imagine that those prayers will be *answered*.

Allow me to relate a personal experience. It is something that played a decisive role in my religious perceptions. At that time I was a student of perhaps fourteen or fifteen years of age. It was immediately after World War I and there was much school to catch up on because of the absences towards the end of the war. Some of the written work would be the deciding factor in the continuation of my education. I remember one time that I fervently prayed to God for the success of such a written assignment; I prayed for a good grade. The result was negative. That made a deep impression on me. I had really made an effort at that prayer and now it was all for nothing.

I know that such disappointments – at least in earnest, life-deciding questions – can signify the end of all trust in God. If God does not hear me when I seriously pray, why should I pay any more attention to Him? Does He even exist? Who could argue the validity of such a question!

I realized at that time that something was not right. Was the problem with God? Must I doubt His existence? Or was there something wrong with my prayer?

This personal example clearly shows that the approach to this prayer was wrong from the beginning. Where one can and must use one’s own power, one should not appeal to God. The saying, “God helps those who help themselves” is apropos. The prayer should not have been a replacement

for my own effort. It should have given me tranquility, trust, and strength in the sure knowledge that my destiny was being led by a higher power.

Here is the decisive point that we have already touched upon with the subject of egoism in prayer. Certainly, who would not understand that someone would pray for a loved one who is on the verge of death, or to save oneself from harm? That is understood. And yet, “Thy will be done” clears the way to a deeper trust in destiny. Perhaps it can not be easily spoken at all times, especially when we first begin to pray. A deeper trust in destiny can be the fruit of a longer experience with prayer. Especially at decisive points in my life, where my trust in the wisdom and love of the Divine leadership of my destiny is the most radically challenged, will I experience the power of prayer. That is “answering” of prayer.

The goal of my prayer is not the fulfillment of this or that wish, but rather that I find strength, trust, and love in and for my earthly destiny. And, for that the Lord’s Prayer offers the best guidance; yes, even more than that. It contains what I would liken to an energy center for “spiritual energy” in the form of thoughts and words that can arm us with the power we need on our inner path. We have seen something of this in the writing of Simone Weil. It has been the same experience throughout the centuries for those who pray.

When we become accustomed to and accept such considerations, the first question still remains: Is there really someone out there who *hears* our prayers? Should we seriously imagine that our voice penetrates to the consciousness of God, His “ear?” Is not that actually a completely impossible assumption? Such reservations are only too easily understood.

Now the question is if we can slowly work toward the reality of God with our conceptions. Certainly, at first, this reality lies outside, “above” our normal conceptual ability that is based upon the limited *earthly* reality. Just calling the eternal, unlimited Being of God into our inner vision is already going beyond our limitations. And yet, we can begin to look in this direction: The narrowness and limitations of earthly existence do not apply to the Godhead, not in consciousness or in the fullness and omnipresence of His Being. That is exactly the *essence* of the Divine Reality; it encompasses everything and penetrates everything. This is the defining element of the Divine Being.

Human beings have widely varied levels of consciousness beginning with those who think only of themselves, to a mother who has her family, with perhaps many children, fully in her consciousness and “instinctively” knows when one of her children is in trouble, or a teacher who gathers his or her whole class into perceptual consciousness. When we look to God we must think of this expansion of consciousness that is possible in increments in human beings as being infinitely increased in God. He encompasses and supports all living things come forth from Him. He is “close” to everything.

Let us think back once again to the fact that the Lord’s Prayer comes from Christ Himself. He taught the disciples to speak: “Our Father!” It

would have been a deception on the disciples if there was no one there to hear these words and answer them with His Being. The disciples, however, had just perceived the power of His prayer that came from his connection with the Father. This experience would have made them aware: God hears every earnest prayer.

And in this fact that God hears us, that we are lifted up with our cares, yes, even with our whole being, into the essence of God and may, for a moment, feel secure, in this lies the *actual* answer to our prayers that permeates our entire being with comfort, strength, and courage to live.

Tranquility – trust – love – gratitude

At this point let us return once more to themes that have already occupied us in this article. With *tranquility* we are speaking of the starting point for every spiritual deepening. It would also be good for prayer to implement it out of tranquility. As we have described, at first one will try to step into inner quietude, quasi dive into it, as well as can be done in the moment. Out of this tranquility prayers also can reach a greater depth.

Now one can pause after every sentence and renew one's quietude before one speaks further according to how it seems right for each individual. One can also be content with praying only one sentence or one word for a period of time. One can also experience more depth with the Lord's Prayer if one repeats the text one time or multiple times until one is "completely inside it," so to speak. Simone Weil described how this repetition of the text was a decisive help. One tries to gradually determine what is right for the individual and also to test from time to time what perhaps should be changed.

Now we can point out that inner tranquility can be expanded into *trust*, trust in destiny. This is something that will become more concrete in combination with prayer. We have often called trust one of the fruits of prayer.

Morning prayer, especially, when the events of the coming day are pressing in upon us and trying to worry us, is when the effect of prayer becomes important. Perhaps it will not always work, not right at the beginning, but with time the experience will not fail; out of prayerful quietude the "Thy will be done" can grow also in difficult moments in life.

Together with prayer coming from a place of quiet and trust, there is another step we can incorporate, that we develop *love* for our tasks upon the Earth, love for our obligations. As soon as we learn to feel trust in our destiny, the awareness that we are not subject to blind chance appears in our consciousness. We are not senselessly knocked about. Our destiny has a coherent leadership that will finally lead us to the good. Such a destiny can I not only trust, I can love it. This destiny also contains the tasks and daily obligations that sometimes make us sour but of which we can also think that they are leading us to our destiny and belong in our lives. In this way trust in destiny deepens into love, love for our daily activities.

Up to this point we have concentrated on the disposition to prayer in the morning which is essentially connected with the development of trust. The

evening also has its own mood for prayer. Perhaps it is even easier for us to create a tranquil atmosphere in the evening. The burdens of the day have already subsided somewhat, but the experiences of the past hours still linger. We now relax. The mood in the evening can be *gratitude* from which we then speak our prayer: Gratitude that our lives are preserved, that we have nourishment; gratitude for the good and beautiful things we have experienced which can be seen as nourishment for the soul, and, finally, gratitude that our trespasses can be taken away by Divine forgiveness and harmony and that we must not succumb to evil.

The first part of the Lord's Prayer is especially significant for the beginning of the day and the second part for the end of the day. Now, however, after we have developed a few basic motifs for the deepening of our prayer experience, it must be expressly added that one can also leave all of this aside. One should not have the impression that it is of the utmost importance that the indicated moods and perceptions must unfold in the soul at all times before one can correctly pray. What we have described here are only suggestions which may be helpful. Those who are able to pray without them should by all means do so. Above all, when one can not take the time to prepare the right mood and become tranquil, then just speaking the words of the prayer is helpful. It is better to pray as well as one can in the moment than to leave off praying altogether because of lack of time. If need be, it is enough to think one thought or say one word that connects us to the reality of prayer rather than letting the moment go by that would otherwise be devoted to prayer. The same goes for times of illness, or fatigue when we may not have the strength to pray.

The healing power of prayer

Our point of departure is the determination that illnesses and maladies that have soul-spiritual causes are accumulating. We have asked for help with this situation. First of all, we have spoken generally of bringing balance to the lopsidedness of our lives, of creating inner tranquility, and of filling this inner quietude with meaningful things. Then we looked at the energy that can radiate from the first, regular exercises in prayer.

Just finding tranquility of mind already has something of a healing effect on the disquiet that usually fills us and, in time, certainly carries over into our physical state of being, possibly causing illness. The effect is deeper still when trust and love can be created in the soul; when we are successful in momentarily putting aside worry, anxiety, dissatisfaction, and aggression and immersing ourselves in internal positive energy. The more this is possible the more intensely is the stress and deep-seated frustration released that we carry with us and is inherent to life today.

A further step is possible in prayer: Not only do tranquility, trust, and love grow in us, but we quasi lift ourselves up over our own self and encounter the higher, eternal, primordial reality from which our actual being comes. We not only extricate ourselves for a moment from the pressure and

narrowness of our normal lives, not only momentarily loosen the chains of egoism, but in the encounter with the Divine Reality, deeper healing forces stream into our soul.

To better understand this let me say: The word “heal” in German means not only “health” but also “whole” in the sense of unblemished, undamaged. Healing would then mean something that has kept its wholeness intact, something that is not broken. Healing is giving back the wholeness, reproducing it, for those who have lost the wholeness of their being.

Human beings do not stem from the earthly. We have previously spoken of how the best of their humanity can not be derived “from below” but comes “from above.” However, since we live in the earthly realm we lose the relationship to our actual, eternal origin. We quasi let go of the “anchor” with which we are “anchored” to God. We have lost our hold long before a stroke of fate outwardly robs us of it. We have lost our inner balance long before we actually realize it. We have lost the wholeness of our being. We are no longer healthy. We need healing.

It will certainly be clear to the reader that we are not speaking here of something for which people can be blamed; that could be counted as a failing or even a moral deficiency. That is certainly not the intention. We are speaking only of the basic, existential orientation of our earthly lives into which we are born and can not change, but must suffer through.

On the other hand, the actual cause of an endless amount of dissatisfaction, frustration, unspecific longing, and restless seeking of many (especially young people) is this “unwholesome” situation of our earthly existence. Being cut off from the roots of our human existence, the missing anchoring in the eternal must have the effect of causing doubt, frustration, anxiety, depression, lack of direction, and constant restlessness. It is obvious that there is a whole array of physical illnesses related to this, but the susceptibility of so many people to drugs and all kinds of sensations may also have their cause in this.

Religion is really nothing more than an attempt to bring people back into a relationship with the world from which they came. Religion means “reconnection.” Reconnection with areas that disconnection with would result in harm. A prayer, a church service, a sacrament; these things put us back into the reality that is our real home. For this reason, a *real* religious life is truly not an “imposed structure,” not an idealistic addition to the “actual” reality of life, but is a foundation, a basis upon which we can truly “stand” in our earthly existence.

It must be admitted that religious life as it is often practiced today has lost much genuineness, seriousness, and depth. It is perhaps permeated in sentimentality and subtle egoism. That should not prevent one from striving for truth, seriousness, and depth in one’s own religious life and perhaps look for other people who want the same thing. Then one will also see that the stream of healthy religious life is flowing along everywhere.⁷

Going to sleep – awakening

Naturally, we can pray at any time during the day. And yet, the moments before falling asleep and after waking up are especially suited to prayer.

