

Rudolf Steiner University College

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Pushing the boundaries!

The role of the inner practising
for the profession of the Steiner-Waldorf teacher

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”But that is just the idea of whole evolution: it always surpasses earlier achievements. It always strives to fight for new boundaries, and then it fights with an equivalent fury to break them, surpass them, move beyond them towards more comprehensive, more perfect, and more integrated forms.”

Ken Wilber: A brief history of everything

Abstract

This is a practise-based phenomenological-hermeneutic study of the role of inner practising in balancing and renewing the inner life of a teacher. By inner practising I mean consciously active will for inner development, consciously decided and committed striving for surpassing oneself. Synonyms for inner practising could be inner work or inner schooling, but by inner practising the leading principle is the process itself. The purpose of this study was to find out, what kind of experiences teachers have about inner practising and how do they reflect their experiences regarding the challenges, the processes and the consequences. There has also been an attempt to find the connection between inner practising and Steiner-Waldorf- education (later SW-education). This has happened through the literature review and through presenting the experiences of the teachers. The practising and the experiences connected to practising has been a phenomenon that has been approached through self-reflection, interviews, writing and keeping diary. To the phenomenological approach hasn't only belong 'pure observing' the experiences but also the practising itself as a way to get into the experiences. Also the hermeneutical way of trying to interpret and understand the constantly 'escaping' experiences has required practising in order not to fall into preconceived ideas. As a result there are some realizations of the transforming power of practising for the being and the work of a teacher. Understanding the meaning of inner practising for example in the everyday work of a teacher and in teacher training could be the next step.

Key concepts: inner practising, self-education, meditation, Steiner-Waldorf school, education, teacher.

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Foreword

This is a study about inner practising, i.e. aiming at nurturing development by doing inner exercises like concentration and meditation. In short the idea of this study is to investigate what happens in teacher through inner practising, how the hidden potentials and possibilities can develop for the benefit of the pupils.

My work is based on over 20 years of inner practising with the exercises and ideas of Rudolf Steiner. As well as on questions that have risen in me during my almost 20 years as a Steiner – Waldorf teacher (later SW-teacher), such as how does the life of inner practising relate not only to the everyday life of a teacher but also to the education itself?

My motivation to do this study is on the one hand to try to find the words to describe both my experiences in these realms and my reflections that sprout from these experiences, and on the other hand to try to understand other peoples' experiences and reflections through interviewing them. My insights of the human being, life and its meaning in the world are biased, schooled and deepened through my inner practising. This is a study of what inner practising is and what the possible consequences of it are.

As a teenager I felt a longing and willingness to learn and to develop my inner being or spirituality. There were some dim ideals about a better human being. There was something resembling a 'holy restlessness' in me, ready to do something, especially inwardly.

It was a real moment of awakening when I first met the idea of 'a practising human being' through reading about it. I felt immediately that this was a part of my life. Finally I had the tools that I could work with. These great ideas were like revelations:

One can practise everything.

One can meditate everything.

Through practising one grows in inner power.

Through practising one is more for the service for the world.

These were for me the inspiring insights that fulfilled my ideals about life. Suddenly there opened up infinite possibilities to develop, to surpass the limits of my inner life that were stopping me from

finding out what I really am and cast stones on my path to self-realization. I experienced that the content of meditation could be any detail of the inner life and there were no boundaries that my consciousness cannot surpass.

I understood only later that by deciding to start to practise I also decided to live my life more strongly and deeply and to become as free as possible through becoming conscious and to meet myself as I am – whatever I am. I made a deal with my life; this was my way of being faithful to me: one cannot really be happy without consciously trying to know oneself.

But this growth is not for oneself: “Self-perfection is by no means self-seeking, for the imperfect man is an imperfect servant of the world and of humanity. The more perfect a man is, the better does he serve the world.” (Steiner, 1987, p 117) This meant to me and it still means: make yourself more perfect, practise!

