

TRIUNE NEWSLETTER

SHAPING A NEW FORM OF UNIVERSITY

- ❖ The cultivation of a living, imaginative thinking as the fundamental aim in teaching and research – the inseparability of science and art.
- ❖ Goethean-style phenomenology as orientation in relation to all faculties; awakening the eye of the spirit.
- ❖ The university as the expression and practice of the threefold social life.

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ORGANISM, TIME & CONSCIOUSNESS – THE NEED FOR A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF THE LIVING

Christoph Hueck

One of the most pressing tasks of current natural sciences is the development of a truly accurate understanding of living things. In order not to destroy life further and further, we must first understand it in order to learn how to deal better with living beings. Darwinian gene-centrism, which still prevails in mainstream science, reduces living things to molecular biochemistry and statistical population genetics and thus loses sight of the actual realm of living things, namely the individual organism in its life and its embeddedness in the environment. Since the turn of the millennium, there has therefore been

an increasing discussion in biology and in the philosophy of biology about alternative perspectives (Rama, 2024), which refer to Immanuel Kant and also to Goethe's and Schelling's understanding of the living organism (Nassar, 2022; Steigerwald, 2019).

However, in order to make real progress on these issues, we also need new concepts and ways of thinking. Above all, the concept of time must be expanded in order to understand organic development. It is also urgently necessary to develop a theory of organic forms in order to learn to understand forms and their organic metamorphoses. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe did fundamental work in both areas, which is increasingly being recognized in the philosophy of biology today (Bauer, 2023; Rupik, 2024).

Living beings are not only spatially but above all temporally organised beings. Their form is always a current section from a continuous

process of development and can therefore only be understood by taking time into account. Goethe wrote: "Gestaltenlehre ist Verwandlungslehre", (theory of form is theory of development) and a comprehensive theory of development must therefore also ask about the nature of time.

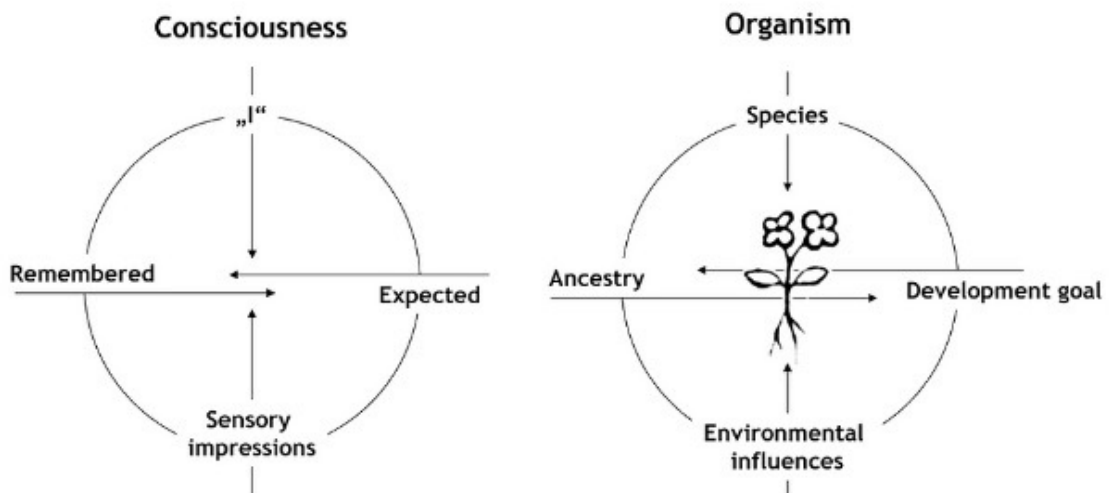
The classical, Newtonian concept of linear, uniformly flowing time is not sufficient to understand living organisms and their development. It can only be applied to dead matter, which is subject to linear causality. Living organisms, on the other hand, integrate their past and future into their present life processes. They live in a time structure in which an unconscious continuation of the past and an equally unconscious influence of the future are always effective in the present. Biological time is therefore integrative time, it is anamnestic, actual and proleptic (anticipatory) at the same time (Weizsäcker, 1942). "... dann ist Vergangenheit beständig, das Künftige voraus lebendig, der Augenblick ist Ewigkeit" (then the past is constant, the future ahead is alive, the moment is eternity), Goethe says accordingly. The Newtonian understanding of time, on the other hand, destroys the concept of biological time and thus the concept of the organism in general.

