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## Rezension / Book review

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Edited by Angelika Wiehl and Michael Zech:

*Jugendpädagogik in der Waldorfschule. Ein Studienbuch / A Pedagogy of Youth in Waldorf Education.*

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Youth today is the focus of the most profound changes occurring in social, economic, political and medial life. In numerical terms (half the world population is under 25) but also in terms of significance for the future development of human societies, youth is vitally important social group. Therefore, this book offers a much needed and important pedagogical perspective. It gathers together a number of key passages from Rudolf Steiner's lectures on the theme of youth pedagogy and frames these with a concise but important discussion of key issues. Though the collection restricts itself to a selection of Steiner's texts on youth, it also draws on a comprehensive body of literature on youth and youth pedagogy in the introduction. It seeks to locate Steiner's radical and innovative thoughts about youth within the context of his overall pedagogical anthropology and his historical context and highlights with a sharp awareness the social, economic, medial and ecological world that youth is embedded in today and that pedagogy has to take into account. In particular, the authors highlight Steiner's significant contribution to the historical development of a cultural consciousness for the specific developmental tasks of youth.

The book is aimed essentially at student teachers and teachers within the Waldorf community, but will also be of interest to students of Waldorf pedagogy in any context. The authors briefly survey and summarize the secondary literature on Waldorf youth pedagogy in the German language, and offer a comprehensive bibliography. As a text that locates itself within the Waldorf discourse, it nevertheless does more than

practice immanent hermeneutics, a term that Bo Dahlin (Dahlin, 2017) rightly applies to characterize most Waldorf/Steiner secondary literature, which interprets Steiner within Steiner's terms. Both authors have recently made significant contributions to the academic discourse on Waldorf pedagogy and are well aware of the challenges involved (Wiehl, 2015; Zech, 2012). They belong to, and in many ways as authors and editors, lead the current generation of academic research within the Waldorf movement.

Angelika Wiehl and Michael Zech have done more than simply publish an anthology of Steiner texts- we have had these before. They have carefully pursued an important pedagogical agenda. In chapter four the authors turn to the challenges facing youth in the present and future and they summarize the key pedagogical and learning processes connected with teaching youth, with sections on the phases of learning how to form judgements. They point towards the vital tasks facing youth education.

It may surprise many non-specialist readers that the notion of youth as a specific phase of the life-course was unknown before 1900 in Western industrialised countries and remained unused elsewhere well into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (Hurrelmann & Quenzel, 2012). The biological changes associated with youth, collectively referred to as puberty, however, have probably been around as long as humanity, though maturation may have occurred earlier among early humans (Lieberman 2013). Indeed, throughout human history, most people actively shaping society were young because life expectancies were much

shorter (Bainbridge, 2009). It's a little reflected fact that most of the great cultural achievements of our ancestors were performed by a youthful population. As far as we know, most cultures have celebrated the significant transition to and acceptance into the adult world through major coming-of-age rites and rituals. Yet there seems to have been little cultural recognition of youth as a significant phase between childhood and adulthood, and even children were often seen as smaller, weaker, less capable people. Historically, the development of modern, urban industrial societies led to longer life-courses due to increased longevity, public education, greater specialization in work and greater interest in social engineering (which could be best applied between childhood and adulthood, examples being the Boy Scout movement, and later the Hitler Jugend/ Bund deutsche Mädels). This led to the construction of the significance of a life stage between childhood and adulthood, which was marked in gender specific ways, but involved the completion of education and training leading to employment and thus to relative economic independence and starting a family. The authors of the well-known Shell Youth Study, a major empirical survey of youth in Germany conducted every four years (Albert, Quenzel, & Hurrelmann 2015), point out that the life-phase of youth now spans the ages from 10 years to 26 years and is rising. Indeed, certain traits of youthfulness have become the marketed ideal for people of all ages to strive towards.