Above quoted words touched my will in a way nothing ever had before: one could make oneself more perfect for the world. The devotional ideal to be a better servant for the world, a Christian: forgetting oneself and doing ones work with devotion. This experience Mother Teresa describes “call inside the call.” (Vardey, 1997, p 21) First one has a calling to become a teacher, then one has “call inside the call” to become a better teacher in order to help the pupils more.

I have felt this like a silent cry in pupils: Free me from my one-sidedness. Help me to surpass myself. Help me to develop my potentials. Help me to overcome my hindrances to learn and to develop. Help me to find my way to be a real human being, to become what I really am.

This cry awakes a servant-question: What can I do for you?

This is why practising has become my passion.

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1 Introduction

One of the important ethical concepts of Aristotle is *eudemonia* (Aristotle, 2005). It is usually translated ‘happiness’ or ‘good life’. Eudemonia is seen as the final goal of human striving. A Finnish philosopher Eero Ojanen writes about eudemonia: “The highest good of every creature is the full development of its possibilities” (2005, p 150-151; my translation).

This idea of the human being, as a developing or evolving self is the main thread of this study. In every human there are potentials and possibilities that she is mostly not conscious of. “a human being is not just something you automatically *are*, it is also something you must try to *be*” (Van Manen, 1990, p 5; author’s italics). The project to become a human, to consciously develop these potentials, is for me an inspiring idea, especially when I have looked at its values, methods, challenges, aims, and possible consequences more closely.

This is a study of inner practising. By inner practising I mean consciously active will for inner development, consciously decided and committed. (Synonyms for inner practising could be inner work or inner schooling.) For example with ones thinking, ones attitudes and reactions, ones motivations of will and will in relation to thinking and feeling, and ones meditative activity, all with the dedicated and patient attitude of a practitioner. This attitude has always been the most important thing for me as a teacher: it is not so much about gaining something for oneself but rather about being in a constant process. The moral aspect of inner practising is that it serves a selfless purposes, its main aim is to develop oneself for the people that one works for and with.

By inner practising it’s a question of certain exercises that are part of the everyday life of many Steiner-Waldorf-educators (later SW-educators) around the world. I call the act of doing these exercises inner practising because the focus of these exercises are an inner activity and it is more question about strengthening certain inner powers and being in constant process than gaining results, not to talk about reaching any aims. The exercise can be any inner activity that one has consciously chosen, has an aim and a practising character. These exercises are like keeping oneself alive and keeping oneself in a process of becoming (as an opposite of staying as one is) or as one interviewee said: “They bring me back to myself so that I can continue my life more balanced and more human than without them.”

I will consider inner practising in the context of Steiner-Waldorf-education. My question here is how inner practising belongs to SW-education and how it might serve the inner life of a teacher,

give strength and insights, and through that become a benefit for pupils. In chapter 2 I try to show how Rudolf Steiner intended inner practising as a part of the SW-education when it was launched in 1919. Some SW-teachers before me have written about inner practising and inner development, but in general as the SW-movement has developed it would seem that this impulse hasn't stayed as clear as it was in the beginning. Even if I don't go deeper in to this development, except shortly in Discussion and reflections (See chapter 5), this observation has been one of the impulses for this study.

My question here regarding inner practising is: could inner practising be a way to become conscious about the possibilities, to develop them and become empowered by using them. To help answer this I have researched teacher's experiences and reflections regarding the aims, rewards and challenges by doing inner practising. One of the intentions of this study is to reflect how inner practising could be part of the life of a SW-teacher and show how it would be possible that teachers can find their individual way to inner practising. In order to get closer to this aim I have tried to be as inspiring and convincing as possible in my writing.

Inner development is one part of anthroposophy which is in turn the impulse of SW-education. I have tried to show the connection between these two in chapter 2. There I have raised some views about self-education as an inner developmental striving of a SW-teacher. I have also briefly introduced the literature of inner practising by Steiner and others. At the end of that chapter I have taken out some examples of exercises given by Steiner, and illustrated the inner practising of today and the context of my theme.