What does it mean to sleep? Our soul detaches itself from the body. Outwardly we remain unconscious. Only in dreaming does sometimes something light up in us indicating that this unconsciousness is perhaps not complete; that also in sleep we “go through” something.

Steiner vividly portrayed the nightly experiences of the soul that we leave behind upon awakening and then often bring into consciousness only as a mood. He said:

For many people in our materialistic age it is very, very difficult to perceive what I would like to call “the holiness of sleep.” When it is experienced that the intelligences living in human form are the ones who have dispensed with all respect for the holiness of sleep, then that is a “savage cultural phenomenon.” Such things should not be criticized. They should also not be counted here in the sense that they lead to an asceticism that is impossible to carry through. We must live with the world, but we must live with it with our eyes open. That is the only way we will tear our physicality away from the base and lift it up. Just think how many people while away the evening hours in purely materialistic pursuits, then go to sleep without developing the perception (because they have not really come out of their materialistic disposition) that sleep unites us with the spiritual world. Sleep sends us over into the spiritual world. People should, at least, gradually develop that with which they can say the words: “I am going to sleep. Until I awaken my soul will be in the spiritual world. There my soul will encounter genius. And when I awaken I will have had an encounter with genius. The wings of my genius will have attached themselves to my soul.

Whether someone makes such a perception come alive in relationship to sleep or whether one does not depends very much on overcoming materialistic existence. This overcoming of materialistic life can happen only through the stimulation of intimate perceptions accordant with the spiritual world. Only if we make such perceptions very alive will the sleeping life become so intensive, and the contact with the spiritual world so strong, that gradually also our waking life can be energized and we will have not only the world of the senses around us, but also the spiritual world, which is the real, the truly real, world. This world that we normally call the real world is only an image of the real world. The real world is the world of spirit.⁸

If we can accept such notions, then further viewpoints about prayer in the evening and the morning become visible to us. I will be able to say to

myself: Evening prayer strengthens the force that leads me up into the regions that we are speaking of here. With prayer it is as if I were spreading the vibrations outward that lead me to encounters with my “genius,” with the angel that accompanies my destiny. And, in encountering my angel I become strengthened with the energy that I need in my daily life in the form of tranquility, trust, and love. On the other hand, an encounter with the angel is also a living guarantee that my relationship to the Godhead does not completely disappear when I must be active during the day in a completely different area of existence. The angel “stands,” so to say, “before God.” It “anchors” my existence in the Divine Being.

In 1917 Steiner spoke about “the holiness of sleep” no longer being perceived as a matter of course. Today that is much more the case than it was at the time he said it. It is all the more important for us to pay attention to the realities that have been indicated here and, when possible, lead our lives with those realities in mind. Much can be done that can be very significant.

The rising up of the soul during the night is endangered in many ways today. This is said without any moralizing sentiment. The “vibrations” of the soul no longer develop. They no longer carry human beings upward when during the day they live only in earthly circumstances and will not direct any thoughts to a higher world. However, evening prayer gives us vibratory power allowing us an encounter with the genius of our destiny.

With such considerations we gain stimulation and impulse not only for evening prayer but it is also significant in the morning for the transition from sleep. Our inner attitude and bearing determine if the energy that has permeated us during sleep will be carried over into our daily lives or if it will disappear upon awakening. We can certainly do something about it. The “vibrations” of our soul are now “folded together” again, but they have something like the “dew” of divine life within them. It is not only the plants that are covered with dew in the morning and therefore refreshed. Our soul also brings energy and refreshment over from the spiritual world. We can see to it that it is not immediately darkened by the “dust” of the Earth but rather learns to maintain some of its original energy.

Healing of the soul – healing of the body

We have not previously spoken of the fact that prayer can also lead to *physical* healing. This is a possibility, not always, but still under certain circumstances. Some religious communities have made this a central point in their religious services.

However, we will not go into that here. This way too easily turns religious striving and perception onto an egoistical path which should rather be avoided as we have stated previously. It does not seem advisable to permeate one’s devotion to God with these kinds of personal wishes.⁹

The effectiveness of prayer lies foremost in the healing energy that it unfolds in our soul. It pertains to the large field of mental-spiritual causes of illness that we are more and more up against today in the form of physical

illness. In this respect, we are dealing with real healing forces when we open our soul, in the way described, to tranquility, trust, love, and, above all, prayer. Such healing forces have a healthful effect on that area from which otherwise additional causes of illness must flow into our body.

Whether or not these healing forces also have a direct, healthful effect on our physical body must be left up to destiny.¹⁰ We need not discount such effects from the outset. Putting them into our prayers would allow us to fall back into egotism. That would be the opposite of what we are striving toward. Perhaps we would experience physical healing and relief but suffer that much more harm to our soul.

Something else can be said: Fortunately we have physicians who can many times effect healing for us. Even very serious illnesses, deathly illnesses, can often be turned around and the person brought back to life. But here the question often arises: What does the person do with the new life he has been given? He was close to death, life was given back to him, does he live on as before or does he understand that the illness was a call from destiny to change something in his life?

For a doctor it is often bitter to observe how he or she has perhaps given their all to help someone back to health only to see that person continue to senselessly waste that life. Not only the illness itself, but also the convalescence is a challenge of our destiny to think about our continued life and to newly arrange it in accordance with the idea of “balance” in our soul. Here is where the steps we have discussed take on an importance that can not be overestimated.

So our prayers should not be directly linked to our wish for health and healing from physical ailments. And yet, during the most difficult hours of our life, including illness, prayer can be *the* decisive support. I will most often not experience physical healing through prayer; but strength, courage, and comfort will grow in the soul so that we can bear our destiny. Patience will show itself as a fruit of prayer.

Those who have a lot to do with the ill and the dying know that how people bear their suffering does not depend upon the degree of that suffering. Whether or not strength and patience is there during the suffering of the unavoidable depends alone upon the person’s strength of soul. Quite difficult things can be miraculously born when our soul has inner strength. Even a small burden will lead to inner collapse then there is no internal support. We will now speak about how inner support and strength can be built.

Faithfulness

At the beginning of this article we pointed out the special difficulty, often seen today, that the inner strength of perseverance usually wanes after a shorter or longer period of time. The first thing we can do against it is care and thoughtfulness in making the decision. That means not too much at the beginning, not too long, not committing for one’s entire life but, at first, just for a short period time. On the other hand, it should be understood that the

inner efforts release their strength when they are carried out not only for weeks and months, but for years and decades. However, since the necessary perseverance usually must be gained, one goes step by step according to plan.

In spite of this, after some time, the feeling that one is no longer really connected to the endeavor will appear. Many people experience this with prayer. One experiences that the words are “empty” or too formulated so that one can no longer completely live in them. That is no reason to discontinue praying. One eats at intervals, even though it may not taste good at the moment, because one knows that it is necessary to keep up one’s physical strength. In a similar way one turns to prayer even if sometimes one does not find satisfaction in it. In any case, substance and energy are connected with the words, just as they are connected with food even if we sometimes only eat because we must.

Of course, a remedy can be necessary. It could consist of taking time outside of prayer, time to rethink single words or sentences in the prayer, to deepen oneself in it. There is a lot of literature written for this purpose. One must not necessarily even read through a whole book. Oftentimes it is enough to read one or two pages to become inspired to look at old things in a new way, thereby enlivening them so that new energy is infused into prayer. This process must be repeated from time to time, just as one must water a plant from time to time in order to give it new strength for life.

Also, the Lord’s Prayer can be infused with more energy when it is devoutly repeated over and over again as we saw with the example of Simone Weil. One can do the same thing with single sentences.

Finally, I would like repeated once again something that can be of key importance to us today in gaining a relationship to prayer. All right prayer is, at the same time, prayer of supplication for others. This thought can help us through many “dry spells” in our prayer life.

If we can demonstrate faithfulness in this innermost aspect of our life, then we are co-workers in building the foundation of our existence. Steiner said it like this:

A person needs inner faithfulness,
Faithfulness to the leadership of the spiritual being.
Upon this faithfulness one’s eternal being and essence,
Can be established,
And, through it, the sense-being,
Can be permeated and energized,
With eternal light.

Special forms of prayer

1. For the Dead

It is especially important to think of the dead and to pray for them. This thought may seem strange at first. One either is not able to imagine that there

is a conscious life on the other side of death and that our thoughts have an effect there, or wants to believe that in “Heaven” all problems are at an end and one must think of the souls that have died as being in a “higher” state, away from all of life’s difficulties.

Neither idea reflects the truth of the matter. We will speak candidly here even though space does not allow for a comprehensive substantiation for our opinion. There is ample literature available on this subject.¹¹ It is not just coincidence that in Christianity praying for the dead has been a continuous practice. The deceased continues to live consciously on the other side of death. It is in no way true that the inner bands that tie them to Earth’s destiny are immediately severed when the outer bands are cut by death. All of the deeper human relationships will not simply stop after death. Quite the opposite is true. Since everything physical has fallen away, the soul-spiritual aspects step up with even more force. And this is, most of all, the desire for human sympathy, that inner warmth and the spiritual light that can live within loving human devotion.

From this viewpoint, there are countless people who have died who are experiencing terrible, deeply painful deprivation, as if pushed out of the human community because those left behind to whom they were connected have practically forgotten them. Every loving thought is like a light in the darkness and warmth in the cold loneliness of existence after death. Every heartfelt prayer forms something like a life center, an “oasis in the desert,” that otherwise woefully surrounds the human soul in the death experience.

For this reason anyone who can pray should pray for the dead. One can combine it with the Lord’s Prayer by thinking of the people who have passed in ways that they become alive in one’s consciousness and by including them in the “our” of the prayer. One can also use another prayer. In our experience the following prayer by Steiner is especially appropriate:

My love is the covering
That now encloses you,
Cooling the heat,
Warming the cold,
Sacrificially interwoven!
Carried by love,
Gifted with light,
Life above!

2. For the Sick

During a serious illness the soul activity of the sick person usually lapses. Perhaps they are still able to think or speak a few words of prayer. In any case, it is of great benefit when another is there to not only lovingly care for the sick person, but also pray for and with him or her. It must be said here that those close to sick people are failing in perhaps the most important act they could do if they fail to pray.

Of course, the condition is that the sick person also wants this. One can ask and will perhaps be amazed that often even people who otherwise have no religious trappings in their lives (or at least have not shown any) come near to the deeper layers of their soul in these situations and suddenly can feel that prayer is right and necessary. The biography of Simone Weil indicates this. Perhaps, if we muster the courage to ask, we can help a person rediscover the path to prayer.