The term adolescence was coined in 1904 by G. Stanley Hall, who founded the influential *American Journal of Psychology*. Today Youth Studies comprises several academic disciplines ranging across psychology, sociology, medicine, education and social care (Furlong 2013). Steiner was one of the first to develop a pedagogy for youth that treated the developmental processes involved not simply as a prolonged transition to adulthood but as a life phase with its own developmental tasks and opportunities. If a prolonged childhood made human learning possible in evolutionary terms, the period of youth, with its 'profound metamorphosis', enables young people to develop the powers of judgement and new capabilities that make social renewal and innovation possible in modern, individualistic societies. The new demands on individuals in modern and post-modern societies create new developmental tasks for youth. The selected texts and commentary highlight how holistic Steiner's view of youth was, in correlating

bodily change with changes in the mind, use of language, the nature of learning and identity. Youth has the potential to change society that no other age group has. That is why young people need to be allowed to develop whatever is within them, rather than being shaped by 'society's pliers' (Bob Dylan) into what the existing structures want them to be, in order that they can perpetuate the status quo and serve existing neoliberal economic structures. As Dahlin (Dahlin, 2010) points out, Steiner's notion of democratic education was based on a preparation for responsible citizenship but more radically on the notion that the renewal of the social order depends on the rising youth generation being allowed to develop what is within them, rather than the state or the economy prescribing what pupils should learn and become. Only then will the creative energy and ideas required to solve the crisis of capitalism through the development of an empowered civil society (Steiner, 1985).

Not only is youth a relatively recent historical construct but the developmental tasks it was supposed to meet, have changed or disappeared. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century most people's lives followed clear and specific trajectories determined by gender, social class, ethnic origin, religion and wealth. By the end of that century Western societies had entered what the sociologist Zygmund Bauman (Bauman, 2000) called liquid modernity- liquid because the structuring structures that shaped peoples' life-courses had become mutable and fluid. The term life-course refers to the way a person's life is shaped by institutions, work, career, family structures, the place where you live and the communities you belong to. Traditional roles and role models are no longer there for most people.

The sociologist Ulrich Beck (Beck, 1992) described this process as a *de-traditionalisation* (*Ent-Traditionalisierung*) and an increasing *individualisation* of people's life-courses. Instead of relative certainty, life was increasingly characterized by risk. Most traditional working class or middle class pathways from youth to adulthood lost their clarity. Erik Erikson (Erikson, 1968) recognized the cultural significance of youth and the quest for adult identities. Havighurst (Havighurst, 1982) defined the age-specific developmental tasks for youth, transmitted by socialization agents such as family, peer groups and schools, as a status passage in which the young person prepared for adulthood. The successful fulfilment of these

tasks would lead to a socially normative adulthood. However, the context of these models was post Second World War affluent America. From the 1970s onwards, those social structures no longer pertained and industrial countries began to lose their major industries and their traditional workplaces. What replaced these were the service and information industries, which do not offer the same life-long jobs and security.

Youth became emergent adulthood (Arnett, 2004), as the developmental tasks changed and the criteria for becoming an adult became more fluid. Hurrelmann and Quenzel (Hurrelmann & Quenzel 2013) have redefined the developmental tasks for youth today as, becoming qualified, committing to a gender identity, establishing one's role as a consumer with a lifestyle and participation in political life with a set of values and norms. Adolescence and adulthood had coalesced, with adulthood retaining many youthful characteristics.

The metaphors chosen to describe the challenges of youth today are 'navigation' and 'orientation': Individuals are increasingly required to find their own way through the uncharted waters of post-modern society. On the one hand, education increasingly infantilizes young people by its efforts at total control (Biesta, 2013), and on the other the media treats them as consumers with choice. The economy doesn't actually need most of them in an age of automation, except as low-paid, disposable service workers. Yet they are driven to acquire ever more, higher qualifications. There are already a lot of disappointed, dislocated, disaffected young people and there will be many more, with all the risks of alienation that that brings.