This is a phenomenological-hermeneutical study of inner practising. The auto ethnographic approach grows organically through the methods that I have chosen to study my theme. As methods I have used phenomenological 1st person reflections and interviews and hermeneutical writing and diary keeping.

The study aims to provide an approach through examples into the realm of inner practising. After introducing the literature and my methods I have given a taste of the world of inner practising through my and other peoples' experiences and reflections of inner practising. These examples will be discussed and reflect upon at the end of this study. I hope that this study will contribute at least something to this particular area and will maybe open up related areas for further research.

The concept 'higher knowledge' mentioned in this study means here something that is perceived but it's not visible.

1.1 Research questions

In my study I have tried to explore the nature of inner practising, how it connects to and serves the everyday life of a teacher. In this context I have mirrored the following research questions.

The main question is: What are the teacher's experiences and reflections regarding the challenges, the processes and the consequences of inner practising? The second question is what idea of human being emerges as a fruit of inner practising.

In order to answer these questions I have chosen four exercises: exercise in eurythmy, positivity, thought control, and meditation to give examples of the rich and complex world of inner practising. The presentation of these exercises is structured in three above mentioned characteristics: challenges, processes and consequences.

2 Literature review

In this chapter I will deal with the different approaches to inner practising from a literary point of view. I start with the general part that includes the developmental aspects of the human being. After that I'll take a look of the self-educational side of Steiner-Waldorf-education (later SW-education), firstly through Steiner's ideas and then by Steiner-Waldorf-teachers (later SW-teachers). After a short excursion in to the current contemplative inquiry of today I'll end with the exercises and approaches Rudolf Steiner gave. These different perspectives give a background for my attempt to investigate the nature of inner practising and how it occurs in the life of a teacher.

2.1 Some aspects of the development of a child and an adult and resistance

In this section I'll try to show how the self-education has been a part of a life of a SW-teacher since the very beginning of SW-education.

To have a picture of an infant without seeing an enormous will to practise things and an ability to learn things would be very one-sided. Without this will to develop and learn, an infant could never attain upright position, speak a language and think. (Kegan, 1982; König, 1981) In other words: one would never become a human with all its possibilities. Karl König gives in his book "Die ersten drei Jahre des Kindes" (1981) a long and detailed descriptions about every important developmental step that a small child takes in his first three years. Through these descriptions, with the child's will on the one hand and a vast openness on the other, it shows how necessary the own will is in every step. While König concentrates on the development of the small child, Robert Kegan describes in his book "The evolving self" the wide range of the various developmental aspects from physical-cognitive to social-cognitive and in the end to the "domain of self" (1982, p 72). There are stages that a human being goes through which are mainly supported from her environment (see above) but the higher a person goes (or wants to go) in her development the more she has to use her own will to reach the final stage, Kegan calls this "interindividual" (1982, p 86). This stage is characterised by qualities like autonomy and self-actualization development.

Goethe describes his view about the difference between an animal and a human being in his famous quote from the point of view of the senses: "Animals are educated by their organs; human beings educate theirs and master them." (Steiner, 2000) In its development an animal becomes mature

much faster than a human being. In human development there is retardation, a slowness of development of central nervous system (Wilenius, 1975). Important here is that the human being never actually becomes ready, in as much as a person can always become more conscious and more human and humane, not to forget that this development doesn't happen by itself, she has willed it.

