

Spiritual Values in Higher Education (2005-2009)

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The cultural crisis of our time will not be healed without healing the university life that informs it. A healing can, however, not happen in general, but only through individuals who penetrate and humanize specific scientific fields.¹ Moreover, a human research culture can only develop out of shared ownership to shared questions.

In May 2005 a group of people met at Sunbridge College, New York. What brought them together was a common question: Within the framework of recognized university life, how can a transnational research culture emerge that nurtures Steiner Waldorf Education in open dialogue with the streams of current educational research? The background was, at that time, the emerging European Bologna Process in education, with its probable future implications for freedom and human values in education in general, and Steiner Waldorf Education in particular. Since this Bologna Process in essence is characterized by being transnational, its counterforce can only be established at a transnational level. The legal framework of quality assessment and control that it imposes on future education can only be met when there is a culture of research that matches its proposition, for instance by addressing questions of spiritual values in higher education. With this background, three fields of research were identified and worked with separately (A, B, C) and subsequently placed within the context of the fourth field (D).

- A. Epistemological foundations
- B. The role of arts in higher education
- C. Contemplative inquiry in higher education
- D. International accreditation and assessment issues

Any culture of research and education needs to rest on an epistemology: an understanding of the knowledge process itself. To humanize science (*das Menschlichwerden des wissenschaftliches Leben*) implies for Rudolf Steiner localizing it within the thinking, feeling and will of human beings. "Objective science must have its life in the human being"². This does not mean surrendering to subjectivity, since ontology and epistemology, the realm of life and knowing, touch and entwine. By waking up to an attentive self-awareness of its own origin in spiritual activity, science becomes humanized. We may, in the name of science, demand an explicit epistemology from every researcher: What is the process of knowing, learning and teaching to you? How is spirit at work in the mastery of your particular field of practice? Epistemology turns into soul observation - or situated, spiritual action research.

In discovering the creative spirit element in various forms of knowledge formation, a bridge is built from the realm of knowing (epistemology) to the realm of being (ontology). Logos is again in touch with ethos. The discovery of the creative element implicit in the quest of knowing also forms a bridge from the field of science to the field of art. What is *the role of art* within higher education? And what are the conditions for the learner to become self-empowered and release his or her individual creativity? How can logos (understanding/learning) come in touch with pathos (expressing/creating) within an academic research culture?

From the role of the arts in cultivating educational virtues and skills, it is possible to take the next step to the question of *the role of contemplative practices in higher education*. There is a growing interest in connecting contemplative practices with education within the academic world. How does the training of academic and professional skills interplay with contemplative practices and personal inner development?

1. "All the years I have been active in the anthroposophical movement, I have strived in a particular direction which implies a bringing together of the anthroposophical with the specifically scientific." R. Steiner in GA 217a.

2. Rudolf Steiner quoted in his lecture to students, October 16th 1920.

Five Annual Conferences (2005-2009)

The first three conferences were held at Sunbridge College, NY, where key persons from three different colleges – all state accredited higher institutions inspired by anthroposophy - met to discuss cooperation and common tasks. The three institutions were Sunbridge College (USA), Alanus Hochschule für Kunst und Gesellschaft (Germany) and Rudolf Steiner University College (Norway). The main focus of these three conferences were the fields of research identified at the first conference in 2005 (A, B, C). At the fourth conference in Norway, the Crossfields Institute and Ruskin Mill Educational Trust from England joined the core initiative group. Through the participation of Crossfields Institute, a stronger focus was given to field D and its relation to the three others (A, B, C). A first decision was also made to start a review based international research journal. At the fifth annual meeting at the Alanus Hochschule in June 2009, the conference was for the first time attended by representatives from all five continents. The Journal initiative was a central topic at this conference, and its formal criteria were established.

The New Research Journal (RoSE)

Seen as an interwoven whole, these four points may serve as a rationale for the necessity of RoSE (Research on Steiner Education) and represent an orientation for its mission. Seen separately, they represent different entry points or topics for future articles in this new scientific journal. As such they will serve to outline its mission and delineate the particular, generally understood, human educational impulse that has given rise to RoSE . -