Again, the Lord's Prayer would be right in this situation. However, one can also turn to texts that are familiar to the sick person such as something they knew in childhood, a verse from a church songbook, or the Twenty-Third Psalm. Steiner wrote the following:

Oh, Spirit of God, fill me,
Fill me in my soul,
Lend my soul powerful strength,
Powerful strength also my heart,
My heart that seeks for You,
Seeks through deep yearning,
Deep yearning for health,
For health and strong courage,
Strong courage that flows in my limbs,
Flows like a precious gift of God,
A gift of God from You, oh Spirit of God,
Oh, Spirit of God, fill me.

3. For Children

Parents have a special responsibility for the religious life of their children, most especially for their children learning to pray. Children have a natural, although usually completely unsentimental, relationship to prayer, for they are closer to Heaven. Some parents learn to pray together with their children even though they would hesitate to pray on their own.

Even before birth, during pregnancy, parents should include the child in their prayers. Just as we can say of the dead that the threshold of death is no hindrance to thoughts and perceptions that we send to them, the same applies to the unborn. The threshold of birth does not hinder a child's soul from perceiving the thoughts and feelings coming from the parents. Prayer builds a bridge, a beneficent access, to the people to which the child will be entrusted.

After birth the parents will pray for and about the child until he or she has grown enough to all can pray together. It is important that the Lord's Prayer also become familiar to the child in his early years. It is one of the most important things we can give to our children for their later lives.

4. Mealtime Prayers

Praying before a meal has gone out of fashion because most people can no longer feel a connection to it. Here we can likewise learn from children to take up this form of prayer again. Children ask for it when they have once

learned it. Space does not permit a comprehensive discussion of the subject, but suffice it to say that with nourishment, the strengthening and upkeep of our physical bodies, we are dealing with known material, physiological processes. However, how the food and drink is transformed in our body and blood remains somewhat a mystery. Mealtime prayer is an accompaniment to this process that forms the foundation of our earthly existence and infuses it with the perceptions of reverence and gratitude. The following prayer is by Rudolf Steiner:

The Wessobrunn Prayer

That I was told among men as the most wondrous,
There was neither earth nor heaven above,
There was no tree nor mountain nor any thing.
The sun did not shine,
The moon did not light,
The mighty sea had no end and no wend,
But there was the one almighty God, man mildest
And there were with man many godly ghosts
And God the holy.

God Almighty,
Thou hast created Heaven and Earth,
And hath given so much good to the people.
Give me, in Your mercy,
Faith and good will,
Wisdom, insight, and strength,
To withstand the Devil,
Defend against evil,
And effectively do Your will.

The Prayer of St. Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace,
That where there is hatred, I may bring love;
That where there is wrong, I may bring the spirit of forgiveness;
That where there is discord, I may bring harmony;
That where there is error, I may bring truth;
That where there is doubt, I may bring faith;
That where there is despair, I may bring hope;
That where there are shadows, I may bring light;
That where there is sadness, I may bring joy.
Lord, grant that I may seek rather to comfort than to be comforted;
To understand, than to be understood;
To love, than to be loved.

For it is by forgetting oneself that one finds.
It is by forgiving that one is forgiven.
It is by dying that one awakens to Eternal Life.

The Twenty-Third Psalm

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside still waters,
He restores my soul.
He guides me in paths of righteousness for
His name's sake.
Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for You are with me,
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me,
In the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil.
My cup overflows.
Surely goodness and love will follow me,
All the days of my life,
And I will dwell in the House of the Lord forever.

– Book of Psalms in the *Old Testament Bible*

Grace

Plants germinate in the earthly night,
Buds leave through the sparkling air,
Fruit ripens by the power of the Sun.

So the soul germinates in the shrine of the heart,
The spirit buds in the light of the world,
Human strength matures in the glow of God.

5. During Times of Distress

It seems perfectly justified to call out to God for help in times of distress. If one already has a strong connection to the Lord's Prayer then its power will also prove effective in these situations. If there is not time for the entire prayer then single words or sentences can also be used.

Some people today, for instance, awaken in the middle of the night with deep feelings of anxiety. Speaking the Lord's Prayer in these situations, out loud, perhaps several times over, can ease the feeling of anxiety. The Lord's Prayer spoken out loud also offers protection when one feels spiritually threatened in any way.

Conclusion

It should be mentioned once again that *nothing* in this article is intended to be conclusive or dogmatic in any way. I have tried to express my viewpoints clearly, although space considerations have limited expression of much justification and reasons. This material should be looked upon as suggestions that may help the reader to find his or her *own* way.

I would like to close with some words by Rudolf Steiner which have been helpful on my own path and for which I am especially grateful. This excerpt is taken from his lecture titled “Vom Wesen des Gebetes”:

Such considerations as this one about prayer are not well-liked today. For instance, one hears it said today: “What is prayer supposed to be able to change in the world when we just pray for this or that? The world goes on adhering to requisite laws that we can not change!” Whoever wishes to really get to know a power must search for it where it is to be found. Today, we have searched for the power of prayer in the human soul and have found that it is something that brings the soul forward. And those who know that it is the spirit that works in the world (not the fantastical or abstract, but the concrete spirit) and that the human soul belongs to the kingdom of spirit, they will also know that not only do physical forces work in the world according to outer, inherent laws, but also everything that is of a spiritual nature also works in the world when the effects of these forces are not visible to the outward eye and outward science. Therefore, let us strengthen the spiritual life through prayer and we will need only to await the effects. They will appear. However, those who first seek the effects of prayer in the outer world will be the first ones to have an awareness of the reality of the power of prayer.

Whoever has realized this should try the following experiment: After having experienced the power of prayer for ten years of one’s life, look back on the previous ten years that went by without being aware of the power of prayer and compare the two decades. One will see how one’s life was changed under the influence of a force that poured strength into the soul through prayer. Forces show themselves by their effects. It is easy to deny the existence of powers when one has not even called upon their effects. Why should one have the right to deny the power of prayer who has not even tried to let prayer become effective within them? A power that is supposed to work in and through the soul can only be known through the exercise thereof.

Poems – Verses - Prayers

You, Who are above us,
You, who are one of us,
You, who are also in us,
That all would see you – also in me,
That I prepare the way for You,
That I am grateful for everything that befalls me,
That I do not forget the other's need:
Keep me in Your love,
As you will, so that others stay in mine.
Let everything in my being
Turn in reverence to You,
And may I never doubt.
I am under Your hand,
And all power and goodness is in You.
Give me a pure mind – that I look at You,
A humble mind – that I hear You,
A loving mind – that I serve You,
A faithful mind – that I stay in You.
– Dag Hammarskjöld

Out of the deep night,
I am awakened
To me.
Out of the deep night,
I am awakened
To You.
In the light of day
I feel Your guiding presence –
For me.
In the light of day
I may create –
For You!

– Johannes Hemleben

The Disciple

I do not know, has it a meaning,
And is it worth anything, that I live,
Only because my heart still beats?
I know only that I am a vine,
Full of late wine.
I do not know, shall I be?
I know only, that the Earth
Puts grain in my lap,
So that I become bread.
God speaks from bread and wine.

– Jochen Klepper

The Long Exercise

Perhaps through long practice you will gradually,
Learn the first lines of the prayer.
When you know it, it will then release you,
From the realm of the lightly-spoken word.

And these first lines of the prayer,
Are everything that you need take with you on the journey.
They remain the never-depleted nourishment
For you at the place of His determining.

The first lines of the prayer you will
Bring with you when you return from over there,
And you will continue saying them with conviction –
And sometimes there will be prayer without words.

– Ina Seidel

Endnotes:

1. Today's life conditions should not be criticized without thought. Better to strive for a conscious relationship with one's self and the environment and not simply "go along" with everything.
2. By "deeper layers" we do not mean what is usually referred to today in a psychoanalytical sense as the "subconscious."
3. *Knowledge of Higher Worlds* by Rudolf Steiner.
4. In the Greek text it is actually plural, "in the Heavens."
5. Barbara Nordmeyer, *Meister ihres Schicksals – biographische Skizzen, (Masters of Their Destinies – Biographical Sketches)* Stuttgart, 1989.
 "Who made the eyes but I?"
 "Truth, Lord; but I have marred them: Let my shame
 Go where it doth deserve."
 "And know you not," says Love,
 "Who bore the blame?"
 "My dear, then I will serve."
 "You must sit down," says Love,
 "And taste my meat."
 So I did sit and eat.
7. Today there are large and small groups everywhere within churches bringing alive an earnest searching in religious life.
8. Rudolf Steiner: *Bausteine zu einer Erkenntnis des Mysteriums von Golgatha (The Mystery of Golgotha)*.
9. Christ also did not heal every sick person of his time, not by a long shot. The Gospel reports make clear that the right moment of destiny always played a role in these healings.
10. Whether healing can and should occur is, above all, a question of destiny. Every healing effects and stimulates something in a human being.
11. *Das Leben nach dem Tode (Life after Death)* by Rudolf Steiner; *Wiederholte Erdenleben (Repeated Earth Lives)* by Emil Bock; *Vom Schicksal der Toten (The Destiny of the Dead)* by Rudolf Meyer.

The Emergence of the Idea of Evolution at the Time of Goethe

by

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Translated by Jon McAlice

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It is obvious to everyone today that the earth has gone through a long period of evolution. We know that this also holds true for plants, animals and the human being. It is also widely accepted that this applies not only to the kingdoms of nature, but that cultures, too, evolve, as do languages and forms of consciousness. The evolutionary approach has in fact become so widely accepted that today every good textbook begins with a chapter covering the evolution of the subject itself. Keeping this in mind, it is hard to fathom the fact that the concept of evolution is barely two hundred years old. Before that time there was no comparable concept. The contemporary meaning of the term evolution is the lawful change of what are usually sense-perceptible phenomena. For the biologist “evolution is a transformation of an organism in form and behavior, with the result that succeeding generations differ from those that preceded them.”¹ Even more reflective of today’s mentality is the statement that “phylogenesis – the true meaning of evolution – is the creation of ever new programs of genetic information.”² Rarely is attention paid to the fact that it is a ‘being’ which is evolving and thereby manifesting or revealing itself in various forms of appearance. This was, however, of the utmost importance to the early discoverers of the notion of evolution. A look at the origin of the idea should provide us insight into this.

