

Fundamentals of Spiritual Science

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Anthroposophy must address itself to forces of knowledge which are certainly present in ordinary life and in ordinary science, but which are present only for the starting points of its development, not for the further steps. And these further steps must be taken in order to penetrate into the spiritual spheres of life from the point of view of a real knowledge, not from that of a nebulous mysticism. The starting point must be what I would call a union of intellectual modesty on the one hand and unconditional confidence in the perfection of the human powers of cognition on the other. As Anthroposophy wants to lead to a unification of these two soul impulses, it comes to be able to investigate something with the same certainty about the so-called supersensible realm as with the help of the senses and the natural sciences one penetrates today with such great luck and such certain success into the realm of the sense world, of physical existence. Now, what is to be called intellectual modesty in this context? Anthroposophy asserts that perhaps one can go beyond what one has attained in the powers of the soul as an adult human being, just as one can go beyond the cognitive faculties of the dreamy state of the soul of a small child [A]. Of course, it depends entirely on whether such a progress really succeeds, but on the other hand anthroposophy has a full intensive confidence that the respective cognitive powers acquired by man can be perfected more and more. [This path of knowledge also shows that in thinking, feeling and willing there is something hidden which is not conscious in the course of ordinary life, but which can be brought to consciousness through inner exercises of the soul. In this spiritual being of the soul, which is hidden from the ordinary life of the soul, that is revealed which is in it independent of the life of the body and in which the relations of man to the spiritual world can be observed. For the spiritual researcher it seems just as impossible to fulfill the "hopes of Plato and Aristotle" about the existence of the soul independent of bodily life by observing ordinary thinking, feeling and willing, as it is impossible to investigate the properties of hydrogen in water. If one wants to get to know them, one must first get the hydrogen out of the water by an appropriate procedure. In this way, however, it is also necessary to separate from the everyday life of the soul, which is led by the connection with the body, that being which is rooted in the spiritual world by its very own powers, if this being is to be observed. Most people believe that if something is to be known about the higher questions of the soul life, then this must result from the facts of the soul, which are already present in ordinary life. From these facts, however, there are no other insights than those to which research in the present sense of natural science can lead. Therefore, true spiritual science cannot be a direct



Urs Schwanderner with his reproduction of the ceiling paintings of the first Goetheanum

contemplation of the life of the soul, which is present from the beginning. It must first reveal the factual world, which can be subjected to its observation, by means of inner processes in the life of the soul. For this purpose, spiritual research applies processes of the soul, which are worked out in the inner experience. Its field of research is located completely in the interior of the soul's existence. It cannot illustrate its results externally. But these are therefore no less independent of any personal arbitrariness than the true results of natural science. They have nothing else in common with the mathematical truths, but this, that they cannot be proved by external facts, but - like these - they are proved for everyone who grasps them in inner contemplation. And just like these, they can at most be illustrated externally, but not represented in their proving content. [2]

Anthroposophical Training in General

The essential thing, which can easily be misunderstood, is that on the path which spiritual research follows, one gives a certain direction to the soul experiences by inner impulses, and then, when they follow this direction, one elicits from them forces which otherwise lie unconscious in them, as in a kind of soul sleep. The processes of the soul that lead to this goal are described in detail (under Training). Here it shall only be indicated what happens in the soul when it undergoes such procedures. If the soul proceeds in this way, it pushes, so to speak, its inner experience into the realm of spiritual reality. It opens its thereby formed purely spiritual organs of perception to the spiritual world, as the senses open themselves outwardly to the physical reality. [3] One type of these soul performances consists in a powerful devotion to the process of thinking. One pushes this devotion to the processes of thinking so far that one attains the ability to direct one's attention no longer to the thoughts present in thinking, but solely to the activity of thinking. For the consciousness then all thought content disappears, and the soul experiences itself knowing in the performance of thinking. Thinking is thus transformed into a fine inner act of will, which is completely illuminated by the consciousness. The brought about experience is a weaving in an inner will activity, which carries its reality in itself. It is (now) a question of the soul, through continued inner experience in this direction, bringing itself to become as familiar with the purely spiritual reality in which it weaves, as sense observation is with physical reality. - That something is real, can only be experienced in this inner experienced reality just as in the outer reality. Who (against it) raises the objection that the inwardly real cannot be proved, only shows that he has not yet understood, how also of the outer reality a conviction cannot be won differently, than only by the fact that one becomes aware of the real through the experienced being together with it. A healthy sensory life can distinguish the real (sensual) perception from the vision or hallucination in the external field by direct experience; a healthily developed soul life can distinguish the spiritual reality, which it confronts, in a similar way from the fantastic and daydreaming.

