

RAINER PATZLAFF: From Analyzing to Imagining - Working out an artistic Approach to Knowledge in the Teaching of Literature.

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To educate and instruct means to form the future. Every young person brings new impulses, new goals and capabilities for this earth life, and thus our work as High School teachers may not only consist of bringing the young people into connection with what already exists in the world, but we must also try to figure out the New which announces itself through them like a prophet, and prepare the way for it in our teaching. What sorts of impulses for the future are manifesting themselves?

For some time we have been able to observe that the young people relate increasingly suspiciously or even negatively to what comes to meet them as the highest achievements in science and technology. In this they do not principally reject science, but resist the way in which science goes astray today; the icy coldness of pure reasoning, analysis and dissection repels them and is felt as inhuman, certainly justifiably. Of course, they cannot express yet how they imagine a new science for the future, yet one can hear clearly in their critical utterances in what direction their longing lies - they wish for a scientific trend which not only satisfies head and understanding, but which also speaks to the exactness and clarity of earlier science. Certainly a high goal, but one for which one can have the feeling: Yes, there lies the future which must be striven for!

Have we anything to offer the students from this point of view? This is not to underestimate how much is achieved in the scientific subjects of the High School in the way of new methods and how carefully people reflect on their own concept of science there. But the question must also be asked for the spiritually scientific subjects, such as languages, the native language and literature, history, history through art, using the same strictness. Do we already have a method which leads into the future, or are we working, if we look at it carefully, still with inherited experiences, which have been developed from a quite different, long past state of consciousness of humanity? For the teaching of literature I would dare the opinion that we have still not worked out a really new trend in methods. There are worthy attempts and many tentative steps, but I still do not see a sure way, at least not in the subject which I can survey: German literature. That is not so much because the German literature teacher has been slow to look for new ways, but rather because in literacy research such future-oriented ways have still not been found, even among anthroposophically minded scholars.

As examples I would like to bring two Faust monographs which appeared in anthroposophical publishing houses for the 150th anniversary of Goethe's death. Both contained a general interpretation of the work which was propounded with learned claims. One book catches the attention by its wide scholarship: every page gives witness to the profound learning and culture of the author who surveys the whole Faust literature. His solid method of work, the learned pedantry demands homage. But if one tests (independently from the respectable content) the research methods with which an anthroposophical author approaches Goethe's poem, then one establishes reluctantly that it is a little different from the way philologists were accustomed to illuminate a literary work of art with great apparatus and the support of all

means of textual criticism and giant thesauruses. The form of textual work which arises is not unlike a natural history trail in a wood. On every tree and bush the reader finds learned labels, which, generations of researchers have hung up and which are continually added to with great energy (with bees' diligence!) The method is anything but new; it can be traced back to the sources of humanism and Biblical commentary in the Middle Ages, back to the scholarly books of the late classical schools - a tradition centuries old, which has been continued from Classical Philology to our own time, and which has developed into perfect scholarly commentary on each line. He is offered for every verse and every line, even for each single word, a plethora of explanations, cross references, parallels, quotations, traditional references, etc., and tears the collected work neatly into a thousand details, which in a discursive way point by point are put under the magnifying glass, like an analytical procedure, which one recognizes from the current scientific research methods. For the basic work on texts it is definitely useful, even unavoidable. But Goethe's type of poetry, which is striving so strongly in the imaginative realm, cannot be revealed by it.

The second book I would like to speak about is at the opposite pole to the first. Here it is not a question of filigree work in detail, but the great relationships are brought together to relate Faust to the evolution of the cosmos and humanity. There everything is related to everything else, macro- and micro-cosmically; the spiritual dimension of the text is revealed, the occult background is illuminated so that the reader gets the feeling that in every verse of the Faust it is as if the whole cosmos came down to him. It goes so far in this style that not infrequently in a single sentence the results of reading several examples from Steiner's Occult Science are indicated casually by the way, as if such things were obvious. Of course this book is certainly more exciting and rewarding to read than the other, but the method seems to me to be highly questionable, which does not arise out of the poem itself, but which is imposed upon it from outside. Goethe's text is so drowned in anthroposophy that the work of art in itself vanishes from view. So here I can find no progress in methods either.