What youth has to deal with today is unprecedented. Zygmund Bauman (Bauman, 2008), with his unerring sense for appropriate metaphors, speaks of the biographical task of youth today being that of a life-artist, designing an individual life path and life-style. "To practice the art of life, to make one's life a 'work of art', amounts in our liquid modern world to being in a state of permanent transformation, to perpetually self-redefine through becoming (or at least trying to become) someone other than one has been so far" (2008, p. 72). This is not simply a life-style option for artists and the idle rich, but a necessity for all, because "the volatility, vulnerability and frailty of every and any identity burdens the identity-seeker with

duty of attending daily to the chores of identification" (2008, p.78).

Lothar Böhnisch (Böhnisch, 2012) points out from the perspective of social pedagogy, that many youths today are left to engage with the dynamic social tensions and social injustices in their private lives that were once fought out in public life between large social groups such as trades unions, political parties or religious groups. And they have to do this with very little help in the way of navigation, cultural maps or role models. Thomas Ziehe (Ziehe, 2009) speaks of a *post-de-traditionalisation* situation, in which youth turn away from society, seeking virtual worlds, whilst striving for the kind of bourgeoisie stability, conformism and conservatism that their more progressive parents and grandparents actively rejected. They no longer protest, they chill and consume. They go along with education, though most experience school primarily as the place to meet friends (Illeris 2014), but remain detached and dislocated from the inner commitment that post-modern reflexivity demands. Perhaps the most appropriate metaphor for the human condition of many young people today is that of the refugee, most of whom are indeed youths, forced to leave their homes, families, cultures, roles, identities and make their way in an unsympathetic world. Many of those not fleeing war and poverty are refugees from reality. These are the dimensions of youth today and thus any pedagogy of youth has to engage with this context. As the texts in this book show, Steiner opened a window to the hitherto unknown inner world of youth, but that is actually just the start of an inquiry that in Waldorf pedagogy often has an aspirational character. Could it be that many young people in Waldorf upper schools feel comfortable but not challenged, except in terms of grades? The need for a critical, self-confident, politically astute generation capable of thinking for themselves was never greater!

Gerd Biesta (Biesta, 2013) has offered us a useful model to analyse the function of schools. He speaks of the tasks of socialization, of enabling young people to be able to participate in and contribute to an increasingly complex, inter-cultural social life. Whilst much socialization occurs in the home and social milieu, school has an increasing responsibility to enable integration, narrative empathy and intercultural and cosmopolitan capabilities, conflict avoidance and resolution skills. The second task of education

is to enable young people to qualify themselves to participate in and contribute to civil society and the economy by learning the skills they need to contribute to a fairer, more ecological world. The third task is to facilitate what Biesta calls subjectivity, that is, becoming a socially responsible person capable of ethical behaviour and autonomous judgement.

The editors of this book have placed the educational function of recognising, enabling and facilitating young people become subjects- in the German text they use Steiner's term- becoming an I (Ich-werden)- at the centre of Steiner's youth pedagogy. Supporting the development of the person (subject, self, I, individuality, personality - we have many words for this locus of agency and responsibility, all of which need to be carefully defined in context) is a central aim of Waldorf pedagogy and especially in youth. This is the guiding motif throughout the choice of texts. It may be a taken-for-granted notion among Waldorf folk, that the function of education is to enable the development of the person, but what does that actually mean in pedagogical situations?

As Waldorf practitioners, we need to beware of two things. The first is that we avoid conflating individuality with neoliberal notions of the individual as a self-reliant, self-managing, self-determining, self-contained, 'dislocated self' (Taylor, 1989). Doesn't the Waldorf discourse in its commitment to an essentialized, Western, humanist notion of the I as the spiritual core of Being sometimes lead us to the view that "individual actors form the basic atoms of social life. Each of us acts according to internal dictates of cognition, emotion, motivation...each of us is responsible for his or her actions"(Gergen, Lightfoot, & Sydow, 2004), p. 392). The subject - Biesta's term for the individual- is a social being who can only come into being as self through the Other. In Biesta's terms, and he draws closely on Hannah Arendt's notion of natality and Emmanuel Levinas' notion of the being through the Other, the subject is called into being through the Other.

Secondly, we should be careful not to limit our understandings of learning and development to the acquisition of knowledge and skills within a 'natural' developmental framework.