A thinking developed in this way becomes aware that it has detached itself from that soul force which leads to memory in the ordinary imagination. What is experienced in the thinking, which has become inwardly experienced reality of will, is not suitable to be remembered as directly as it appears, like that which is experienced as ordinary thinking.

This does not mean that this reality cannot be incorporated indirectly into the ordinary memory. This must even happen if the path of spiritual research is to be a healthy one. But what remains in the memory of the spiritual reality is only the idea of this reality, just as what one remembers today of an experience yesterday is only an idea. Concepts, ideas can be retained in memory; spiritual reality must always be experienced anew. By vividly grasping the difference between the spiritual reality attained through the development of thought activity and the nurturing of mere thoughts, one comes to experience oneself with this reality outside the physical body. [4]

At the moment when the "experience outside the body" becomes reality for him, the spiritual researcher gains insight through this experience into how ordinary thinking is bound to the bodily processes of the body. His knowledge gained in the experience leads him to see how the thought gained in the outer experience arises according to its essence in such a way that it can be remembered. This kind of emergence, however, which becomes memory, is based on the fact that the thought does not merely lead a spiritual life in the soul, but that its life is shared by the body. [5]

Training of the Will

As certain impulses, which one gives to the soul experiences, lead to the grasping of the will reality in the thinking, so other directions, in which one directs the soul processes, lead to experiencing forces hidden in the will activity. In ordinary life an unfolding of the will of one's own soul is not perceived in the same way as an external process. Even what is usually called self-observation in this field does not put man in a position where he sees his own will in the same way as he sees an external natural process. In order to find oneself facing this will in the same way as one faces an external fact as a spectator, again powerful processes of the soul caused by arbitrariness are necessary. (For example, the imagining of a known course of facts in reverse sequence also in the details). But if these are brought about in the appropriate way, then something completely different occurs than, for example, a looking at one's own will in the same way as an external fact is looked at. In this observation a conception appears in the life of the soul, which is, as it were, an inner image of the outer fact. In observing one's own will, the habitual imaginative power goes out. One ceases to imagine in the outwardly directed way; but instead an essential imagining is released from the subsoil of the will. Such an essential imagining breaks through the surface of the activity of the will; an imagining that brings with it a living spiritual reality. At first, within this spiritual reality, one's own hidden spirituality emerges. One becomes aware of how one carries a hidden spirit-man within oneself. One has this not like a thought-image in oneself, but as a real being; real in a higher sense than the outer body-man is. Only this spirit-man does not appear in such a way, as external sensually perceptible beings, which present themselves to the observer in their outwardly revealing characteristics. Rather, he presents himself through his inner being, through the unfolding of the processes of consciousness in his own soul. But the thus discovered being of consciousness is not, like the soul living in the human body, directed to sense things, but to spiritual processes, first to the processes of one's own hitherto developed soul life. One truly discovers in oneself a second human being, who as

a spiritual being is a conscious spectator of the ordinary soul experience. - As fantastic as this description of a spiritual man in the bodily may seem, it becomes for the correspondingly trained soul life a sober description of reality, a representation of a spiritual being, which is as different from all visions or illusions as day is from night. - As in the transformed thinking a reality of the will is discovered, so in the will an essential consciousness weaving in the spiritual. - And the two now prove to belong together for the further experience of the soul. They are found, as it were, on paths running in opposite directions; but they result as one unity. And through this connection man is first placed before the all-round real spirit world. When this connection occurs, the human being is not only confronted with his own self, but also with entities and processes of the spiritual world, which lie outside of his self. [6]

