

What is ‘Heart-Thinking’?

AN EXCERPT FROM

The Speech Sound Etudes: Feeling the Gestures and Finding the Figures¹

*A detailed research report by Kate Reese Hurd
offered to eurythmy colleagues at Michaelmas 2014*

Part Three: Inner Support for the Work

Knowledge of what we do matters

But what about the development of the heart center?

A center prepared in the head descends to the heart

PART THREE: INNER SUPPORT FOR THE WORK

Knowledge of what we do matters

Our thinking activity is not only our means of bringing forward and guiding our soul-spiritual development and our artistic deepening in eurythmy. Rudolf Steiner indicated that the knowledge we achieve has far-reaching consequences for the dead and for the beings of all of the Hierarchies. These souls and beings are depending upon us for what we can provide to them during our sojourns on earth. He explained this in the following passages, as quoted by William Lindeman in his book, *How Do We Know? Epistemology: A Gateway to the Christ*, Chapter 6:

It is now the case that certain thoughts can only be grasped – even by supersensible hierarchies – if and when human beings here in earthly existence grasp these thoughts.” (See Rudolf Steiner’s lecture, “Henry VIII and Sir Thomas More: The Education of MAN Through the Materialistic Conception,” Dornach, October 1, 1916, in the lecture cycle, Inner Impulses of Evolution.) And Steiner explained that bodhisattvas need to teach while incarnated because “... the content of earthly Anthroposophy can be attained only on earth, in a physical body. Then Anthroposophy can be used in the spiritual world, but it must be acquired in a physical body. ... Anthroposophy does not arise through the spiritual world itself; it arises only on earth and can then be carried up into the spiritual world by human beings. That makes sense when one reflects that animals, for example, see everything on earth as human beings do, but are unable to understand it. In the same

way, supersensible beings can only view the supersensible world, but not understand it. Concepts and ideas of the supersensible world can arise only on earth, and from there they shine forth like a light into the spiritual world. From this one can rightly understand the significance of the earth. It is not merely a transitory passageway nor a vale of tears; it exists so that here a spiritual knowledge can be developed that can then be carried up into the spiritual worlds. (See Rudolf Steiner’s lecture, “Life After Death,” Strasbourg, May 13, 1913; Lect. 16 in the cycle, *Life Between Death and Rebirth*; his emphasis.)

Lindeman then queried: “Does this mean that spiritual beings act instinctively? By grasping the concepts inherent in their actions, do we reflect back to them the significance of what they are doing?” (his emphasis).

Clearly, what we do here on earth has the power to transform not only ourselves and our world on earth, but the spiritual world also. How we go about our eurythmy matters. When we apply our thinking actively, to cognize and therefore know every aspect of our inward feeling-experiences in eurythmy, we are developing priceless gifts of knowledge to be shared with the whole spiritual world. And our thinking activity opens out to embrace that entire world, as Rudolf Steiner so beautifully described in his book, *Mysticism at the Dawn of the Modern Age (MDMA, “About the Author, the People and the Background,” 8 pages in; his emphasis):*

There outside stands a tree. I take it into my mind. I throw my inner light upon what I have apprehended. Within me the tree becomes more than it is outside. That part of it which enters through the portal of the senses is received into a spiritual content. An ideal [i.e., not physical-material] counterpart to the tree is in me. This says infinitely much about the tree, which the tree outside cannot tell me. What the tree is only shines upon it out of me. Now the tree is no longer the isolated being which it is in external space. It becomes a part of the whole spiritual world living within me. It combines its content with other ideas which exist in me. It becomes a part of the whole world of ideas, which embraces the vegetable kingdom; it is further integrated into the evolutionary scale of every living thing.

If we replace the tree that is perceived outside of us with a feeling-experience that is perceived inwardly, such as in eurythmy, what thinking is doing when it is applied to feeling-experiences becomes clear: the spiritual power of love within thinking activity² unites the “what” that comprises our feeling-experiences with all other ideas that are related to them – such as language, color, movement, rhythm – placing them into their rightful, resonant context, to bring them into communion with the entire “evolutionary scale,” with the whole cosmos *into which our thinking opens*. And if we as individuals will actively engage this power of love

that lives within our thinking, to do this, we can join with each other in that communion, lifting ourselves and our eurythmy to a higher level indeed.

But what about the development of the heart center?