How do we find an approach between these extremes in Faust, which at the same time is artistically adequate and also scientifically exact?

Goethe himself gives the decisive indication. In a letter to J.K.L. Iken of 23 September, 1827 he speaks about his poetic method when he looks back on the Helena Act and then observes in general: Also because of other dark places in earlier and later poems I might give the following for consideration. Because so much in our experience cannot be communicated clearly and directly, I have for a long time chosen the method of bringing the secret meaning to the attention through contrasting pictures which reflect each other. Since everything which I want to communicate is a question of life's experiences, so I may point out and hope that people will want to experience my poems again and again.

With total clarity Goethe expresses what a forming principle lies at the basis of his work, "bringing the hidden meaning to the attention through contrasting pictures which reflect each other" - these words are like a key to reveal the multiplicities of the Faust poem according to its own formative laws, and thus we have a legitimate starting point for the new methods which we need to develop. Many tasks and questions arise out of it for research. Here only indications can be given of the experiences

which arise in using this key in practice. Let us consider Goethe according to Goethe's own methods.

The Faust poem is renowned for being divided in two parts, the contents of which stand side by side, disconnected like two different works. Whoever expects a linear, sequential treatment will find a break: The Gretchen episode of Part I is not referred to in Part II for a long time, as if it had not even happened. But Goethe is not using the discursive method; for him it is the question of the "contrasting pictures", which stand in a polaric relationship one to another. Faust I and II are such polarities, which Goethe himself has characterized in Small World, Large World as micro- and macro-cosm. The two, however, only stand side by side apparently unrelated; actually a whole play of closely woven relationships is active. For example: Faust in his study opens up the book of Nostradamus. The first thing that he sees is the sign of the macro-cosmos. He looks at it and experiences something from it, but Goethe could have omitted the episode in his treatment of the work, for it has no consequences; Faust feels nothing in the experience which can help him forward at that moment in his development. He leaves further to the sign of the microcosmos - the Earth Spirit. He speaks to him and sets the development in motion. Also in Faust II the motif of the macrocosmos is mirrored like an extra from Part I which stands totally in the sign of the microcosmos. Also, in reverse the First part is mirrored in the second, especially noticeably there, where before the Classical Walpurgis Night the deserted study is once more discovered, but this time as a transition place and not as the center of the action. Here it is shown that Faust in both study scenes experiences pictures, but in a polar relationship of consciousness: he experiences the sign of Nostradamus with clear day consciousness, the Helena dream in deep sleep. Also interesting is the varying reflection at the beginning of the two parts: Part I begins in an inside room; Faust is alone, surrounded by dead nature beings. Part II begins out in nature; Faust is alone, surrounded by living nature beings. Then the next scene: In Part I Faust is outside in nature among people (Easter walk). In Part II Faust is in an inside space among people: The Emperor's palace.

	Faust I	Faust II
Scene 1	Inside alone	Outside alone
Scene 2	Outside with people	Inside with people

These few examples already show that the scenes actually reflect each other both in large and small details. The wings enclosing the narrow study or open nature, the fact that Faust is alone or among people, is every time a specific soul gesture. Each detail presents a one-sided view and does not give the complete reality in life; but as they are laid side by side and reflect each other, there arises to some extent between them as an unexpressed truth what the poet actually means; there arises the mysterious, fundamental being of man who can live through each one-sidedness and yet is not quite consumed by any one of them.