The word ‘evolution’ has been in existence since Roman antiquity. At that time, it meant the unrolling of a scroll as it was being read. Everything that the scroll contained was ‘evolved’ or unrolled. It still has this meaning in relation to the development of a thought, when what is present as a whole in one’s consciousness is articulated step by step.³ It was essentially with this meaning that Kant used the term to describe the origin of the universe out of a gaseous mist in his *General History of Nature*. There he writes that it corresponds most closely to the nature of God if the celestial bodies are ‘uncoiled’ from matter in which mechanical laws hold sway. In other words, “that the origin of the world lies in a mechanical evolutionary process rooted in the general laws of nature.”⁴

In this sense, evolution assumes preformation, the presence of a perfectly formed miniature encapsulated in the germ, which in the course of time ‘evolves.’ Whether in botany, where preformationism was widely held to be true (v. Haller) or in the history of literature at that time, it was this use of the term that was most widespread. If we examine seventeenth century novels with this in mind, we find ‘preformed’ heroes everywhere. Princes are intelligent, just, manly, brave, sometimes even able to speak from the moment of birth. The stories of their lives consist essentially in their using and preserving these character traits and capacities through a series of adventures. Imprisoned virgins are rescued, villains are slain, outlaws and the overly proud are punished and in the end, he is given the kingdom – the goal that had lived in his soul from the beginning. A good example of such a book is *Hercules and Valisca* by Andreas Heinrich Buchholtz (1659).

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, we begin to see movement creeping into this rigidity of thought. Leibniz was one of the first to enter new territory. In his later letters to Lady Masham (1704), he differentiated between two elements underlying all development: uniformity, which is maintained by nature within the objects, and change, which reveals itself outwardly, “I hold not only that these souls or entelechies all have with them some kind of organic body appropriate to their perceptions, but also that they always will have, and always have had, as long as they have existed: so not only the soul, but also the animal itself (or what is analogous to the soul and to the animal, so as not to argue about names) remains, and thus that generation and death can only be developments and envelopments of which Nature, as is her custom, gives us several visible examples to help us to work out what she keeps hidden.”

This idea was only expressed in private letters and remained hidden from Leibniz’ contemporaries. It surfaced again by Herder, who took it up vehemently (“my grand theme!”). In keeping with his character, he published immediately (1774). This was his first attempt at a philosophical history. Entitled *This Too a Philosophy of History for the Formation of Humanity*, Herder wrote about change and the process of becoming throughout history: “Those who have so far undertaken to unfold the progress of the centuries for the most part have in the process the pet idea: progress to more virtue and happiness of individual human beings. Should there not be manifest progress and development but in a higher sense than people have imagined it? Do you see that growing tree!, that upwards striving human being!, having to pass through diverse ages of life!, all manifestly in progress!, a striving one for the other in continuity! Between each there are apparent resting places, revolutions!, changes!, and yet each has the center of its happiness in itself! No one is in his age alone, he builds on the preceding one, this becomes nothing but the foundation of the future, wants to be nothing but that – this is what we are told by the analogy in nature, God’s speaking exemplary model in all works! Manifestly so in the human species! The Egyptian was not able to exist without the Oriental, the Greek built upon them, the Roman raised

himself onto the back of the whole world – truly progress, progressive development, even if no individual won in the process! Its goal is on the large scale! It becomes – what husk-history boasts about so much and what it shows so little of – the stage of a guiding intention on earth!”⁵

This initial sketch, in which nature was referred to as an analogy to the development of humanity, was soon revised and rewritten, thanks to Goethe’s support and interest: “Herder is writing a philosophy of history, which, as you can imagine, is new from the ground up. We read the first chapters together yesterday. They are delicious; the history of the world and of nature was just racing by us.”⁶

Beginning with a fairly simple plan which he brought progressively to perfection, Herder worked to develop the idea of the evolution of humanity. Natural evolution appears in his work as a precursor to the cultural evolution of the human race: “Air, fire, water and the earth evolve out of the spiritual and material staminibus in periodic cycles of time. Diverse connection of water, air, and light precede the emergence of the seed of the simplest plant, for instance, moss. Many plants had to come into being, then die away before an animal emerged. Insects, birds, water animals and night animals preceded the present animal forms, until finally the crown of earthly organization appeared – the human being, microcosm. He is the son of all the elements and beings, Nature’s most carefully chosen conception and the blossom of creation. He must be the youngest child of Nature; many evolutions and revolutions must have preceded his formation.”⁷ There are still many transformations to come before the human being reaches the ‘radiant glow’ of his ‘bud of humanity.’ But Nature wills to reach this stage for “nothing in Nature stands still; everything strives and moves forward. If we could only view the first stages of creation, how the kingdoms of Nature were built one upon the other: a progression of forward-striving forces would reveal itself in all evolution.”⁸ But the human being cannot count on Nature for his own further evolution. He has to “lay the foundation for his own future appearance” himself; through “spiritual exercises” he must “spin the fabric” which will once clothe him.⁹

How deeply Goethe felt himself to be connected to these ideas becomes clear in his morphological studies written some thirty years later: “My difficult, painful study of nature [searching for the plant and later the animal archetype] was lightened, even sweetened as Herder began to draft his *Sketch of the History of Humanity*. Our daily discussions revolved around the primordial origins of the aqueous earth and the organisms that have evolved upon her through the course of time. The origin and its ongoing evolution was discussed at length and through the exchange of ideas and the arguments that ensued, our scientific understanding was purified and enriched. With other friends I also had lively discussions about these topics, which interested me passionately.”¹⁰ However Goethe went on to say: “Today, thanks to broader experience and a greater depth of philosophy, there are aspects that have become visible which were hidden to us at that time.” Goethe had gained

through a “greater depth of philosophy” an understanding of Nature that was still closed to him in the 1780s. What does he mean by this?

Another source, which has fed the emergence of the idea of evolution can shed light on this question.¹¹ In his youth in Leipzig and then later, Goethe was brought into contact by Susanne von Klettenburg with pietistic autobiographies. This is a form of literature which, like journaling, lives from one’s willingness to account for the way one leads one’s life. In pietistic circles, it was also the practice to show oneself to be worthy of God’s guidance in one’s own life and to ever again examine one’s efforts to achieve this worthiness.

Pietism touched Goethe directly during his time as a student in Strasburg. There he became acquainted with Johann Heinrich Jung-Stilling, who told him stories of his own youth, highlighting the adventures in which he believed to have been truly under God’s guidance. Jung was raised in a simple, peasant-like surrounding and had as a child already been drawn to spiritual questions. In addition to an apprenticeship and practical training, he had trained as a teacher and taught at seven different schools in an equal number of years. At the end of this time he had experienced an illumination. A radiant cloud enveloped and permeated him with an unknown energy. In that moment, he dedicated his life “to the honor of God and to human charity.” In addition, he “made a strong and unshakable pact with God, to in the future subject himself fully to God’s guidance and refrain from all vain wishes and desires, even, if God so wished, to remain a simple working man for the duration of his life and to do so contentedly and joyfully.”¹² Naturally he proved not to be content as a simple working man, but became first a private tutor, then a doctor. Goethe met him as he was studying medicine in Strasburg. After hearing his stories, Goethe suggested that he write the story of his youth and young adulthood. Jung-Stilling applied himself to this task and sent the manuscript to Goethe, who edited it in a number of places and then had it printed without mentioning any of this to his friend. In the meantime, the latter had begun to practice medicine, but his initial success quickly took a turn for the worse. Patients came ever more seldom and the family finances plummeted catastrophically. Finally Jung-Stilling found himself with unpaid rent to the tune of seventy taler with only fourteen days to pay up or leave. “The fourteenth day drew closer and there was absolutely no indication as to where the money would come from. Time and again, tears came to poor Jung-Stilling’s eyes; he often ran to his sleeping chambers, buried his face in his hands, wept and begged God for help, and when his work called, his wife Christine would take his place. Finally the dreaded Friday arrived, both prayed incessantly as they went about their work! At 10:00 AM the postman arrived; in one hand he held the bill and eviction notice, in the other a heavy letter. Full of anticipation, Jung-Stilling took the letter. It was in Goethe’s writing, on the edge was the notice that it was weighted with one hundred and twenty talers in gold. Astonished, he opened it and read that his friend Goethe had published the beginning of his memoirs under the title of *Jung-Stilling’s Life*

and enclosed was the author's honorarium. How powerfully this tangible intervention of Divine Providence affected Jung-Stilling and his wife is indescribable; they resolved never again to stumble or doubt, but rather to bear all sorrow and tribulation with patience. In the light of truth, they also realized that the Father of humanity was leading them by the hand, that their path was right in His judgment and that He was preparing them for higher goals through such trials."¹³

Following this obvious intervention by God in Jung-Stilling's life, he wrote his publisher: "Now dearest Decker! I have to tell you that I am Heinrich Stilling. Yes it is I, I have had to walk this difficult path before I could reach the point at which I now find myself. Everything you have read in my story is truth without invention! It is strange how God passes out the roles in this flower- or caterpillar-like life of His humans. Everything is all right with me, for I am not yet finished, I am still in the smelting."¹⁴

Although Jung-Stilling experienced himself as an evolving being, he was still in a similar state as one who is waiting to see what is going to be unrolled. He had not yet taken an active part in his own evolution. This step was taken a few years later by Karl Phillip Moritz and described in his novel *Anton Reiser* (1785). This is also an autobiographical account of the author's youth. But how different was his experience. At seventeen, the author had a kind of awakening. He discovered that if he tried hard enough, he could independently guide the forces of his own thinking: "And what was at first but empty names slowly became full, clear concepts, and when he now read or thought the names again and everything grew light and radiant which had previously been dark and twisted, a wonderful feeling overcame him that he had never felt before – he tasted for the first time the bliss of thinking. A new creation took place in the forces of his thinking. It was as though dawn had appeared in his understanding and now a new day was breaking and he could not get enough of the stimulating light. From then on he was less unhappy because the forces of his thinking had begun to evolve."¹⁵ This is not the clearly experienced finger of God intervening in the course of a person's life. His part has been replaced by the individual's own, self-directed thinking. This experience was so powerful that it transcended the pietistic tradition in which Moser too was raised.