In order to understand organic development, the

abstract idea of time as a constant measure and medium for change must be replaced by a phenomenological understanding of time (Hueck, 2023). Without change, we would not experience time at all and would therefore have no conception of it. We must therefore look at time not "from the outside" and abstractly, but "from the inside" and concretely, i.e. our inner experience of time. Such phenomenological studies will be supplemented with studies of selected philosophical texts by Goethe, Immanuel Kant and Edmund Husserl.

In the new university, this understanding will be taught through phenomenological observations of developing organisms, first-person-perspective phenomenology of time-consciousness, and its meditative exploration.

When we look at experienced time, three different types immediately stand out: (1) The unchanging past, which is present through memory; (2) the present, in which we perceive the world and ourselves in it; and (3) the future, which is not realised yet but which is present in our more or less unconscious expectation. (The present moment, by the way, is not an "expansionless point" for human experience, but a period of 2-3 seconds, which is roughly the length of a breath [Pöppel, 1984]). Finally, the experience of time presupposes that something remains unchanging in the flow of change: the



cognising subject. For it is the "I" that remembers, perceives and expects. Without a continuous I-consciousness, one could not have time-consciousness, because one would simply swim along with the flow of time.

A phenomenological experience of time leads to a concept of a double stream of time: From the past into the future and from the future into the past. One can visualise these two currents by two arrows pointing in opposite directions. The present moment is the meeting of these two currents, of what has already become and what is continually becoming. The full characteristics of the present also include the encounter of the "I" and the world, which are "perpendicular" to the time dimension of the "double current". This figure of the cross in a circle symbolises the structure of the conscious experience of the soul. (The figure is an old structure which also resembles the four causes of Aristotle (Hueck, 2024).

Interestingly, the inner qualitative experience of time corresponds exactly to the living structure of an organism. Living beings always originate from the past in which they (or their ancestors) came into being; they always appear as presently perceptible forms in relation to their environment; and they carry their own future of development within them. Finally, they have an unchanging essence (at least in foreseeable periods of time), their species. Just as the I remains always the I, so the rose is always a rose, whether as a seed, a seedling, a sprouting, flowering or fruiting plant.

Through the inner observation of the experience of time, therefore, qualities of life can be explored, opening up avenues of further phenomenological exploration of the living. ≈

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THE UNIVERSITY AND FINDING THE SPIRIT

Rudolf Steiner

Young people at the universities are seeking for something. This is not surprising, for their purpose in going to university is to seek for something. They have been looking in those who taught them, for real leaders, for those who were both teachers and leaders or—as would be equally correct—teachers endowed with leadership, and they did not find them. And this was the really terrible thing clothed in all kinds of different words—one man speaking conservatively, the other radically, one saying something very wise and another something very stupid. What was said amounted to this: We can no longer find any teachers.

What, then, did youth find when they came to the universities? Well, they met men in whom they did not find what they were looking for. These men prided themselves on not being teachers any longer, but investigators, researchers. The universities established themselves as institutes for research. They were no longer there for human beings, but only for science. And science led an existence among people which it defined as “objective.” It drummed into people, in every possible key, that it was to be respected as “objective” science. It is sometimes necessary to express such things pictorially. And so this objective science was now going about among

human beings but it most certainly was not a human being! Something non-human was going about among men, calling itself “Objective Science.”