If one has made a beginning in this way, one finds continually new secrets of composition which do not come into view at all with an analytical method. For example, one can notice that Goethe did not simply later add the Witches' Kitchen, which was missing in Urfaust, but formed as a polaric contrast to the aforementioned the scene of Auerbach's Cellar, in order to weave together both scenes in a varying mirror-relationship to Faust II, and even the following: in Auerbach's Cellar, as also in the Witches' Kitchen it is a question of the effects of certain drinks. At the feast in

Auerbach's Cellar Faust has, however, nothing in particular in mind, so the scene remains without results in the action, it is only a transition place. The interpreters consider it only a satirical insertion as a theatrical joke, which enlivens but which does not have essential significance. That appears now in another light: What does not interest Faust here, namely how the human being can be manipulated through magical appearances and get into illusions and dependence, that is taken up again in Part II in the Mummenschantz scene with the creation of paper money, etc., and then Faust does not look on in boredom, but takes an active part himself. Auerbach's Cellar is then like a preamble, a reflection of that which only later in Faust II becomes the theme; and how it expresses the character of both parts; it plays itself here in miniature, in the narrowness of the habits of a cafe, then in the breadth of great politics. With the Witches' Kitchen it is the opposite: This scene sets in movement the whole Gretchen action; Faust steps into the magic circle, takes the drink, and thus begins the tragedy. In a different way the Witches' Kitchen appears again in Faust II in the laboratory, but forms there only a transition place.

We begin here to practice a method of meditation which sets out a basic knowledge of the text won from analytical work, but then progresses from analytical picking away and labeling things and concerns itself with the comparative observation or an observing comparison. With students one can easily reach this; with enthusiasm they discover every new detail which confirms the large in the small, but find also significant expressions, relationships and secret threads, weaving in and out, so that a kind of breathing process arises by which one can look from the whole work to the detail and from the detail to the whole work. The contemplation arises through the imaginative character, for the work becomes a giant picture before which one stands as before a painting: it is not separated out, but it is looked at all over, compared and allowed to work and the inner riches of the work are felt to be greater and greater. And yet it is an absolutely exact experience that has nothing to do with the fantastic, nothing to do with association. It deals with concretely researched facts and thus with a science; this method could be called imaginative research.

When we begin to do this we become aware of what we for a long time believed already, of a surprising new experience, that is that Faust is founded in deep imaginations which did not arise from reason or the arbitrary choice of the poet, but which have arisen from life as true soul pictures of hidden facts. In this lies the truly spiritual characteristic of the work and if one approaches it with the indicated method, then the spiritual in the work is revealed and there is no need to attach thoughts from anthroposophy. Even this can be shown through several small examples. During the Easter Walk Faust sees the sunset and feels as if he is inwardly torn apart: "Two souls live, alas, within my breast". He describes how one strives for the earth and one for heaven. But the inner experience has its expression in outer nature, for he sees the evening sun glowing with yellow red and the black landscape below, and this impression of yellow-red and black, of light and dark, becomes ever more intense, contracts and becomes a poodle, a specific poodle whose nose is directed to the earth and whose tail rises into the sky like a whirl of fire. Faust sees him in this way first. But now (it is also quite imaginative) there is left of this double being only one extreme, the snout, which is attached to the dark earth, to

the dark materiality, and Faust has to deal with this in the next scene. Now we can, without Rudolf Steiner's remarks on Lucifer and Ahriman,**find the double being of Mephisto purely from the text, for Mephisto clearly appears in a double guise, even in his clothes for which Goethe gives indications. The first devil which arises from the poodle is black, perhaps has a red feather in his hat, and appears as the power which has to do with the darkness, with disturbance and annihilation. Faust does not make a pact with him, again an episode in the action without consequence. He vanishes and then a quite different Mephisto enters of whom Goethe says he is dressed in red and gold; he asks Faust to free himself from the earth with its narrowness and troubles, to tear himself away to lead an easy life. Faust seals the pact with him, and this new Mephisto leads his new master from the house, not onto earth, but

EIN BISSCHEN FEVERLUFT, DIE ICH BEREITEN WERDE,
HEBT UNS BEHEND VON DIESER ERDE,
UND, SIND, WIR LEICHT, SO GEHT ES SCHNELL HINAUF

A little fiery air which I shall prepare
Will lift us quickly from this earth,
And if we are light, we'll quickly rise

Here again with Mephisto we see how polaric opposites interplay: The black devil has in addition something Luciferic, that he wants to go out and cannot pass over the Druid sign; he uses the lulling illusion which lifts Faust out of his waking consciousness and slips away. On the other hand the red devil, which one imagines with a black cloak, shows features of his counterpart, when he wants to have the pact signed with physical material (of course to express his being, not with black ink, but with red blood!)