This novel was published as Goethe was working with Herder on *This Too a Philosophy of the History for the Formation of Humanity* and doing intensive botanical studies. With this preparation, he set out for Italy. On this journey, his whole structure of thoughts and ideas was soon brought into fluid motion. On September 27, 1786, he noted in Padua: "Amidst this new array of different sorts of plants, the idea emerges ever more strongly that perhaps all forms of plants could be developed out of one! This is where I have been stuck in my botanical studies and I do not yet see my way out of the confusion." Just a few months later, in Rome (February 19, 1787), he seemed to be more hopeful: "I am on my way to discovering new and wonderful indications how Nature, what an incomparable monster, lets the

manifold evolve out of the simple.” Then, not long after this in the botanical garden in Palermo, Goethe was finally able to grasp the idea of the archetypal plant. This idea, which permeates all his future work, was not merely a discovery that allowed him to bring order to a small segment of his surroundings. At least as important to him was the leap in consciousness which finally allowed him to follow in his mind’s eye the flowing, constantly changing forms. His own consciousness had likewise become fluid and mobile. Thus he wrote in the introduction to *Metamorphosis of the Plants* (1807): “When he who is called to lively observation begins to hold his own in the struggle with Nature, he first feels a strong drive to master the phenomena. It does not take long, however, before they draw near to him with such force, that he rightly feels to have cause to recognize their power and revere their presence. As soon as he becomes cognizant of this reciprocal effect, he becomes aware of a double infinity: in the phenomena the manifold nature of being and becoming and the living, weaving relationships, in himself, however, the possibility of an infinite development in that he continuously makes both his sensibilities and his reason able to respond to new forms of accepting and reaching out.”

Goethe’s observation is of the utmost significance for the emergence of the idea of evolution. This cannot be found in the environment if the fact of evolution is not first experienced within the human being. A person who is not in the process of evolving himself will not be able to recognize evolution. It is the fundamental problem of all evolutionary research. Goethe experienced this in all its consequences. He published *Metamorphosis of the Plants*. Knowing full well how difficult it would be for the general understanding of his readers, he added an introduction in which he sketched out the fundamental problem: “When we become aware of living Nature in such a way that we desire to gain insight into her being and the way she works, we tend to believe that this is best done by dissecting an organism into its constituent parts. It is true that this approach can bear fruit. But these efforts to understand everything by dissecting it do have a negative side. What was once alive lies before us separated into the elements that made it up, but it is not possible to put these back together and bring the organism back to life. This is as true of many inanimate objects as it is for all living organisms. Thus scientists throughout history have been driven to recognize the living form as such, to grasp the significance of the outer, perceptible parts in the context of the whole, to understand them as a manifestation of something within and thus to master the whole in their examinations. If we observe all forms of Nature, especially the organic forms, we discover that nothing is static or at rest, nothing is finished, but rather that everything is in motion! What is once formed is then transformed and if we wish to achieve a living understanding of Nature, we must follow her example and be just as mobile and formative as she! Each living thing is not singular, but plural; even though it appears to us to be individual, it remains a collection of living, autonomous beings, which can appear to be either similar or dissimilar.”

Even such a description can only be understood if the reader can recreate the connections fluidly in his own consciousness. If he does not do this, understanding can not be achieved. Goethe was aware of this difficulty. He characterized it in his *Morphological Notes* (1820), in which he published his findings concerning the human intermaxillary bone. In this essay he posed the difficult question as to whether it is possible to envision the bones of the skull as metamorphoses of the vertebrae. And he confessed “that I have been convinced of this hidden relationship for thirty years and have continued to study it. Yet such an aperçu, the awareness, grasping, envisioning, the concept or the idea, however one wishes to call it, do what one will, retains a certain esoteric quality. It can be spoken of in its wholeness, but not proven; one can present it in its details, but can’t quite manage to fully round it out.”

This difficulty is a question of consciousness for everyone interested in the problem. It is on par with the question as to whether one has enough strength in thinking and the capacity to apprehend relational aspects. Anyone who has insufficient training in the apprehension of mobile concepts will not be able to understand the essence of the subject. This was the painful experience that Goethe, upon his return from Italy, was to make with his contemporaries: “From Italy, with its richness of forms, I have returned to Germany, formless; the lovely beckoning skies were traded for gray ones; instead of comforting me and welcoming me back into the fold, my friends drove me to despair. My delight over foreign, little-known objects, the pain I felt at having to leave it all behind me, seemed to be as an insult to them. I missed their interest; no one seemed to understand me. In this embarrassing state, I did not know how to find myself. The loss I felt was too great for my senses to be able to acclimate themselves. My spirit strove to keep itself whole. For the past two years, I had observed, collected, contemplated and striven to sharpen all my capacities. As the gifted Greeks had striven to evolve the purest art within the context of their nation, I had hopes of slowly seeing the whole and achieving thereby a pure, unprejudiced level of artistic enjoyment. Further, I believed that I had recognized how nature goes about her work to bring forth living forms, the templates of artistic endeavor.”¹⁶

Goethe was describing his own evolution. He developed within himself the ‘art’ of ‘slowly seeing the whole.’ Nature, which also proceeds in this manner, served as his teacher. For the moment, he found himself alone with this capacity, for no one in his circle of friends had taken the same path: “It is terribly painful not to be understood, when one with great effort finally comes to the point where he believes to understand both himself and the issue at hand.”¹⁷

It is through his own development that Goethe discovered the lawfulness that governs evolution in Nature. He became aware within himself of the seed or germ that maintains continuity in everything that manifests itself outwardly. Through this experience, he searched to discover the generative, ‘autonomous being’ in Nature that in all its various manifestations remains true to its own ideal. In his papers we find a short note which characterizes

this concisely: “It is an enjoyable business to at once explore both Nature and oneself, to use force on neither her nor one’s own spirit, but rather to let the two of them bring each other into balance.”¹⁸

Having thus become aware of evolution, Goethe tried to bring the observed lawfulness into artistic form in *Wihelm Meister*. He worked on this, the first of the German ‘developmental novels,’ for many years, from 1795 until his death in 1833. Naturally, he returned time and again to contemplation of his own life and his own growth. From 1810 on, he worked on his autobiography *Fiction and Truth*. He characterized the leitmotif of this work as follows: “It seems as though the primary task of a biography is to present a person in the context of his time and to show to what extent it all works with him or against him, how he develops through this a picture of the world and of humanity, and how, if he is an artist, a writer, or a poet, he brings this to expression in the world.”¹⁹ This wholeness can only be depicted artistically, as is true for the wholeness of an ‘autonomous being’ as a living idea. Thus Goethe gave his memoirs the title *Fiction and Truth*, not as Jung-Stilling said, ‘truth with no invention.’ It is only through a consciousness of the whole that wholeness can be brought to expression.

In the second part of his memoirs, Goethe draws our attention to precisely this relationship. He introduced a “hopeful Old German saying: What one wishes for as a youth, one will have in excess when aged.” The wish he saw as a striving: “If a certain focus becomes an essential part of our nature, then with every step we take a part of this wish is fulfilled. If the conditions are right, the path of fulfillment is a straight one, otherwise it is a winding, twisted one. If one finds something that one once hoped to do being done by another, the wonderful feeling stirs within his breast that humanity in its totality is the true human being and that a single person can only truly be joyful if he has the courage to experience himself within that totality.” Thus Goethe closed the circle and arrived once more at his point of departure. For it is this relationship between individual development and the evolution of humanity that he and Herder pondered as young men. What Goethe strove for in his youth, he attained as an old man!

The idea of evolution emerged for Goethe out of the observations of his own life. What he began to have an inkling of in this context, he discovered at work in the forms of Nature. And, vice versa: what he experienced in Nature, he discovered secretly at work within his own soul-spiritual nature. Looking back over his life as an old man, he wrote: “The ever-changing display of plant forms, which I have followed for so many years, awakens increasingly within me the notion: The plant forms, which surround us, were not all created at some given point in time and then locked into the given form. They have been given a felicitous mobility and plasticity that allows them to grow and adapt themselves to many different conditions in many different places. How they can be brought together under one concept has slowly become clear to me and that this conception can be enlivened at a higher of level [of consciousness]: thus I began to recognize in the sense

perceptible form a supersensible archetype. Whoever has felt what a rich, saturated thought has to say, will admit what a passionate movement comes to life in the spirit when we are enthused, and we anticipate the totality of what will evolve step by step.”²⁰

Initial definition of the concept of evolution

Goethe’s insights were gained from his own sense of his evolving self. They do not, however, contain a concept of evolution. This step was taken by the German idealists, who all developed their ideas based on Goethe’s work. In the introduction to his book *History of Philosophy*, Hegel characterized the situation in which he found himself. “Evolution is an idea that is bandied about all the time. One of the specialties of philosophy is to examine what is thought to be known. Those things that are applied and used without being examined, the things used to simply get through life, are precisely what is most unknown for those who are not philosophically trained.” Hegel then tried in a roundabout, yet fundamental manner to, in thinking, grasp the idea of evolution. To begin with, he differentiated, as did Leibniz before him, between two elements: the idea which evolved and the articulated, mobile manifestation. To these comes the content of the idea itself. This is always concrete. Evolution consists in the working together of these three elements: “What is true and defined unto itself, bears within it the drive to evolve. Only what is alive, the spiritual, is active within and evolves. The idea – in itself concrete and evolving – is an organic system, a wholeness that bears within itself a wealth of stages and moments.” Wherever something was evolving, Hegel recognized a living spirit, an idea at work. From this point of departure, he turned to an examination of the history of philosophy, characterizing it as a sequential blossoming of the human spirit: “Philosophy is itself the cognition of this evolution and is, as conceptual thinking, itself the cognized evolution. The further this path of evolution proceeds, the closer philosophy comes to perfection.”

Besides Hegel, it is Schelling who struggles most at that time to understand this idea. In his fragmentary work *The Age of the Earth*, he begins with inner unity or oneness: “If, by any process of evolution, the inner unity of the evolving subject is assumed, then it follows conclusively that each system has but one subject, one living being evolving itself within it. Thus it is in principle impossible to form a definitive, static concept, for since it is in continuous motion, progress, enhancement, any concept can only hold true for a moment; as a living organism it is in fact not one, but many. We see from this that there is no point in the living wholeness of scientific art, where one can stop or that one can hold on to, but that only by waiting for the evolution of the whole is it possible to express the concept of the evolving subject in its totality. The subject is present as well in the middle and at the end, as it is at the beginning, and it is not what it is at any given point; it is in truth not singular, but rather both one and all. Whoever attributes a protean nature to the subject of any given process of evolution has come closer to the

truth than he may realize.” This characterization of evolution shows clearly just how close Schelling was to Goethe. Not only the last remark, but also the terms used point to this relationship: “continuous motion,” “progress,” “enhancement,” and so forth, show the close connection between the two great thinkers.