The way to (the path into) the spiritual world is thus covered by exposing what is contained in thinking and willing. The emotional life cannot be developed in a similar way by an inner impulse of the soul. What is experienced in feeling within the physical world cannot be developed in the field of spiritual perception by the transformation of an inner force as in thinking and willing. That which corresponds to the feeling in the spiritual world rather appears of its own accord as soon as the spiritual perception is attained in the manner described. Only a feeling-experience of a completely different character arises than that of feeling in the physical world. One does not feel in oneself, but in the entities and processes that one perceives. [7]

A Mental Vision is Entirely Like That of the Memory

The anthroposophical ideas are not memory ideas; but they appear in the soul in the same way as memory ideas. This is a disappointment for many people who would like to get ideas about the spiritual world in a cruder way. But one cannot experience the spiritual world in a coarser way than in the (density) of the memory of an event experienced in the sense world ages ago, which is no longer before one's eyes. The human soul faces the spiritual world in the same way as man generally faces a forgotten existence; and it comes to the knowledge of this world when it awakens in itself forces which are similar to those bodily forces which serve memory. [8] One must be careful how gradually - I would like to say - this life takes root in the ordinary life of the imagination, which looks very much like dreams, but precisely through its meaningful course, if one does not look at the individual images, but at the meaningful course of the images, is guiding into the spiritual world. [9]

The way of looking at, of perceiving, is completely different when one penetrates out of the world of his merely sensual perceiving and of merely thinking about the world of the senses to this looking, thinking experience; for it is no longer a mere thinking, it is a thinking experience. One must come to another way of relating to oneself in the soul in order to make progress. One has to come into the position, so to speak, of grasping the moment - that's what I want to call it. In ordinary consciousness we have time to leave the thought there in the consciousness when we want to grasp this or that. But when we move up to the thinking experience, to the experience of the contemplative thinking, we

must come into the position to grasp quickly in a moment that which shines out, reveals itself out of the spiritual world - that is, first of all out of this world of the etheric body. I would like to say that this way of perception, which we otherwise call the way of perception of the reflex acts, must, spiritualizing, take possession of our soul life. We don't need to take a long time to grasp a thought in our consciousness, for example, when a fly wants to fly into our eye, but we close our eye quickly. Just as we have the presence of mind to grasp the right thing in the moment, so we must grasp inwardly with the soul in the moment that which flashes out of the spiritual world and can only be brought into the personal thoughts by grasping it strongly, but grasping it in the moment. This practice of spiritual presence for grasping is one of the most important things that the spiritual researcher must acquire. If he does not acquire it, it can happen that the things he observes - as it is the case with many who make experiments in this field - in the moment when he becomes attentive, when he becomes aware of them, they have already disappeared again, so that they are as if they were not there. [10]

The most important and essential thing in experience approaches the soul from the spiritual world in such a way that it appears very quickly - and flits by without being observed. That is why man misses the secrets of the spiritual world, because he does not have presence of mind enough. One of the best exercises to find one's way in the spiritual world is that one gets used to developing presence of mind already in the outer life, that one gets used to not hesitating for a long time in a situation. The more presence of mind one has, and especially in situations that require quick thinking, the more one trains oneself to catch what the spiritual world offers. [11]