Just as Mephisto appears in a dual form to Faust, he appears before the student in the same way. The first would trap him in the laced-up boots of pedantry and logic; one can hear the Ahrimanic spirit in the formulations. Then he suddenly says "I am now tired of the dry tone" (playing with words about Wagner, the dry sneak) and changes the character. Now he flatters the vanity of the student, advises him to lead a gay life and describes the doctorate as a possibility for getting a title and indulging his desires. In conclusion, he writes in the student's album (in Latin) "Thou shalt be as God, knowing Good and Evil", the famous words of Lucifer in the Paradise story. So all the details remain in harmony.

Another very deep-reaching imagination, which to my knowledge is

** From his spiritual research Rudolf Steiner has indicated that not one but two powers of evil work upon us - one from olden times named Lucifer would like to lift man away from everything earthly, increases the selfish Ego experiences, encourages illusion and pride (Hubris). The other, called Ahriman in Old Persia, would like to pull man deeper and deeper into the material world, into hardening and fossilization. Both show themselves to supersensible perception as actual spiritual beings. They must appear in the drama as two separate beings, if you want to reflect the reality. But Goethe, as Rudolf Steiner repeatedly said, could still not achieve (contradicting the tradition medieval picture of the devil) this knowledge in full clarity, and therefore drew both of them into one form, that of Mephisto.

definitely still not researched, is the Firewater, the unification of Fire and Water. It reaches far back into human history, and appears in Faust significantly first in Auerbach's Cellar, where the Firewater (as one used to call alcohol) spills on the floor and goes up in flames; next in the Witches' Kitchen, where Faust remarks on drinking the draft of youth, how a flame comes towards him. It is an exciting task for the students to find out what the quality is of the firewater in Auerbach's Cellar and that in the Witches' Kitchen. Then there open up quite new insights and we understand more deeply what really happens in the Witches' Kitchen and what goes on with the people in Auerbach's Cellar. And once we are on the track, then surprising new questions arise also for Faust II; for the motif of Firewater continues from the Rainbow Monologue and the Mummenschanz with its bubbling kettle to the Classical Walpurgis night, at the end of which the uniting of Fire and Water is celebrated in those exact words, and yet again in the laboratory in the vial of Dr. Wagner, up to the final scene where Faust and Wagner fight against the Emperor's enemies and land is wrestled from the water with the help of fire machines. Hope is a thread which can open up the labyrinth of Faust II, but always so that the conclusions of the work are not set out, but are made comprehensible through the relationships to the laws of the work itself.

It is obvious in such a method that the teacher cannot stand there as the one who knows everything already and who pulls the students slowly along behind, but only who is a little way ahead and who can himself learn a lot from the students. So the teacher is excited to discover more and more, and then students notice here is a human being still on the way, and "we are on the way with him." That makes the teaching fruitful, and so one can conclude the Faust Main Lesson with a clear conscience, leaving many questions open; it satisfies the young people in the deepest way to know that the material is not concluded, but can be endlessly deepened and taken into life. Now of course it is so that the method of "pictorial revelation" must be very carefully practiced before it can be used in a secure way, and a preparation is necessary for it. This preparation can take place in the 11th grade while working on Wolfram's Parzival. Then a huge field for activity is opened up. I would like to share a small example which will make clear how certain central imaginations, if they are once sensed, can really reveal the spiritual content of the work.