This could be perceived in detail, over and over again. How often is it not said: This or that has been discovered; it already belongs to science. And then other things are added to science and these so-called treasures of science become an accumulation, something which has acquired, step by step, this dreadful objective existence among mankind. But human beings do not really fit in with this objective creature who is strutting around in their midst, for true and genuine humanness has no kinship with this cold, objective, bolstered-up creature. True, as time has gone on, libraries and research institutes

have been established. But the young, especially, are not looking for libraries

or research institutes. They are looking in libraries for—it is almost beyond one to say the word—they are looking for human beings—and they find, well, they find librarians! They are looking in the scientific institutes for men filled with enthusiasm for wisdom, for real knowledge, and they find, well, those who are usually to be found in

laboratories, scientific institutes, hospitals and the like. The old have

accustomed themselves to being so easy-going and phlegmatic that they really do not want to be there at all in person—only their institutes and libraries must be there. But the human being cannot bring this about. Even if he tries not to be there, he is there nevertheless, working not through the reality that lives in him as a human being, but through a leaden heaviness in him.

“It is now very difficult to speak about wisdom in the university, for modern science is not wisdom, rather mostly operational knowledge. If we do not establish a sapiential dimension of academic life, if we do not seek truth that is embedded in wisdom, if we do not seek “illumination,” as the Oxford motto has it, we shall fail.”

N. Lobkowitz, “Man, pursuit of truth, and the university,” in *The Western University on Trial*, University of California Press, Berkeley. 1983. p.37.

In the nineteenth century it showed itself through a particular phenomenon in a significant way. When anyone with a little imagination cast an eye over the higher forms of culture in recent centuries, he made acquaintance at every turn with this objective creature "Science," which came upon the scene in many different guises but claimed always to be the one and only genuine, objective science. And having made its acquaintance, having this objective science continually introduced to one, one perceived that another being had stolen away bashfully, because she felt that she was no longer tolerated. And if one were spurred on to speak with this being, secretly in the corner, she said: "I have a name which may not be uttered in the presence of objective science. I am called Philosophy, Sophia—Wisdom. But having the ignominious prefix 'love' I have attached to me something that through its very name is connected with human inwardness, with love. I no longer dare to show myself. I have to go about bashfully. Objective science prides itself on having nothing of the 'philo' in its makeup. It has also lost, as a token, the real Sophia. But I go about nevertheless, for I still bear something of the sublime within me, connected with feeling and with a genuinely human quality."

This is a picture that often came before the soul, and it expressed an undefined feeling in countless young people during the last twenty or thirty years.

People have been trying to find forms of expression—for as there are forms of expression for the life of thought, so too for the life of feeling—they have always been trying to find expressions for what they were seeking. Possibly the most zealous, who felt the greatest warmth of youth, broke out into the vaguest expressions because all they really knew was: We are seeking for something. But when they came to express what it was that they were seeking, it was nothing, a Nothingness. In reality, the

Nothingness was, as in the words of Faust, the "All," but it presented itself as a Nothingness. It was a question of crossing an abyss. Such was the feeling, and it still is the feeling today. It can only be understood as part of history, but history in a new, not old sense.



In ancient Greece nobody would have known how to speak about objective science. How did man express his relation to the world? By reference to spiritual vision he spoke of Melpomene, of Urania, and so on; of the "Liberal Arts". These Liberal Arts were not beings who went about on the earth, but for all that they were real. Even in the age of philosophy, the Greek's experience of his connection with the spiritual world was concrete. The Muses were genuinely loved; they were real beings with whom man was related and had intercourse. Homer's words: "Sing, O Muse, of the wrath of Peleus' son, Achilles" were not the mere phraseology they are thought to be by modern scholars. Homer felt himself a kind of chalice and the Muse spoke out of him as a higher manhood enfilled him.