Friedrich Nietzsche's picture that a human is "a rope, strained between the animal and the superhuman, - rope above abyss" (Nietzsche, 2008, p 23; my translation) may give ways to be a human: to let oneself fall or strive for more. A human being is like 'raw material' or abilities that develop further through her own will so that she can fulfil her idea as a human. Nietzsche's idea of human being between an animal and her ideal of a human being, "to bind her natural instincts and follow her ideals selflessly" (Steiner, 1963, p 39; my translation) bring out the idea of the active person. Like a conclusion Nietzsche lets Zarathustra say in his first speeches to the crowd: "A human being is something that has to surpass oneself." (Nietzsche, 2008, p 27; my translation)

A human being seems to have both: a will and willingness to learn and develop and a resistance for both of them. There are on the one hand these enormous innate powers to change according to the inner values and on the other hand the powers connected to the consciousness that wills to keep a practitioner unchanging. A person lets him/her self dive into this deepest will of developing oneself (point of evolving self) and prepares to overcome the resistance and whatever one might meet in one's developmental path. "If I use the metaphor of a sculpture, then we are at one and the same time the stubborn stone, the transforming chisel, and the artist's guiding hands. - - - it is a true continued "self-conquering"." (Zajonc, 2009, pp 33-34) Here we can see the elements of a process of being and becoming a human: the will, the inner practising and resistance.

Becoming conscious about oneself is one of the themes of inner practising. About the self-knowledge Tony Dunderfelt writes: "First it is to understand the function of one's own psyche... and second to investigate the answers to the questions like "Who am I?", "Why do I exist?", "What is my mission in life?" - - - thus clarifying the kernel of the inner nature of man and the meaning of life." (2006, pp 18-19; my translation) Another theme that belongs to inner practising and to self-knowledge is authenticity. One can ask if the process of authenticity can be compared with the process of becoming oneself. Guignon puts this in question by bringing two opposite possibilities: on the one hand 'be all you can be' and on the other hand 'self-loss or releasement' (2004, p 7).

2.2 Steiner's inner practises for the teachers

The SW-education was launched by founding the first Waldorf School in Stuttgart in September 1919. 12 years earlier Rudolf Steiner had already written 'Education of the child' which gave the basis for the later SW-education. At the founding Rudolf Steiner gave lectures and a course on the principles of the education. In one of these talks, on 26th of August 1919 Steiner (1994) introduced the idea of practising for the teachers. On that occasion it was in the form of speech exercises.

In the above mentioned lectures and talks, to the teachers of the first SW-school and also later to other teachers, Steiner gave very few concrete exercises for teachers, and then only when asked personally and these exercises were not meant for public use. Steiner's way of indicating these things was more in the form of pointing out the possible things to notice: "The child actually represents a large number of riddles and in solving these riddles one has to develop feelings that one has to carry with one into the classroom" (1990, p 68; my translation).

In his pedagogical lectures for the teachers of the first Waldorf Schools Steiner keeps on repeating the value of continuing self-education. Steiner introduces for example the seven virtues of the teacher, three inner and four outer virtues, at the end of the course for the first teachers of the Waldorf school: Imagination, Courage for the Truth, Responsibility of soul (Steiner, 1989) interest in the world, never to grow stale, no compromise with the truth, never to become sour (Steiner, 1996). A year later Steiner strongly emphasises the aspect of studying in three steps: taking in the Study of man, understanding it through meditation and remembering it. (Steiner, 1994b) The last one means that by having taken in deeply enough the first two steps and really tried to understand the evolving human being it's possible to realise them in educational deeds: "... that awakes new inner impulses." (ibid)

This gives a picture of a situation: on the one hand teachers have the materials (ideals, virtues; also meditations) to work with and on the other hand teachers are left very free to develop exercises and practise according to their individual needs and situations.

2.2.1 Self-education – a part of life as a SW-teacher

The self-educational impulse also has its roots in education in many ways. Throughout the history of mankind there has been, especially through religion, a strong impulse for self-education and ascetics. (Nouwen, 1981; Reschika, 2007) People wanted to educate themselves in order to fulfil their ideals. This idealism is and has been a part of the profession of a teacher. (Haavio, 1969;

Suhomlinski, 1977). No wonder, would it not be a misrepresentation of a teacher, if there was not any idealism in them?

Inner practising and self-education has been a conscious part of SW-education since the pedagogical impulse was launched.