The students can be made aware, after a longer occupation with the text, of the following: Parzival's life-way begins in the loneliness of Soltane where he grew up. As he rides out to become a knight, he meets the first person, Jeschute, and then his relative, Sigune. Immediately in front of King Arthur's court he meets Ither, whom he slays with his spear because he wants his armour. With the help of Gurnemanz, Parzival becomes a knight himself, continues on without reproach and is on top of the world. A customary King Arthur romance would have reached its goal and would end here. Not so with Wolfram: the visit by night to the Grail castle works like a ride into the future of humanity, in which Parzival, although the complete Arthurian knight, now pathetically fails. And now a new series of meetings begin: After leaving the Grail Castle Parzival meets Sigune. and then Jeschute, and immediately before the camping place of Arthur he looks upon, as if enchanted, the three blood drops on the snow. Finally he manages to reach Arthur:

Soltane	Jeschute	Sigune	Murder	
Grail Castle	Sigune	Jeschute	Blood drops	Arthur's Court

Even if the meeting with Jeschute and Sigune in the second sequence is reversed, even so the parallelism of the two series is so noticeable that one cannot believe that it is by chance; the students see that at once. But one thing remains a question: If the single steps of Wolfram are a parallel, what has Ither's death to do with the blood-drop scene? The three drops are experienced by Parzival as the sign of Minne, and Wolfram cannot do enough to speak of Minne; the word falls relentlessly and a little in the background of the Grail it is also spoken of. Love is the theme here, and there it is murder. What do they have in common? Wolfram says specifically of Ither, that he was red from top to toe, that his blood oozed into the earth and colored the flowers red. Likewise before the second meeting with Arthur Parzival sees blood which has flowed on to the earth, but in the end he thinks of the pure Minne (love, devotion) for his wife. It doesn't need to be brought together what the two have to do with each other. Murder and love, love and hate, these seem to be the most extreme contrasts that one can imagine - also a type of Firewater problem.

In the central Ninth Book of his epic Wolfram has the hermit Trevrizent speak about the origin of evil in the world, and then the formerly unresolved problem appears again with a deliberate paradox: The grandson Cain took his grandmother's maidenhead. That appears incredible and ridiculous, so Parzival asks and receives the following explanation: Adam was the son of the earth, for he lived from the fruits of earth which was his mother. Adam's sons, Cain and Abel, behaved so that one brother killed the other for little reason, and the innocently flowing blood fell on the earth, and then she was robbed of her virginity, of her purity. How deeply goes such a picture if one knows that it was the custom among olden peoples to show the virginity of the bride and the consummation of marriage pictorially by the bedsheets on which red drops of blood were to be seen. When I mention this, many students suddenly remember: we had this picture already at the end of Book II, as Gahmuret, Parzival's father was murdered in the East; then the evidence was brought back in the form of his shirt which he wore for love over his armour, and on this white love shirt, the bloody drops of his murder were to be seen. It was brought home with the spearpoint which slew him. (Those who know will recognize this as a grail symbol!) Murder and love are here united in the same picture. What is the significance? Wolfram solves the riddle with the indication that the earth's losing her virginity, by which sin, evil, hate came into the world one day be compensated for when once more innocent blood fell on the earth, sacrificed by the highest love: through the death of Christ. Now we are in the inmost temple of the Grail. This may be enough to indicate how purely from the picture we can penetrate deep into the background of such a work, but always so that the students have the impression that nothing is completed, but only one or two of the many veils have been lifted.

What one has practiced in this way in the Eleventh Grade continues on a higher plane in the Faust main lesson of Twelfth Grade. The climax can be formed by lyrics of the twentieth century; here one cannot work rightly without the imaginative method, for contemporary poets have written many poems which are wrecked by the analyzing method because it is no longer possible to come to useful results with the divisive and dissecting reason and discursive work methods.

An example:

Evening of words,
Evening of words, dowsers in the quiet!
One step, then another,
a third, the trace of which
your shadow does not efface:
the scar of time
opens up
and covers the land with blood -
The bulldogs of word power
attack in the midst of you now:
they celebrate the thirst,
the hunger of the wild ...

