

Questions for the Future

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From Rene Descartes right through to Maurice Merlau-Ponty the question of the distinction between the physical body and the life body has been thoroughly examined philosophically (translator's note: two distinct words in German which have no distinct English equivalents). «A physical body you have, whereas a life body you are.» What anthroposophical anthropology can contribute is enhancing our understanding of the body as something living: the different levels of the human being's make-up, enveloping and together constituting the individuality, are parts of our organism and destiny. They are embedded in laws of a higher order and form a whole, which we call the human individuality. The life of the earth as a planet of a cosmic system is a highly complex process and expresses itself in various domains. The sciences research the interconnections between the whole and its parts in order to understand how the whole, despite diversity and autonomy, forms a unity (beating wings of a butterfly and the storm). This whole is unique in the cosmos as we know it.

In the Anthropocene age the interplay between the earth and the human being has become different, more tightly meshed; human beings have not only their own existence to be responsible for, but just as much the dignity of the earth, of nature. The knowledge gained of the countless disturbances to a stable balance are scientifically documented and generally accessible, which allows each individual to take responsibility.

At present the magnificent uniqueness of the earth in the cosmos and the ethical potential of the human individuality form the greatest challenge for our cultural, societal and scientific world. The earth and humankind are vulnerable, closely connected with one another and in need of protection. In the present time the spirit of the earth and the human spirit are in a face-to-face encounter without any protective membrane.

In the context of this development modern schools must think over the task of education; the same goes for Waldorf and Steiner schools world-wide. Very early on Rudolf Steiner draws attention to the central task of our time in his account, published under the title Education of the Child: the issue is to develop a pedagogical method which is able to foster the growing child in a holistic way in the midst of society and nature.

How do we shape educational spaces so that the child feels at ease and at home both outwardly and inwardly?

How can the lessons be approached artistically in the context of digitalisation?

How often is the teacher fully aware of each child, each pupil?

How do we overcome the principle of subject teaching?

How does the spirit of Waldorf education come about?

How do we pick up the latent questions of adolescents?

How consistently do we deal with «the coming alive of science, of religion, of art», at all stages actually?

How does health come about in the school?

How do we foster the potential of resilience?

Which teachers do the pupils need?

What do modern adolescents require in order to take initiative?

What connects the teachers of a school (community building)?

Does focused caring for nature belong to education as well?

We need to liberate ourselves from the maximisation and optimisation of the school's achievements (trend towards becoming more and more academic) and answer the question practically: what kind of school does the human being need in the age of polarisation and tensions? The view that the economy, science and society have to format a type of person so as to conserve what is already there for the future is obsolete.

All these questions have something to do with the incarnation of the I, that is with the living body. The so-called generation Alpha (born after 2010) is going to school now and is meeting different requirements from generation Z (born after 2000).

It should not be asked: what does the individual need to know and be able to do for the existing social order? But rather, what is in the person as a predisposition and what can be awakened in them? Then it will be possible to go on adding new forces to the social order from the upcoming younger generation. Then there will continually be living in this order what those entering it as full human beings make of it; but the upcoming younger generation will not be turned into what the existing social organisation wants it to be.

(Rudolf Steiner Articles 1915-1921)