In his course for the first SW-teachers in 1919, just before the first Waldorf school was about to begin, Steiner introduced the idea of practising. At the beginning of the session of the afternoon discussions (1994, pp 50-51) with teachers, 26.8.1919, Steiner brought speech exercises for the 'gymnastics of the speech organs'. This was an introduction of external practising but Steiner already saw the possibilities of practising in developing the inner abilities. The speech exercises are not only the 'gymnastics of the speech organs'.

While introducing these exercises Steiner uses, as a humorous example, the figure of Demosthenes, a Greek, 384-322 BC, the greatest and most famous orator in ancient Greece (Papadogeorgos, 2003). The thing that Demosthenes wanted the most was to become an orator in ecclesia and in order to this he had to overcome his speech impediment. But he had a will to practise: he practiced speaking clearly with small stones in his mouth. He tried to conquer the uproar of the waves of the sea with his voice. He ran uphill simultaneously reciting verses with a loud voice. At home in front of a mirror he practiced his posture and facial expressions. Not only did he become the famous orator but also a distinguished Athenian statesman. (Eslander&Hietakari, 1948)

With this example Steiner showed the way for the teachers. It is the will that can be exercised. The example of Demosthenes gives a hint of the other side of practising, namely practising things that the practitioner has no tendencies towards.

It is possible to see here how Steiner puts these ideals before the teachers in two ways: physical exercising with speech and to conquer oneself with the will, to do something that by nature one is not able to. Through this Steiner gives an insight to the teachers of how be a teacher that strives for balance in outer and inner life, the gained abilities and the abilities that have to be work for and how the will becomes stronger only by practising.

2.2.2 The self-education of a SW-teacher

“All education is basically the self-education of the human being.” (Steiner, 1991, p 131) This radical insight was and still is the basic of all SW-education. When Steiner continues, it becomes even more radical: “All education is self-education and we as teachers and educators are only the environment for the self-educating child.” (Steiner, 1991, p 131) Thus all that is left of education is

self-education. For the teachers of the first Waldorf School it was an obvious part of the life of a teacher because of the nature of SW-education. (Taskinen, 2008) The importance of a role model for a growing child was recognized. After education a pupil should be able to consciously educate herself, thus to continue doing what she has been doing through her time at school. In order to succeed with this ideal there has to be people who can show the way.

The teachers were fully aware of their direct influence on the pupils. Through the insights of Steiner's lectures the picture of human/growing child was more or less clear, and that it should lead to the individualized pedagogy.

When this is put in the larger context of SW-education, the impulse of self-education is one of the three key aspects: to practise practising; studying the development and the being of man; studying the subjects and methods. This study has mainly concentrated on the first part and partly on the second where it corresponds to the first part.

In the following section there are examples of a special area of meditative activity, a teacher's meditation. As an activity it has an even more practical approach as the former described because it is intended to be a tool for the teacher in her professional development.

2.2.3 Teacher's meditation

How can a teacher use a meditation as a tool? When the first Waldorf School was launched it was obvious to its founder Rudolf Steiner, that most teachers had, among other disciplines, meditative life. (Taskinen, 2008) Steiner saw it as an important part of the life of a teacher as well as an inseparable part of SW-education.

As Rudolf Steiner launched his impulses in different areas of the society he also gave meditations for the different groups of professionals. They were doctors, priests, curative educators and teachers. The professional meditation says already a lot about its aim: it is meant to be a tool, through which a professional can find another approach and another dimension to her work. At the same time this tool provides a way to bring a teacher, the educational work and the pupils together. For the teachers Steiner gave two meditations through which a teacher could deepen her understanding, autonomy and relationship to the pupils and content she teaches, and of herself. In other words, as Arthur Zajonc crystallizes the quality of the teacher's meditation in describing the contemplative inquiry: "Its motives are high, its methods gentle, and its interests selfless". (2009, p 179)