Steiner based his pedagogy, including his notion of learning and development, on his theory of knowledge and social ethic (Wagemann 2016). Knowing is

a form of learning that involves the whole person in a creative and productive engagement with the world. Because of its relational nature, learning is both epistemological and ontological. Through the learning process the I comes progressively into being in the world.

As my own research with young people in Waldorf settings has shown (Rawson, 2017), they are very capable of identifying what has enabled them to not only construct clear identities but also show the qualities of agency, reflection, narrative empathy, biographical learning that mark out what becoming a subject means. What this study highlighted was the importance of scaffolded reflection, using journals, artistic methods, narrative and creative writing in supporting this process. As Biesta argues, subjectivity is a process of being called into being. In encountering the Other (in person, art, in natural phenomena) the person is called into being. Such encounters are events that cannot be planned. However, teachers can create learning situations in which they are more likely to occur and they can recognize them as significant and valorize them when they do. In order to do this, teachers need to understand and value the function of subjectivity and they need to be honest in reflecting on their practice to identify what fosters and what hinders, what compartmentalizes or marginalizes subjectivity as the coming into being of the person/subject or I.

The elephant in the room in youth pedagogy in Waldorf schools that hardly anyone really wants to talk about in the light of 100 years of Waldorf pedagogy, is the *lack* of Waldorf pedagogy in the upper schools. There is no research on this, but anecdotal evidence is suggestive. These authors do not address this directly. They make no polemic statements. What they *do* do, however, is to remind us what Steiner's pedagogical intentions in this respect were. They illuminate exactly the key ideas that are necessary for a meaningful youth pedagogy by careful selection and commentary.

In the study I referred to above (Rawson, 2017), the participants primarily identified informal learning situations that involved encounters with authentic practices outside the normal school timetable, as biographically relevant situations in which they were challenged and as situations in which they themselves could determine and shape what they did. These did not include most of the main academic subjects that

grace the upper school curriculum. The analysis suggested that for these students in that school at that time, such subjects were not experienced as existentially relevant, even though they were manifestly important for passing exams, which are seen in a taken-for-granted way as necessary tasks in the lifecourse, but are not experienced as developmental tasks they choose out of their intrinsic, existential interests and creativity to give expression of their subjectivity, their I.

As Marx and others have pointed out, when the human spirit experiences that the fruits of its creativity are being instrumentalized to perpetuate a system over which they have no control, this manifests in alienation. There is a mild degree of alienation, in which these young people do not experience such learning as expansive in the sense that it enhances their personal needs for learning (Grotlüschen, 2004, 2015), nor does it offer opportunities for encountering the other and coming into being because the outcomes are prescribed. This is the message of Biesta's book title, *The Beautiful Risk of Education*. An education system that infantilizes young people through the control over learning that state exams systems and education that serves them, at an age when youth

This book is comprehensive regarding Steiner's contributions to Waldorf youth studies. It offers prac-

tioners an orientation in Steiner's foundational theory about youth, which can be a basis of generative principles for engaging in pedagogical research. The commentary texts also offer a vital link to contemporary issues of youth. This book should usher in a new chapter of Waldorf youth studies, not in the sense of further immanent hermeneutic studies of the Waldorf High School curriculum. What I am referring to is a whole series of issues within Waldorf youth studies that now need to be developed out of Steiner's foundational ideas. These include, the relationship of young people to language during puberty and adolescence and in particular the spiritual implications of this in the context of changes in the dominant forms of communication, contemporary literature, film and the role of language in advertising. Other areas include art, drama, foreign languages, work experience, projects, media studies, ecology, intercultural education, political and economic education, and issues about how learning situations can be arranged to engage different abilities and interests (integration and differentiation), or indeed the ongoing adaptation of the curriculum to meet changing conditions and in different cultures. This book provides I believe the not-so-hidden agenda of the authors was to prompt, not a return to the roots, but more of a question: and what are we doing in the field of youth pedagogy, given the situation of youth that Steiner developed?

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