The heart center is not at all left out. In my experience the normal role of the heart is to feel, to perceive; for as Rudolf Steiner pointed out in *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity* (PSA, also published as *The Philosophy of Freedom* or with other title-characterizations), feelings are perceptions. Without the mediation of thinking and the completion it provides, these feeling-perceptions show us only one half of reality (Ch. 8, paragraphs 2-4; Ch. 4, especially paragraph 10; see my report ENDNOTE 14 and see his *Truth and Knowledge*, Ch. 4ff). Our heart gives us awareness of many things; it can give us a sense for truth as we near it; and most importantly, it is a “need of the heart” that leads us to anthroposophy. (See the first Leading Thought in *Anthroposophical Leading Thoughts: Anthroposophy as a Path of Knowledge; The Michael Mystery*, ALT.) It has always been my heart that has urged me toward anthroposophy; and I accept this paradox and follow this urging of my heart to tread this path of knowledge so that I might know with clarity what I think, feel and do.

A center prepared in the head descends to the heart

In *Occult Science*, Chapter 5, Part 7, Rudolf Steiner stated:

Under a properly regulated training this centre in the neighbourhood of the heart does not however develop right at the beginning. Preparation has to be made for it. A preliminary centre appears first in the head, is then transplanted into the region of the larynx and finally comes to rest in the neighbourhood of the physical heart.

With good reason, it is the head point that points upward in the pentagram that represents our human form and being. My sense is that this properly-regulated process, under the guidance of Michael, is the means by which “*hearts are beginning to have thoughts*” (ALT, first Michael Letter, last paragraph, August 17, 1924). However, Rudolf Steiner went on:

If development is irregular, it may be that this organ is formed in the region of the heart from the outset. There will then be a danger that instead of attaining calm and objective supersensible perception, the pupil might develop into a fantastic dreamer.

This issue of the potential for improper development of the heart center is so important that reiteration and elaboration of what Rudolf Steiner wrote is helpful. In *Knowledge of Higher Worlds and Its Attainment* (KHW), he explained that the twelve-petalled heart center is the central organ through which currents flow both upward and downward to the other centers; and he wrote: “It is for this reason that the very greatest care

must be devoted to the development of the twelve-petalled lotus, for an imperfection in the latter would result in the irregular formation of the whole structure [of the centers].” He then explained that through adhering to proper esoteric instructions,

[the student] introduces into their etheric body currents and movements which are in harmony with the laws and evolution of the world to which they belong. ... A simple start is made with a view to the deepening of the logical activity of the mind and the producing of an inward intensification of thought. Thought is thereby made free and independent of all sense impressions and experiences; it is concentrated in one point which is held entirely under control. Thus a preliminary center is formed for the currents of the etheric body. This center is not yet in the region of the heart but in the head and it appears to the clairvoyant as the point of departure for movements and currents. No esoteric [self-]³ training can be successful which does not first create this center. If the latter [this center] were first formed in the region of the heart the aspiring clairvoyant would doubtless obtain glimpses of the higher worlds, but would lack all true insight into the connection between these higher worlds and the world of our senses. This, however is an unconditional necessity for MAN [the human being] at the present stage of evolution. The clairvoyant must not become a visionary; they must retain a firm footing upon the earth. The center in the head, once duly fixed, is then moved lower down, to the region of the larynx.

And then Rudolf Steiner described the further developments to be achieved from there, which lead to the settling of this new center in the region of the heart, at which time,

the student becomes gifted with the inner Word. All things now acquire a new significance for them. They become as it were spiritually audible in their innermost self, and speak to them of their essential being. ... They acquire a new understanding for all that the great teachers of humanity have uttered. ... For the tone of their words follow the movements and rhythms which they have themselves formed within themselves. (See Ch. 5, “Some Results of Initiation,” a bit under 2/3 into the chapter. This is Ch. 6 in some editions.)

In the notes that he supplied for his 1924 edition of *A Theory of Knowledge* (ThKn), Rudolf Steiner described this new center in its function as a new “mystical organ” established within us, which from then onward supplies us with true mysticism:

But one must carry full clarity of concepts into one’s experience through the mystical organ if knowledge is to come about. There are persons, however, who wish to take refuge in the ‘inward’ for the

purpose of escaping from clarity of concepts. These apply the term ‘mystical’ to that which would lead knowledge away from the light of ideas into the darkness of the world of feeling – the world of feeling, not illuminated by ideas. Against this mysticism* I have expressed myself throughout my writings. On behalf of that [true] mysticism which holds fast to the clarity of ideas, and makes of the mystic sense a perceptual organ of the soul which functions in the same region of the human being where otherwise obscure feeling is dominant, every page of my books has been written. (See the back of *ThKn*, 7th Note, for a passage 6 pages from the end of Ch. 16. *At the end of his 1901 Preface to the first edition of *MDMA*, he called this type of inner activity “the mysticism of muddled heads.” It is also known as the Philosophy of Feeling – see *PSA*, Ch. 8, 3rd page especially.)