The third in this club is Fichte, who applied the idea of evolution in his work on the history of philosophy. In *Foundations of the Present Time* and *Talk to the German Nation* (1806), he took up the ideas articulated twenty years earlier by Herder and developed them further.

How strongly Goethe felt himself to be challenged by the clarity of the idealist philosophers comes to expression in his second collection of *Morphological Notes* (1820) in an essay entitled *Effects of the New Philosophy*. He began this essay with a description of how he had developed an artistic method which allowed him to apprehend Nature’s working. Then he continued: “Further progress I owe to Niethammern who has attempted with friendly tenacity to help me solve the main riddles and understand the concepts and expressions. What I owe to Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, the von Humbolt brothers, and Schlegel should gratefully come to fruition in the future, especially if I have the chance to sketch out the events of the last decade of the last century.”

Goethe emphasized at other times his debt to the different thinkers, and vice versa. None of the great philosophers would have been able to envision the idea of evolution were it not for Goethe’s work. They are all in agreement in the formation of the concept: They recognize evolution as taking place between the activity of a spiritual being – which always remains identical with itself – and its changing manifestation through the course of time. Whenever we use the term evolution, we should keep in mind that we are speaking of a being! Even if we are focussed for the moment on the sense-perceptible manifestation, it does not mean that the being does not exist, merely that we have, for the moment, forgotten it.

The spiritual dimension

The ancient, static view of the world was brought into motion by the discovery of the idea of evolution. The question arose as to how evolution happens, what are the stages that something passes through in the course of time. This new fluidity of ideas was not bound solely to the examination of Nature. The earth, the plants, the animals, the human being, peoples, cultures and their languages had all gone through long processes of evolution. The great thinkers and scientists of the nineteenth century focussed the efforts on placing ever-new phenomena within the context of evolution.

Less visible are the results of those thinkers who applied the idea of evolution to spiritual phenomena. One of the major contributions made in this realm was the exhaustive study of the evolution of human consciousness done by Immanuel Hermann Fichte, the son of the great philosophical idealist. In the first volume of his *Basic Principles of a System of Philosophy* (1833), he addressed the question of how consciousness evolves to reach the point

of desiring to embark on philosophical explorations. This is a matter of choice. But then “it educates itself to philosophy, which is not only the beginning of consciousness but its own proof of itself. Thus the first part of the system contains the scientifically founded evolutionary history of consciousness towards and in thinking, and also an excursus on the possible relation of thinking to truth.”²¹ Here we also find the observation that thinking itself must reach a certain stage of development to be able to grasp its own evolution. To do so it has to be able to place itself within the focus of its examination. Fichte called this most sublime level of thinking, at which the thinker not only thinks but at the same time consciously examines the activity of his own thinking, a “speculative, beholding knowing.” It is the highest stage of spiritual activity. It does evolve itself naturally, only through untiring, self-directed spiritual practice. Consciousness has to want to educate itself.

What Fichte wrote concerning thinking was expanded by Rudolf Steiner at the end of the nineteenth century to include the totality of human experience. The human being has reached a stage in his development at which there is no further natural evolution. The natural course of evolution has led him to the emergence of self-directed thinking. With this, he has the capacity to take his own future evolution into his own hands, and in so doing to give it a direction which he determines. The idea of the human being is thus one which does not contain all its possible manifestations. Evolution guides the individual to a certain stage of development, then sets him free. “The perceptual object ‘human’ has in him/her the possibility of transforming him/herself, just as the plant seed contains the possibility of becoming a complete plant. The plant transforms itself because of the objective law inherent in it; the human being remains in his incomplete state unless he takes hold of the material for transformation within him and transforms himself through his own power. Nature makes of man merely a natural being; society makes of him a law-abiding being; only he himself can make of himself a free man. Nature releases man from her fetters at a definite stage in his development; society carries this development a stage further; he alone can give himself the final polish.”²²

What Goethe indicated with the saying, “What one wishes for as a youth, one will have in excess when aged,” would have to be changed somewhat based on a modern understanding of the path of spiritual evolution: The goal towards which one through practice strives, he will one day reach. Goethe had set himself such a spiritual goal, and in spite of various hindrances, remained true to it throughout his life, evolving himself as he went. As a fruit of this striving, he was able to bring the idea of evolution to light. Through this individual effort, it has become possible for us to find ourselves in a stream of individual development with the goal of becoming a freely-choosing human being who can set his own goals. It is at the beginning of this process of evolution that we find ourselves today.

Footnotes:

1. W. Zimmermann, *Evolution*, Freiburg/Munich, 1952.
2. Franz Wuketits, *Grundriss der Evolutionstheorie*, Darmstadt, 1980.
3. Cicero, Top 9.
4. J.H.Kant, Akad.A.1.
5. Hanser Edition B1.
6. Letter from Goethe to Knebel (1783).
7. *Thoughts on a Philosophy of the History of Mankind*, 1784, Book 1.
8. Op.cit. Book 5.
9. Op.cit. Book 5.
10. J.W.von Goethe, *Morphological Studies*, 1817.
11. My thanks to Prof. R. Habel, Marburg, for suggesting this connection.
12. H. Jung-Stilling, *Story of My Life*, Book 2, Darmstadt, 1976.
13. Op.cit. Book 3, 1789.
14. Op.cit.
15. Karl Phillip Moritz, *Anton Reiser*, Reclam-Universalbibliotheks-Ausgabe.
16. J.W.von Goethe, *Morphological Studies*, 1817.
17. Op.cit.
18. J.W.von Goethe, *Maxims and Reflections*, Nr. 1140.
19. J.W.von Goethe, *Fiction and Truth*, Part 1.
20. J.W.von Goethe, *Story of My Botanical Studies*, 1831.
21. I.H.Fichte, *Knowledge as Self-knowledge*, 1831.
22. Rudolf Steiner, *The Philosophy of Freedom*, London 1979.

Osiris and Isis

by

Jørgen Smit

Translated from Norwegian by Ted Warren

For Grades 5–12

During the ancient Egyptian culture Osiris and Isis emerged as the most central gods. The myth of Osiris who was killed by his brother Seth, and Isis who gives birth to Horus after his father's death, lived at the core of Egyptian religion both as myth in the broad public and as esoteric knowledge among the leaders. Under the Twelfth Dynasty (roughly 2000 – 1800 BC), as Pharaohs Amenemhet I, Sesostris I, Amenemhet II, Sesostris II, Amenemhet III, Sesostris III, and Amenemhet IV ruled Egypt, thousands of people journeyed yearly to Abydos to experience the ritual, mystery plays of the myth of Osiris and Isis, Seth and Horus that were performed in ceremonial acts by priests (according to the hieroglyphic text on the I-cher-nofret-stone). We can also follow these myths far beyond the boundaries of Ancient Egypt in literature to the present day.

The most concentrated and encompassing form of the myths is found in the writings of Plutarch, who was himself an initiate of the mysteries, though in a time when they were receding. In his version we find the final event of a long process, in which the Osiris myth had lived for a couple of thousand years in very different forms. In the first historical phase Osiris dies, but resurrects by his own power. Osiris is the winning spiritual strength that sheds its light with sovereign security. In *The Book of the Dead* from the earliest Ancient Egyptian time, Osiris is the strong god, who has the entire warmth, life and light of the sun in him, and who carries each Egyptian individual's spiritual being, as well as the entire people's spiritual being. After death, human souls live further according to how much of Osiris lives in them. No matter what name they had in their earthly life, after death they were Osiris N.N.

In the next historical phase, Osiris is murdered by his own brother Seth and locked in a beautifully painted coffin. The spiritual, creative force is locked in by the earthly, bodily material. Though Seth is evil when carrying out the murder, he is also the brother of Osiris. His body is not alien or rejectable. He has the same godly origin as Osiris. Yet the physical body begins to effect the spirit in such a way that Osiris becomes locked in and his

body is thereafter cut into fourteen pieces, so that his spirit may no longer shed light and work into the physical, earthly world. Osiris continues to live, but he is now displaced to the world beyond, the world of life after death, the subconscious and the superconscious.

His sister and wife Isis is left behind as the mourning wife. Who is she? On sculptures of her we find written: "I am she who was, who is, and who shall become. No mortal can ever lift my veil." Is this not the same eternal force as Osiris? She is the "sister." Osiris is the creative spiritual force that has now been displaced to the subconscious realm beyond life. Isis is the eternally searching and the eternally receptive force that can receive the creative forces of Osiris. Isis lives inextinguishably, searching in the depth of the human soul. She is the force that, when the time is right, will give birth to a new spiritual child, Horus, who can reestablish the Osiris activities.

The Osiris-Seth-Isis-Horus myth was interpreted in many ways before Plutarch's time. It was placed within the seasons of the year, in the desert (Seth) and in the fruitful Nile (Osiris), or in the heavens as the sun-reflected light from the moon that recedes after fourteen days (Osiris was cut into fourteen pieces) and returns anew in fourteen days (Isis finds all fourteen pieces). Or the myth has been considered a human drama that took place on earth a long, long time ago when Osiris-Seth-Isis-Horus lived in Egypt as godly incarnations in human bodies. All of these interpretations and even more may have their full legitimacy without one being singularly correct. The mythical pictures are deeper than simplified, fixed concepts. Their essence lives in the activity of the dramatic images and poetry, and resounds deeply in the human soul, while also living in the outer world and in nature. In myth the spiritually creative forces of the world and inner human life are experienced as a unity.

An especially deep aspect of the myth is the moment Horus defeats the evil Seth and leaves Isis to judge him. She refuses to give him the death sentence despite the fact that he murdered Osiris, for Seth is of the same godly origin as Osiris. He must be freed and the battle continued. The physical body cannot be rejected. It also belongs to the human being. But the heavy, foreign quality of the body must be continually overcome. He who interprets the situation is Dsjoti (Dehuti or Thot), whom the Greeks called Hermes or the "three times great Hermes" (Hermes trismegistos), the great initiate, he who was considered the inspirator of the Egyptian culture.

In the following play most of the details are taken directly from ancient sources (Plutarch and the *Book of the Dead* texts). In Scene 2, as the searching and mourning Isis comes to Byblos where King Malkandros rules, she appears disguised and unknown as a nurse for Queen Astarte's child. In the next scene, in which Isis wants to give the child the forces of eternity through the cleansing fire, to purify the physical, bodily nature, the initiation scene is interrupted by Astarte's fear (the lower, immature soul force) and lack of understanding, and Isis cannot yet fulfill her task. We find the exact same dramatic pictures in the "Homeric" Demeter hymn, Eleusis mysteries' esoteric

legend. The connections between Demeter and Isis, between Eleusis in Hellas and the Egyptian mysteries are revealed.