Becoming Instead of Being is the Law of the Spiritual World

Compared to the life in the body, the spiritual experience has something completely unusual in that for this experience the idea of being, as it is acquired within the physical world, loses all meaning. There is nothing existing in the spiritual as in the physical world. In the spirit everything is becoming. Settling into a spiritual environment is settling into an everlasting becoming. This restlessness of becoming of the spiritual outer world, however, is opposed by the experience of the inner world, which perceives itself as a resting consciousness within the never resting movement in which it is placed. The awakened spiritual consciousness must find its way into this inversion of the inner experience in relation to the consciousness that lives in the body. Thereby it can gain a real knowledge of a body-free experience. And only such a knowledge can include (for example) the states between death and new birth into its sphere. [12]

Thinking as the Starting Point of Spiritual Cognition

Man is a thought being. And he can find his path of knowledge only if he starts from thinking. Whoever wants to turn to other forces in man for higher knowledge, spurning the work of thought, does not take into account that thinking is precisely the highest of the abilities that man possesses in the world of the senses. [13] It would be much more comfortable, however, if one could come to the higher gift of sight by avoiding the work of

thought. That is what many would like to do. But for this an inner firmness, a mental security is necessary, to which only thinking can lead. Otherwise, there will be only an unsubstantial flickering back and forth in images, a confusing play of the soul, which makes some people happy, but which has nothing to do with a real penetration into higher worlds. [14]

When we think, we are seemingly all alone within ourselves, yet beings of a spiritual nature participate in our thoughts. Let us consider a thought within us. Behind this thought stands a spiritual entity. If we think ourselves enclosed on all sides by the "body" of a spiritual entity, then the thought is only an expression of the "body" of the spiritual entity that works into us. Every time a thought twitches through our soul, it is an imprint, a kind of footprint of a higher spiritual entity. This spiritual entity is made of the same material that the thought is made of. [15]

People today are really not schooled on thoughts in general, because they prefer to think of moving in the projections of language as thoughts. People abandon themselves to these so-called thoughts, they passively surrender, they also accept every so-called thought that rolls through their head. And the consequence of this is that the will to think, the arbitrary, the actively working in the thought, that this belongs to the very rarest in the souls of men today. [16]

Thoughts are the forces which are active in things. And our thinking organ is just something that draws from the cosmic reservoir of thought forces, that takes the thoughts into itself. We must speak of thoughts in such a way that we are aware of them: Thoughts are the world-dominating forces, which are spread everywhere in the cosmos. But these thoughts therefore do not fly around freely, but they are always carried, worked on by some entities. [17]

Thinking, Concepts and Ideas

Through thinking, concepts and ideas arise. When someone sees a tree, his thinking reacts to his observation, an ideal counterpart is added to the object, and he regards the object and the ideal counterpart as belonging together. If the object disappears from his field of observation, only the ideal counterpart of it remains. The latter is the concept of the object. The concepts, however, are not isolated. They join together to form a lawful whole. [18] Today we look at a clock and form a concept of it. But we could not form the concept "clock", if someone had not formed this concept before there were clocks and had not constructed a clock afterwards. It is the same with the concepts of all things. The concepts which we form about the things of the world existed as realities in primeval past. At that time they were put into the things. Everything comes into being according to such concepts, as people do with their creations today. [19] You can imagine the structure, the network of concepts that man has - starting with mathematical quantities and numerical concepts up to the most complicated concepts with which Goethe made a beginning in his "Metamorphosis", but which are still quite in their infancy in our occidental culture - you can imagine this whole network of concepts like a blackboard that forms the boundary

between the sensual world on the one side and the spiritual world on the other. Thus, then, we can think of ourselves bounded precisely by the conceptual network: on one side the sphere of the supersensible and on the other the sphere of sensual reality. When man approaches sensuous reality in this way, he will find that this sensuous reality coincides with what he has constructed for himself as a concept. For example, he may find that his inwardly constructed concept of the circle (as the location of all points that are the same distance from a center) coincides with the circle (the horizon) that results from sensory observation by going out to sea. He then begins to understand what presents itself to him in the perception in comparison to what he has formed himself as a concept. Concepts are therefore not gained by perception (and subsequent abstractions). This is a prejudice which is very common today. Concepts are gained by inner construction. The concept is, so to speak, that to which man comes, just when he refrains from all external, sensual reality. And now he can let work together what he has constructed inwardly with what presents itself to him outwardly as sensual reality. Thus we have fixed the position of the conceptual network in relation to the external, sensual reality.