The possibility of an aberrant soul-spiritual development stemming from the premature opening of the heart center must be reckoned with. For me, such an outcome as this – and any shade of it – is not what I seek. I am in no hurry. And my experience indicates that the practice of eurythmy is not an alternate or substitute path to the correct development of the heart center. Eurythmy depends upon the proper treading of the path of knowledge that is anthroposophy, which is both its origin and the soil in which it grows and flourishes – if it flourishes.

I believe that this preliminary center that we must establish in the region of the head is that center made possible by the work of Archangel Gabriel during the Age of Materialism, which ended in the late 1800s. “During that period delicate structures arose within the front part of the brain, and were gradually implanted into the reproductive system,” so that all of humanity would possess them. When we consciously work to develop these “delicate structures” – as we should during this present Age of Michael – we can prepare ourselves to receive spiritual knowledge directly into ourselves, with clarity, from the “tidal wave” of spirit that Dr. Steiner said is now “flooding” into our earthly realm. (See *Festivals*, Michael Section, Lect. 4, Part 1, 3rd-5th pages, and Part 2, 2nd page.)

And these must be the same faculties that Rudolf Steiner referred to in *Occult Science* (*OS*). He wrote that we must say to ourselves:

The wise guidance of spiritual Powers has given me certain faculties. It has not bestowed these faculties on me for me to leave them unemployed, but rather that I may put them to use. The wisdom of the guidance is to be seen in the fact that seeds have been planted in me of a higher state of consciousness; and I fail to understand the guidance aright if I do not regard it as a duty to set before me the high ideal: that whatever can become manifest to MAN through the development of his spiritual powers shall become so manifest’ (Ch. 5, 3rd page in).

And throughout these developments, the heart is not at all neglected: the ‘six basic exercises’ are meant to foster the balanced development of the heart center (and I’m making no claims concerning my own success – I just try). A full description of these is contained in *Esoteric Development: Selected Writings and Lectures... (ES)*, Ch. 5, “General Demands...,” GA 245. I’ve found it helpful to compare these descriptions with those found in *OS*, Ch. 5, 9 pages from the end of Part 2; and with those in *KHW*, Ch. 5, almost 1/3 through the chapter (Ch. 6 in some editions). One of the things that is different in *ES* is that following these six moral requirements or General Demands are the “Further Rules in Continuation of the General Demands” in the next chapter (also GA 245). I have always felt deeply provoked when reviewing these four Further Rules – and perhaps I’m not alone! These rules are:

No unproven concept shall enter my consciousness;

There shall stand before my soul the living obligation continually to increase the number of my concepts;

Knowledge will come to me only about such things, the yes or no of which I regard without sympathy or antipathy; [and]

I must overcome my aversion to the so-called abstract.

I feel particularly struck by the first one, with that absolute “no” in it. But I believe that these four Further Rules are essential for the properly-regulated [self-] training that Rudolf Steiner described, that will prevent the precocious and aberrant formation of the heart center. My conviction is that they ensure a right development in eurythmy, also. Because of this first rule, I feel it as an imperative to regard all gestures and laws in eurythmy as being “unproven concepts” if I have not completely grounded them in my own independent experience. Hence, my present commitment is to surmount any sense of overwhelm and directly seek to prove them as best I can; and with this, my work takes on even greater meaning. For me, there is no other way to proceed. (Also see the Four Habits which Rudolf Steiner discussed in *KHW* beginning two pages after he described the settling of the new center in the region of the larynx, before it arrives in the region of the heart. The third habit consists of the set of six exercises.)

And it is not only in the cultivation of logical thinking, and in the pursuit of the six basic exercises and the four Further Demands that thinking serves us in our conscious guidance of our moral development: in the inner work of meditation, thinking plays a key role; for it builds up the meditative images that are to evoke the feelings which are to be rested in and brought to a higher level, ennobling them and enabling the development of higher cognition. (See *OS*, Ch. V, second section, beginning 2 pages in. Rudolf Steiner gave a lengthy example with meditation on the rose cross. Also see *KHW*, Ch. 2, the section on “The Control of Thoughts and

Feelings,” for the examples of the contemplation of a seed and of growing and withering plants.)