A last moon to help you:
a long silver bone -
naked like the way you came -
If he throws among the pack
it will not save you
The ray which you awoke
froths nearer,
and above swims, a fruit
into which you bit many years ago.

The poem is by Paul Celan. In the language it presents nothing that is dark or unusual; the sentence structure is ordered, we know every word, a poem made of well-known German words. Yet we stand before the poem and understand what the students call only drivel.** From this arises an exciting question. If the poem is like this which we call drivel, it is nonsense, are we thought to be fools? Feeling says to the student, No, we suspect there is something behind it; but how are we going to get to it? From there it is only one step to the fundamental question for all modern art, How can I develop judgment for what is fake in this realm and really has artistic substance?

Now the method can stand their test of fire, for it quickly appears that with such pictures as we have found in this poem nothing else helps but that one uses a completely new method, namely that one begins to live with them. And it is extremely fruitful if one can have time over several days, or rather over several nights, to be able to live with such pictures with the students. Then they have the experience on their own that it is not a question of connecting some kind of arbitrary subjective associations with the text, but that it is actually possible through an intensive, I would like to say, contemplative listening to come to real connections which are present in the text. But the special thing about it is: as soon as one experiences these connections inwardly one is no longer in a position to express them in words; then we are on the other side of what can be spoken in words. The threshold of the physically audible has been crossed, the first supersensible perception begins.

It is so necessary nowadays to work out such imaginative methods, as I tried to indicate and this is shown so clearly by the state of consciousness of modern humanity. A hunger for pictures as never before has struck our contemporaries, which reaches beyond the global extent of picture screens and its increased use in innumerable lands. What people seek are not outer, technically produced pictures, but inner pictures of soul experiences, imaginations which express a real spiritual world; and one can sense as a teacher that just in this way the students bring new powers and capacities which want to be tended and developed.

** The colloquial German term is "Bahnhof" (= train station, the confusion is probably the common factor)

What appears when they do not receive proper care, when they are fed with completed and outer pictures, instead of developing their own powers, if they are given moreover abstract and analytical instruction, which moreover are directed to the intellectual ability and leave the rest of the human being cold? Rudolf Steiner spoke very dramatically about this question in a lecture on the renewal of social life which in many respects is an indicator. I would like to close with a few quotations from this:

In our Waldorf school system we have just established in the foreground that the instruction and education for the elementary age children are based on pictorial representation for what lies deep in the child's soul are the imaginations received in the spiritual world. They are trying to emerge. And if the teacher has the right relationship to the child, he gives him pictures. And as the teacher places pictures before the childish soul, there are shaken from the child's soul those pictures, or rather the powers of pictorial representation which were received before birth, or, should we say, before conception.

The child has forces in his body which tear it apart if they are not drawn out in pictorial representation. And what is the result? The forces are not lost; they expand, they take on an existence and enter the thoughts, the feelings and the will impulses. And what results from this in human beings? Rebels, revolutionaries, unsatisfied human beings, people who do not know what they want because they want something which is unknowable, because they want something which is not compatible with any possible social organism; what they should have only imagined, what should have gone on in their fantasy has not entered there, but has gone into their social drives.

If the world revolts today, then it is heaven which revolts; that means the heaven which is held back in the souls of men, and which does not then appear in its own form, but in its contrary image, which appears in struggle and blood instead of imaginations. It is therefore no wonder, if those people who take part in such disturbances of the social order actually have the feeling that they are doing something good. For what do they sense in themselves? They sense the heavens, but it only takes the form of a caricature in their souls. The truths are this serious which we should look into today. To recognize the truths about which it is a question today, that should be no childish game; it should be carried out throughout with the uttermost seriousness.

(Lecture of 11th September, 1920, in the volume GEISTESWISSENSCHAFT ALS ERKENNTNIS DER GRUNDIMPULSE SOZIALER GESTALTUNG, GA 199)