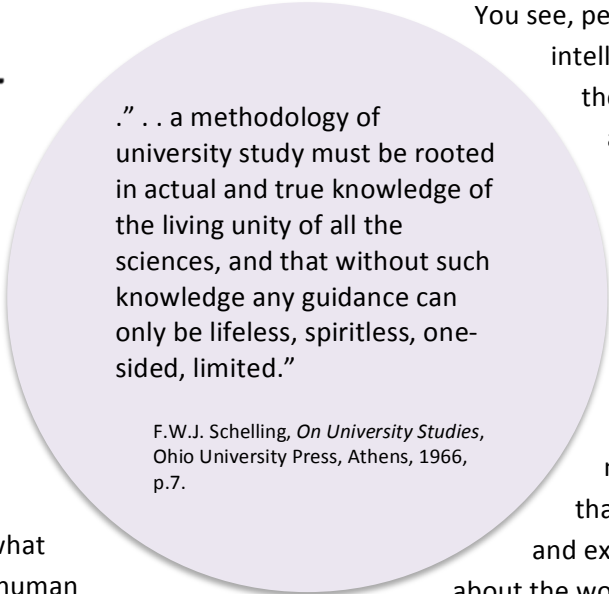
Klopstock was unwilling to speak in the phrases which were already prevalent in the world into which he was born; he said: "Sing, immortal Soul, of sinful man's redemption." But this "immortal soul" too has disappeared little by little. It was a slow and gradual process. In the first centuries of Christendom we find that the once concrete Muses had become dreadfully withered ladies! Grammar, Dialectic, Rhetoric, Arithmetic, Geometry, Astrology, Music—they had lost all concrete reality. Boethius makes them appear almost without distinct features. It is impossible to love them any longer. But even so they are buxom figures in comparison with the objective science that goes about as a being among men today. Little by little the human being has lost the connection he had in olden

times with the spiritual world. This was inevitable because he had to develop to full freedom in order to shape all that is human out of himself. This has been the challenge since the fifteenth century, but it was not really felt until the end of the nineteenth and particularly in the twentieth century. For now, not only was the inheritance lost but the traditions too. Fathers had nothing to tell their sons. And now the feeling was: We are facing a Nothingness. People began to sense: The earth has in fact become new.

To give a picture of what Waldorf (Steiner) education is, we must say that it speaks quite differently from the way in which people speak elsewhere in the sphere of education: Waldorf school education is not a pedagogical system but an art—the art of awakening what is actually there within the human being. Fundamentally, the Steiner school does not want to educate, but to awaken. For an awakening is needed today. First of all, the teachers must be awakened, and then the teachers must awaken the children and the young people.

An awakening is needed, now that mankind has been cut off from the stream of world-evolution in general. In this moment humanity fell asleep—you will not be surprised that I use this expression. They fell asleep, just as a hand goes to sleep when it is cut off from the circulation of the body. But you might say: But human beings have made such progress since the fifteenth century, they have developed such colossal cleverness, and, moreover, are aware of the colossal cleverness they have developed. If the [First World] War had not come—which, by the

way, was not the experience that it might have been, although people did realise to a slight extent that they were not so very clever after all—heaven knows to what point the phrase, “We have made such splendid progress” would have got. It would have been unendurable! Certainly in the sphere of the intellect tremendous progress has been made since the fifteenth century. But this intellect has something dreadfully deceptive about it.



“ . . . a methodology of university study must be rooted in actual and true knowledge of the living unity of all the sciences, and that without such knowledge any guidance can only be lifeless, spiritless, one-sided, limited.”

F.W.J. Schelling, *On University Studies*, Ohio University Press, Athens, 1966, p.7.

You see, people think that in their intellects they are awake. But the intellect tells us nothing about the world. It is really nothing but a dream of the world. In the intellect, more emphatically than anywhere else, man dreams and because objective science works mostly with the intellect that is applied to observation and experiment, it too dreams about the world. It all remains a dreaming. Through the intellect man no longer has an objective relation with the world. The intellect is the automatic momentum of thinking which continues long after man has been cut off from the world. That is why human beings of the present day, when they feel a soul within them, are seeking again for a real link with the world, a re-entrance into the world. If up till the fifteenth century men had positive inheritances, so now they are confronting a “reversed” inheritance, a negative inheritance.

Only the spirit can open the shutters, for otherwise they will remain tightly shut. Objective science—I cast no reproaches, for I am not overlooking its great merits—will, in spite of everything, leave these shutters tightly closed.