I believe that one of the things that holds us back from these tasks that depend upon thinking – tasks which are part and parcel of unfolding the Consciousness or Spiritual Soul – is that the Spiritual Soul appears as cold at the start. Hence, we shun it. But Dr. Steiner wrote in “A Christmas Study: The Mystery of the Logos” (*ALT*, Dec. 28, 1924):

[I]n its essential nature the Spiritual Soul is not cold. It seems to be so only at the commencement of its unfolding, because at that stage it can only reveal the light-element in its nature, and not as yet the cosmic warmth in which it has indeed its origin.

Truly, we must take heart, summon our courage and dare to forge ahead, trusting in that warmth.

In eurythmy performance we do not express any sort of thinking process; instead, whatever we have come to in our own being and in our eurythmy via our inner development – whatever conscious knowledge we have achieved – shows: it is communicated through how we go about what we do in every detail. Our onlookers perceive whether we have hold of the cosmic ‘garment’ for real or not (see *MDMA*, above). The good news is that further help can come to us in eurythmy when we attain the level of Imagination (and higher); for then we would actually behold the etheric formative forces at work. I believe that through this direct beholding, at that time, we would be able to bring our eurythmy gestures into full accord with the activity of these etheric forces – activity which we had perceived and known thus far only through the movements of our larynx, if we have done that work. With this correction and this new resonance with the etheric forces, we would achieve an entirely new level in our artistic expression.

Rudolf Steiner gave inspiring descriptions of the work that is required in order to enter into the higher levels of cognition known as Imagination, Inspiration and Intuition in his lecture, “Knowledge and Initiation” (London, April 14, 1922). Five to six pages in, he said that upon entering the realm of Imagination we attain to a “new way of thinking ... a pictorial, formative thought filled with inner life and possessing a quality of strength and intensity comparable with the sense impressions of the ordinary life;” and that through this we perceive “a new human being that we come to know within us ... ‘an organism in time.’ ... We have come to experience ... the ‘formative forces of the body’; not the full human being ... but its formative forces ... the etheric body.” In his lecture, “Paths to Knowledge of Higher Worlds,” he also gave a helpful and concise overview of the requirements on the path to the first two levels of higher cognition (Christiania/Oslo, November 26, 1921).

When I am so keenly aware of these features of our time and the extensive soul-spiritual potentials we possess within us during this Age of Michael – when I experience how my own thinking activity makes it possible for me to lay hold of the whole “evolutionary scale of every living thing,” bit by bit (again see *MDMA*, above) – then I know that my feeling-perceptions in eurythmy are but the tip of the cosmic garment. They remain in isolation within me as only one half of their true reality unless and until I bring the power of love within my own thinking to meet them, to illuminate them and reunite them with the cosmos. When I know that my thinking activity provides the opening to all that is, I cannot possibly be content to rest within the confines of feeling-experiences unilluminated by this power of thinking with which I am blessed. Rudolf Steiner said:

When [the human being] themselves brings life into their thoughts, then, giving and receiving communion through their own being, they ally themselves with the element of Divine Spirit which permeates the world and assures its future. ... [And] as they quicken the spirit in themselves, they charm it also into the dead and dying matter that surrounds them” (see *The Spiritual Communion of Mankind*, Lect. 5, 5-6 pages from the end, New Year’s Eve, 1922-23).

And meeting each other through this activity, in eurythmy and in everything we do, is then the highest communion possible for us in our time. Let us be on our way there, earnestly and cheerfully!

NOTES

¹ Note for p. 1. The Figure drawings made by Rudolf Steiner show in detail the nature of twenty of the speech sound gestures as done in eurythmy. They may be found in *Eurythmy and the Impulse of Dance, With Sketches for Eurythmy Figures by Rudolf Steiner*; text by Marjorie Raffé, Cecil Harwood and Marguerite Lundgren, 1975.

² Note for p. 2, regarding love within our thinking activity. In Chapter 8 of *PSA* at the end of his “Addition to the Revised Version, 1918,” Rudolf Steiner wrote (his emphasis):

One who is willing to *experience intuitively* in thinking, will also be able to do justice to what is experienced in the realm of feeling and in the element of will, whereas mysticism of feeling and metaphysics of will are incapable of doing justice to the activity of permeating existence with intuitive thinking.” In that paragraph he also wrote that when thinking “dives down into the phenomena of the world ... this diving down is done by a power that flows within thinking activity itself, the power of spiritual love.

³ Note for p. 4. the role of the teacher of adults in our time, the Fifth Post-Atlantean Epoch, is to give instruction on how to train oneself. No one is to train the adult student.