Once the children in grade five have been given simplified pictures of Ancient Egyptian culture, such a play may be performed by the children as a new, more conscious step in the direction of understanding the qualities of Ancient Egyptian culture, of the eternal, immortal drama of its myths, and, overall, of the evolution of the human being.

Osiris and Isis, a Play

by

Jørgen Smit

Translated from Norwegian by Ted Warren

Scene 1

(The Pharaoh's throne hall. Some of the court are gathered, among them Seth and his three accomplices, Tashenatit, Nut-hetepeth and Hu-nefer. A herald enters.)

Herald: A message of joy I bring to all the people. Osiris is now returning. He sent me in advance to spread the word that festivities will be held upon his arrival. He brings great riches from foreign lands. All the people of foreign lands have given him presents in thankfulness for the good deeds he spread to the people of the world from his country of black earth along the Nile.

Seth: Our hearts rejoice at this message. We shall see our enlightened brother again. We have longed for him, as he was abroad. Upon the day that Osiris no longer lives in the Kingdom of Egypt our land will be dark, cold and divided. Go now to prepare the festivities.

(Everyone leaves the throne hall except Seth and his three conspirators.)

Seth: Remember, now we must stand together. Our great day has arrived, when we shall revenge our suffering during many years of subjugation. Evil's great gods, give us the strength and power to topple the false God of Light, Osiris. Brother, now you shall die. Tashenatit, is the coffin built with the correct measurements?

Tashenatit: Yes, my lord, with the exact measurements. In secret we have measured King Osiris as you commanded. And the coffin is now the correct size for the King, to the breadth of a strand of hair.

Seth: Good, our sly plans shall be fulfilled. But has the right moment now arrived? Nut-hetepeth, where does the sun wander at this time?

Nut-hetepeth: It is the seventeenth day of the month of Athyr. Among Scorpion's bright stars the sun now shines.

Seth: And where is the moon?

Nut-hetepeth: It will stand in full splendor when Osiris returns home. His twenty-eighth year of rule is now completed. The full moon shines from the eye of the Bull, Aldebaren, near the Milky Way's most powerful stars.

Seth: And Mars? Where does the mighty Mars shine?

Nut-hetepeth: It has disappeared, my lord, and may not be seen by the naked eye. Yet we have followed its route carefully and know where Mars, the red and powerful, is headed. It has disappeared in its own house, in the sign of Scorpion behind the luster of the sun.

Seth: The right moment has arrived. Just like Mars I sneak behind the king's back, and now, Osiris, you shall die. In the sign of death we lay him in the coffin that fits his measurements perfectly, while the moon shines from the other side. And you, Hu-nefer, have you finished melting the lead?

Hu-nefer: Yes, lord, we have melted the lead, so much that it covers the whole coffin. We have it ready outside. As soon as Osiris lies down in the coffin and we have fixed the lid tight, the red-hot lead shall flow over it and fasten all openings so he will be choked in his own breathe within.

Seth: And now move aside. The moment is near.

(The Herald enters. Osiris approaches and enters with Isis and his court. Music. Seth and his conspirators bow down with their foreheads on the floor.)

Osiris: Be greeted, arise my dear brother. You shall not lie in the dust before me. You shall stand by my side, my brother. I know you have governed the Kingdom of Egypt well while I was in foreign lands. Tomorrow you will hear more about what I have accomplished abroad. Now we shall enjoy our reunion. *(As Osiris speaks the three conspirators carry in the coffin.)* But what is this? A wonderful coffin! What a masterpiece! Such valuable wood. Where have you found the precious jewels that cover the lid? Who shall own this treasure?

Seth: It has been decided that the coffin shall be owned by the man who fits in it perfectly.

Osiris: But who is that? You speak in riddles my brother. You, wise sign-bearer Kerasher, maybe it is you. Try, see if you fit in the coffin.
(Kerasher climbs into the coffin.)

Kerasher: I certainly do not fit. This valuable coffin shall be owned by someone more honorable than I.
(hesitatingly)

Seth: *(Quickly and sharply)* No, not him. He is too short.

Kerasher: *(As he climbs carefully out of the coffin)* I knew it. I never succeed in life's trials.

Osiris: But you, my brave cup-bearer, Panetchem, maybe you have better luck. You try.

Panetchem: My lucky moment has come. I recognize it, no I am certain. I dreamt it last night. I should become the richest in the whole kingdom.

Seth: You are a little too tall, my good Panetchem. A happy dream is not good enough. Here only the right measurements count.

Panetchem: *(As he steps out of the coffin)* What a disgrace and disappointment.

Seth: *(Turning suddenly, ingratiatingly, to Osiris)* Perhaps you fit my brother, Osiris. Look, will you try? Lie down in the coffin. If it fits you, it is yours.

Osiris: I do not know the measurements of the coffin. Nor do I have the desire for the coffin's treasures. But I will try if it can please my brother. *(Osiris proudly lowers himself into the coffin.)*

All: Look, it fits.

Seth: Yes, truly, it fits to the breadth of a hair. Osiris has the correct measurements. The coffin is owned by Osiris. *(with a crude voice)* And Osiris is now owned by the coffin! *(Immediately the lid is closed tightly with an explosion. The stage darkens completely. Seth's scornful laughter is heard in the darkness. Covered by darkness the conspirators carry out the coffin and all together cries of anguish are heard. Afterwards, subdued light. Everyone stands like stone statues.)*

Isis: Seth, what have you caused? Your own brother. You are killing him in the coffin. Let go of him! O woe! *(Isis walks a couple of steps to the left where Seth and the conspirators have disappeared. She stops and becomes rigid.)*

All: Osiris is dying. We are lost.

Isis: *(As she unsuccessfully tries to continue to walk)* O woe! What a catastrophe! Bottomless darkness sinks over the people of the earth. An ice-cold wind will penetrate every human heart. *(Mourning music as the curtain falls.)*

Scene 2

(In Byblos at the court of King Malkandros. The background is a huge oak tree that has grown up and now encases the Osiris coffin within its limbs. Malkandros and Queen Astarte enter from the left.)

Malkandros: Astarte, you my queen, what happiness for our country that the gods have given us a son, even though it must occur on this day of sorrow, the same day that Osiris was killed by his own brother, the dark and evil Seth.

Astarte: And no one knows where the corpse has been buried.

Malkandros: No, no one knows for sure. But I have heard that some children saw the dark men with Seth accompany the coffin down to the beach. They shoved it into the waves. Now it is cradled on the wide spaces of the oceans of the world.

Astarte: Tell me, King Malkandros, can it be driven onto land?

Malkandros: Never, I believe. Osiris is dead. In our state of mourning, our child must grow up. *(Malkandros and Astarte exit. Isis enters from the right, unveiled, walking with slow steps.)*

Isis: I have wandered from land to land and searched for Osiris. Not one good day have I had. I must find him. Maybe he can be awakened to life again. *(She notices the oak tree.)* What is that? This beautiful tree is no ordinary tree. The form hides something secret. My brother, Osiris. I feel you. You are near! Has the coffin drifted to land where the tree has grown up and hides you in its boughs? The dead hidden in life? O, what a wonder!

Astarte: *(Enters from the left):* Who are you? Where do you come from? What do you want in the castle?

Isis: I come from far away and ask to serve. I am a widow in mourning. Do you need someone to nurse your baby?

Astarte: Yes, truly you arrive at the right time. I feel you are a good person. You may take care of my child. He is asleep in here. *(Astarte exits to the left, while Isis remains and turns towards the oak tree. After a short moment Astarte returns with her child and gives it to Isis.)*

Astarte: Here is our only child. He is born in sad times but you, my dear nurse, shall turn the dark portents to joyful rays of sun for this child.

Isis: *(With the child)* You, my dear child, see me dressed as a nurse. I will give you my forces, for I am Isis, she who was, she who is, and she who shall become. You shall take part in the gods' eternal forces. But first I must cleanse you in the gods' purifying fire, so all of the earth's clods are torn away to enable your being's starry luster to shine forth. *(The stage becomes darker).* The dark of night is falling upon us. See my star, Sirius, burning bright. I will go to work. *(Isis stands before the oak tree with the child in her arms, looking at the audience.)*

Isis: Come divine fire, come blazing flames. *(red lights)* Appear divine purifying force. Come consuming willpower. *(stronger red lights)* Come flaming beings that give eternal force. *(Red flames [eurhythmy] come in from all sides towards the middle, where they flame against each other. As they enflame, Isis lifts up the child between the flames. The flames run out and Isis holds the child close to her. The flaming beings come back again towards the middle and Isis lifts up the child again between them. The flames move out again. The whole action repeats a third time. Music and song can accompany. Suddenly Queen Astarte enters from the left.)*

Astarte: *(Screams)* What are you doing? Stop! Let go of my child! You wicked witch. Do you want to damage my son? *(The flaming beings run out. It is pitch dark on the stage. From behind the stage cries of woe)* O woe! *(Half light on the stage. Isis puts the child down at Astarte's feet and goes to stand by the oak tree.)*

Isis: Look, there is the child. Take him back now, Astarte. You have stopped me in the holy act. I wanted to give him eternal life through the gods' purifying forces. Know that I am Isis, the sister of Osiris. *(Astarte falls on the floor.)* In me you see the wisdom of the universal starry heavens, for I am she who was, who is, and who will become. No mortal being has lifted my veil.

Astarte: *(Lying on the floor with only her head barely lifted)* O woe! Great Isis, have mercy. I did not know what I did. I did not recognize you behind your veil. I did not understand your holy act. Fear lamed me. Be graceful. Take the child back to you and finish the holy act.

Isis: No, I may not. You have prevented the gods in their actions.

Astarte: But tell me what we can do? What do you suggest? We will give you whatever you want.

Isis: Then give me of that mysterious tree that grows so powerfully here. Keep the tree but give me what is hidden in its boughs.

Scene 3

(By the Nile. High reeds and palms. On the front of the stage stands the open coffin. Isis kneels bowing over one side of it. Instrumental music and song, improvisation from the background, as three figures do eurythmy to words of the choir.)