Science is only willing to concern itself with the earthly. But since the fifteenth century the forces which can awaken human beings have disappeared. The awakening must be sought within the human being himself, in the super-earthly. This is indeed the deepest quest, in whatever forms it may appear. Those who speak of something new and are inwardly earnest and sincere should ask themselves: "How can we find the unearthly, the super-sensible, the spiritual, within our own beings?" This need not again be

clothed in intellectualistic forms. Truly it can be sought in concrete forms, indeed it must be sought in such forms ... "How can we find the spirit which, out of the forces of the present time, is working in us? How can we find this spirit?" ≈

Excerpted from: Rudolf Steiner, "The Younger Generation", GA 217, Lecture 4th October, 1922.

LINKS AND INITIATIVES

This space in future editions will be reserved for news, relevant links and outlines of initiatives.

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MISSION STATEMENT OF THE NEWLETTER

To help develop an international community of people together striving to shape a new kind of university. **Please share this newsletter widely.**

To share insights and information which will help to develop the content, methods and organisational principles of this kind of university

BACKGROUND – ON THE EVOLUTION OF THE UNIVERSITY

The university, since its inception in the medieval people, has become a central organ of the cultural and spiritual life of society. It has been called a "little city", a melting pot for new ways of thinking and for shaping the world creatively.

All knowledge in the medieval university was unified by faith in a transcendent God. During the time of Renaissance humanism, and later in the early-modern Kantian and Humboldtian universities, the human rational faculty became seen as the unifying power. The university came to be thought of as a centre for universal knowledge. The modern university can better be called a "multi-versity"; faith in God or the rational striving toward the universality of knowledge is not its central concern. It is essentially materialistic in outlook, serving mainly practical ends through its teaching and research.

SHAPING A NEW FORM OF UNIVERSITY

This means stepping toward a future in which the university is completely free of the state –

financially, in terms of course content, and in relation to the awarding of degrees. This freedom is the responsibility and duty of this central organ of the cultural-spiritual sphere of the threefold social organism; it is already recognised in academic freedom. Ways this freedom can be further achieved can be discussed and advanced through this newsletter.

Following the indications of Rudolf Steiner, the aim of lower and higher schooling is not to educate but to awaken – to help awaken the modern human being to the spirit, the spirit working in the human being itself. What can be achieved at the tertiary level will fructify the whole field of education into the future.

Thus we can state boldly: the aim of the new university is to help open the “eye of the spirit” to the working of creative spirit in all forms of nature and the human world. In every faculty, in every aspect of teaching and researching, the task will be to advance human life towards an understanding of the world as a manifestation of spirit.

For this reason the orientation of the new university is fundamentally phenomenological. This is the method which is taught, guided and inspired by what others have perceived in this way. Modern individuals need to learn to see for themselves.

Seeing is grounded in physical perception, in what appears to us in the world (phenomenon literally means – “what appears”). But physical appearance hides what is invisible and essential. When teaching and researching focuses one-sidedly on the physical we have everything technical, the approach which considers what is “real” as only observable, empirical phenomena. Academic thinking then becomes highly materialistic and objective. However, when teaching and learning reaches through what appears to us physically, it rises to the artistic through a “knowing of the heart”. In the works of the later Heidegger and the later Merleau-Ponty we have the vision of the invisible within the visible. We find that “more appears than appears to appear”.* The appearance hides the innate idea (*eidōs*) which may nevertheless come to presence through the pathway of phenomenology; this innate idea Plato equated with *to ekphanestaton* (“what properly shows itself as the most radiant of all is the beautiful”).

The new university is focused on a highly practical, applied phenomenology, on all the phenomena which come within the scope of the different faculties. Different minerals and soil forms; plants and animals; the forms and structures of the human body and human consciousness; the different stages in the growth of children, their different soul gestures and temperaments; all the disease and health appearances; social forms and social processes – and so on. For this advanced practical phenomenology, we look mainly to the indications of German philosopher and artist Rudolf Steiner, who in turn drew greatly on the artistic phenomenological natural science of the poet Johann von Goethe.

Editor

* R. Bernasconi, “The Good and the Beautiful” in *Phenomenology in Practice and Theory*, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, Dordrecht, 1985, pp.179-184.