What is the position of our conceptual network to the supersensible reality? At first it is not different from the sensual reality. If someone opens the supersensible reality to himself and approaches this reality with his concepts, he will also find this conceptual network coinciding with the supersensible reality. Exactly in the same way the supersensible facts and beings will affect his conceptual network, only from the other side, and he will find it coinciding with it. So that we can say: In a way, the supersensible realities cast their rays on the conceptual net, as on the other side the sensual reality does so. At the net of concepts sensual and supersensual reality meet. [20]

The Network of Concepts has a Purely Spiritual Origin

Where does this conceptual network actually come from? We can best make it clear by imagining the image of a shadow being cast on the wall. If you see that the hand casts a shadow image on the wall, you will say: If the hand were not there, the shadow image would not be created either. The shadow image is similar to its original image, but it has a special peculiarity, it is actually - nothing. For it is precisely because the hand keeps out the light, because the non-light takes the place of the light, that the shadow image comes into being. Thus, by the extinction of the light by the hand, the shadow image arises. Exactly in the same way our concepts arise in reality. We only mean that we spin them out of ourselves. They arise from the fact that behind our thinking soul the supersensible reality stands and casts its shadow images on this soul. And the concept is actually nothing else than the erasing of the supersensible reality on the wall of our soul. And because our concepts are similar to the archetypes of the supersensible world - as the shadow image of the hand is similar to its archetype (the real hand) - therefore the concepts are something that can evoke in man an inkling of the supersensible realities. The reason why man thinks that he can spin out the network of concepts from himself is that he has no idea of this supersensible world at first. But it is there and casts its

shadows. Where it meets the perceptions of the sensible, these shadow images arise. So we have no supersensible reality in the concepts, any more than we have the hand itself in the silhouette of the hand, but we have, so to speak, silhouettes of it.

Thus we have defined the conceptual network, so to speak, as the boundary between sensuous and supersensuous reality, but in doing so we have recognized that the concepts do not flow into the soul from the sensuous world, but from the supersensuous world. [21]

Quotes:

- [1] GA 84, page 154ff (1961 edition, 291 pages).
- [2] GA 35, page 274f (edition 1965, 484 pages)
- [3] GA 35, page 275f (edition 1965, 484 pages)
- [4] GA 35, page 276f (edition 1965, 484 pages)
- [5] GA 35, page 279 (edition 1965, 484 pages)
- [6] GA 35, page 280ff (edition 1965, 484 pages)
- [7] GA 35, page 283 (edition 1965, 484 pages)
- [8] GA 21, page 130f (edition 1960, 182 pages)
- [9] GA 273, page 153 (1981 edition, 286 pages)
- [10] GA 66, page 49f (1961 edition, 269 pages)
- [11] GA 67, page 23f (1962 edition, 367 pages)
- [12] GA 35, page 287 (1965 edition, 484 pages)
- [13] GA 9, page 172 (1961 edition, 214 pages)
- [14] GA 9, page 175 (edition 1961, 214 pages)
- [15] GA 93a, page 128f (1972 edition, 286 pages)
- [16] GA 190, page 158 (edition 1980, 238 pages)
- [17] GA 283, page 151f (1975 edition, 186 pages)
- [18] GA 4, page 57 (1973 edition, 278 pages)
- [19] GA 97, page 88 (1981 edition, 340 pages)
- [20] GA 108, page 238ff (1986 edition, 336 pages)
- [21] GA 108, page 240f (edition 1986, 336 pages)

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GA 283: The Essence of the Musical and the Experience of Sound in Man (1906/1920)

Anthony's Notes

[A] When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. 1 Corinthians 13:11 NKJV

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