Choir: *(Backstage, not visible)*
 O' woe, Osiris, the light of the world is put out,
 See his dead body in the coffin.
 How will we find the strong source of life?
 How will we find the lost light?
(Music and song)

Isis: *(As Isis speaks the three figures do more subtle eurythmy movements and Isis lifts her head and arms.)* Osiris, hear my call. Osiris, come out of the dark house of death.
 Osiris, hear the wings of my spirit.
 Lift yourself out of the darkness.
(Music and song)

Choir: *(From the background)* Our hearts carry bitter sorrow.

Isis: Osiris, the morning sunshine is here. Wake up.
(Music and song)

Seth: *(Sticks out his head and half his body from the side)* Now we must stop the forces of life. Soon Isis will awaken the dead Osiris. I will fool her away with a call. *(Seth disappears and is heard from off stage with a fake voice of a child.)* Come. Help me. I am drowning, help. I am sinking, help.

Isis: *(Stands up)* Who is shouting? Where? I am coming soon to help. *(Isis and the three mourning-dressed figures exit quickly. Seth and three conspirators run in with axes – they wildly cut up the body in the coffin.)*

Seth: *(While he is cutting)* The great Isis shall never awaken life of the dead. We cut the body into fourteen pieces. Take the parts away quickly for Isis is coming back. Hide them in the reeds over there. You, take out the head. You, take out the legs. I will take the chest. The rest you take. *(almost totally dark, as Seth and his conspirators run out with parts of Osiris)*

Isis: *(Returns with the three mourning-dressed figures, more light appears)* I sense danger. What has happened? Osiris is gone. The coffin is empty. O woe! *(Isis bows over the empty coffin. Music and song from backstage. The three mourning-dressed figures make movements, as Isis lies as in a faint.)*

(Stands up) Now I must search for him and find him. I sense it is Seth, his evil brother. Yet Seth shall not win. Osiris, show me where you are to be found.

(Isis leaves with her hands raised before her as in a trance. Music and song. The three mourning-dressed figures follow.)

Scene 4

(Another place by the Nile. Pyramids, palms, reeds. In front and to the right, a large stone.)

Isis: *(Entering slowly, carrying the Horus child in her arms, sits by the stone)* I have searched for many long days. Some parts of the dead Osiris I have found. The evil Seth has cut him into pieces. I found his head first. O bitter fate, cut to pieces, thrown into an unworthy place!
I let his face be formed, sculptured with great artistic work,
And it was buried where the head was found.
The people believe Osiris is resting in his grave, where they lay his portrait.

And I have eight more pieces: a foot, a hand and the chest –
what a torment. And I have buried eight portraits of his
godly body at each place where the parts were found.
And eight new graves show the people that they shall
search in the kingdom of death. But I must search
further until I have found all of the pieces.
O you, my child, my little Horus child, I gave birth to you
during the long, sorrowful wandering. Your father was
dead as you first saw the light of day.
But you shall grow magnificently in his light.

*(Isis lifts up the child. At the same time the curtain opens to the side, and Osiris stands
in strong light, music and song.)*

Osiris: Yes, Horus. You, my child, shall live forever.
You will grow up as the splendor of the morning sun.
I shall protect you and give you strength
From the land beyond the dark gates of death.

Scene 5

*(The grown Horus sits on the throne, the falcon on his headress. To the left, Lower
Egypt's priest, Oadsjit-hm-ntr, with the snake symbol; to the right, Upper Egypt's
priest Nechbet-hm-ntr, with the falcon symbol. Eventually a number of Court
Members.)*

Horus: I have finally united the whole Kingdom of Egypt,
united wisely the lower with the upper,
and saved the people of Egypt from division and strife.
What does Oadsjit-hm-ntr bring to the Pharaoh?

Oadsjit-hm-ntr: We bring the earth's hidden treasures of wisdom
From lands below the Nile delta,
From the Snake God to the new Sun.

Horus: And what gifts are from Nechbet-hm-ntr?

Nechbet-hm-ntr: We bring the heaven's wisdom of the stars
From the land's upper part, the sources of the Nile,
From the Falcon God to the new Sun.

Horus: And like my father, Osiris, I unite the lower
with the upper, snake and falcon with the godlike
power of the Sun and the heart of gold.
But I am helpless, unless you my honored father, Osiris,
Will give me your help from the kingdom of the heavens.

(Osiris appears in the background on a platform above the throne. Eventually music.)

Osiris: My son, what do you plan to do?
Will you let Seth wander freely in the Kingdom?
Will you not fight the murderer of Osiris?

Horus: You challenge me to act, Osiris!
The dark Seth shall be driven out of the Kingdom.
I shall conquer him so he can do no harm
With his deceitful cunning.

Osiris: Blessed be Horus, you, my son.
I send you my light of wisdom and all my strength.

Scene 6

(At the Nile. High reeds and palms. Eventually blue curtain. Seth together with the three darkly dressed conspirators, equipped with spears and a large net.)

Seth: We are gathered to fight against Heka-Horus,
The false ruler who has stolen the throne.
He maintains that he is the son of King Osiris,
But it is a lie, he is a sly mutineer.
There he comes.
(Just then the three darkly dressed figures move to the left.)
Stay together here, defend our rights.

Horus: *(Appears from the right together with three light-filled figures, equipped with flaming swords.)*
To battle for light over darkness! *(Eurythmic movements: light-filled beings force back the dark beings. The dark beings attack, retreat and come from new sides. This is repeated several times. Possible music with drums in the background. Finally the dark beings are driven to one side of the stage, where they collect in their own net and sink to the floor in a clump with Seth in the middle.)*

Horus: You are trapped in your own net.
Now you lie enwrapped.
You pathetic brother murderer, prince of darkness.

Seth: *(Struggles to come free. Whispers)*
I am still alive. You have not killed me.
Be proud for a while, but remember:
the higher you stand, the deeper you fall!

Horus: Take the prisoner to the Abydos Palace.
You shall be dragged in front of those you have hurt,
In front of Isis, the widow, queen mother, goddess,
She sentences you to eternal imprisonment.

Seth: *(Quietly to himself, as he is dragged away)*
I can safely count on Isis' weak heart.

Scene 7

(The Throne at Abydos. Horus sits on the throne. Isis with a golden crown on her head sits on her own throne to the left, Dsjoti (Thot-Hermes) with the ibis-symbol and a papyrus roll to the right. Forward to the left Lower Egypt priest Oadsjit-hm-ntr, with the snake symbol, in front of him and right, the Upper Egypt priest, Nechbet-hm-ntr, with the falcon symbol. Horus Falcon is above the throne in the middle. Possibly also on stage: sign-carrier Kerasher and cup-bearer Panetchem and some of the Pharaoh's warriors.)

Horus: The wretched murderer has been captured.
He sits powerlessly in prison.
Bring Seth in and lie him down below the throne.
(Seth is pulled in by one or more prison guards.)

Seth: Mercy. Have mercy. Save my life. I beg you!

Horus: You whimper for mercy. Were you merciful?
You who cunningly took your brother's life.
You shamefully cut his body into pieces with an axe.
Now you await your sentence. It will be absolutely merciless.
(Turns to Nechbet-hm-ntr)
Wise Nechbet-hm-ntr, what is your sentence?

Nechbet-hm-ntr: The prisoner was trapped in his own net.
There he shall remain, in the darkness he loves so much.
In the mountain's deepest cave he belongs.

Horus: And you my honorable priest, Oadsjit-hm-ntr,
Who advises the Pharaoh, what do you say?

Oadsjit-hm-ntr: His tongue lies. His abandonment is the poison of a snake.
It is best to fill his cave with that which he loves.
He shall live with snakes and may his spirit be filled with the same poison he spreads to others.

Horus: I have never heard more severe words.
This merciless sentence he brought upon himself
The priests have formulated into words.
Therefore I remain silent.
I leave the final sentence to my mother.
You Isis, the star-filled wisdom of the universe,
how do you judge this pathetic murderer
who killed King Osiris, your brother?

Seth: *(Tries violently to wrestle off the guards, but remains caught in his net. He manages to come a little closer to Isis and stretches towards her.)*

Isis, dear sister, remember our blood relationship,
our common blood, from the same motherly womb.
I was born too early and in the wrong position,
but I am just as much your brother.
You would not do your brother harm?
O mercy, dear sister, remember our blood.

(All turn towards Isis, silence for a moment. Then Isis stands and moves slowly from her throne towards Seth, waves the guard away, and frees Seth from the net. Seth stands in astonishment.)

Isis: I do not have the heart to judge you.
You were wrong, destruction and evil became your lot.
But we are of the same womb, that is true.
You were born too early and in the wrong position,
but you are just as much my own brother.
You stem from Geb, as much as I do,
and Nut, the magnificent heavenly mother –
I cannot do anything against our mother.
I cannot do anything against my brother.
Go free, I cannot sentence you to anything else.

Seth: I am free! I am free! I must move quickly,
before justice captures me.
(Seth runs off to the right, as everyone else remains stunned.)

Horus: *(Stands from the throne and walks a few steps towards Isis.)*
What have you done, my mother, unknowingly?
Have you lost all of your heavenly wisdom?
Now I tear off the golden crown from you.
Your head shall never again carry a crown that witnesses
the light of heavenly wisdom.
*(Isis bows forward silently. Horus tears off her crown.
Horus also bows forward holding her golden crown
in his hand. For a moment they all stand like statues,
then pandemonium breaks and they all speak except Isis,
Horus and Dsjoti. Everyone speaks at the same time,
chaotically, and divide into three clusters, more or less.)*

1st Group: What did he do against Isis, against his mother?

2nd Group: What shall we do? I have no idea!

3rd Group: Darkness rules again. O Osiris, return!
(They all continue to talk amongst each other.)

Dsjoti:

(Steps forward to mid stage. Everyone else steps aside and becomes silent.)

Now I can no longer remain silent.

The gods named me Dsjoti, and my task is to always retain the words of wisdom

so they may be used in the right moments.

And that which no longer lives here

must be retained as a picture,

a picture revealing to us that the most powerful

that once was now works secretly,

behind the mysterious, dark veil.

(He takes out a crown that is formed as a cow head with horns and walks towards Isis).

Isis, I give you another crown,

a sign, a head of a cow with a horn.

You remain Isis, but in mourning.

For long periods of time you will live secretly hidden behind a veil.

Thus mankind will sense that you are that which was and is and shall become.

A child shall be born of a pure woman.

In him shall live the Wisdom-filled Words of Light.

And, Isis, then you shall be redeemed.