2.2.4 The invisible side of the education

Fritz Bohnsack brings a view of being a teacher: “that the whole person of the teacher will be ‘read’ by his pupils.” (Kiersch J. & Paschen H., 2001, p 113; my translation) Pupils are not only listening to what and how a teacher says something, but also to what she is. This meeting has a ‘being’ character that a teacher is not usually conscious about, she just ‘is’. Thus a teacher affects the pupils through her whole being, also through her inner striving and struggle. Steiner writes about the same idea with other words: “For you can only become good teachers and educators if you pay attention not merely to what you *do*, but also to what you *are*. ... the fact that man is effective in the world not only through what he does, but above all through what he is” (Steiner, 1989, p 25, author’s italics).

It is a well known experience of many teachers of how she affects the pupils through her being, especially with regard to their feelings and to their inner state such as being well rested or tired, present or absent minded etc. It is more difficult for the inner perception to sense, how through inner practising her being is different and its effects.

For example the idea of the ‘undercurrent’ relationship between the teacher and the pupils that Rudolf Steiner (1989) introduces could be experienced and felt. First he points out how the earth carries the electricity without wires and then he makes an analogue.

If you go into the school with egotistic feelings you need all kinds of wires — words — in order to make yourself understood by the children. If you have great feelings for the universe which arise from ideas such as we have discussed today, then an underground current will pass between you and the child. Then you will be one with the children. Herein lies something of the mysterious relationship between you and the children as a whole... Pedagogy must not be a science, it must be an art. And where is the art which can be learned without dwelling constantly in the feelings? But the feelings in which we must live in order to practise that great art of life, the art of education... (Steiner, 1989, p 155)

These ideas give a new accent for the impulse of the inner practising of a teacher. It means an educating of ones own being, not only of ones inner skills and abilities. At the same time it means that the responsibility towards the pupils will be more conscious, sharpened and expanded.

2.2.5 The relation between practising and ideals of a teacher

One example of the possible ideals is ‘interest’: interest for the development of the human being, for the visible and invisible being of the pupil, for the meaning of the subject and its content and for the world of today. Interest means to be inwardly active and willing to learn and also change the

view of things and in turn to also change oneself. When taking seriously the idea that pupils are able to ‘read’ what is there inside the teacher, being active and willing gives so much to ‘read’ that it has an educational value.

Through observing, studying and inner practising the teacher gains something that Steiner calls ‘educational instinct’:

If you yourselves have a well developed knowledge of the growing child, permeated by your own will and feeling, then you will be able to teach and educate well. Through an educational instinct which will awaken within you, you will be able to apply the results of this will-knowledge in the different departments of your work. But this knowledge must be truly real, which means it must rest upon a true understanding of the world of facts. (Steiner, 1989, p 130)

This is a huge step from the random way of reacting towards a sudden happening in the classroom. A teacher ‘knows’ what she is doing, thus knowing has an intuitive character but in this case the intuition is based on knowledge. It also means that a teacher has a new and open access to the source inside of oneself, as Lievegoed describes it: “Through it [inner practising] can be created moments, in which the inner voice starts to tell us much more than we knew before.” (Lievegoed, 1998, p 82; my translation) This is like ‘knowing’ while improvising (Nachmanovitch, 1990). These are the “intuitive capacities” that Schieren (2008) has described. (See chapter 2.3.)

2.3 Waldorf teachers’ reflective writings on inner practising

In the SW-education movement there are several books about inner practising for the teachers.

One of the classics is ‘Der werdende Mensch’ (Smit, 1989; translated ‘Lighting fires’ in 1991) by Norwegian teacher Jørgen Smit. In the beginning of his book Smit brings his point: a teacher has first to develop knowledge of her subject, secondly her methods but thirdly – usually unnoticed – the attitude towards life (Lebenshaltung) that “streams into the educational act” (Smit, 1989, p 9; my translation). The idea of constantly striving to become a human being comes through in his ponderings. It is possible to stay as a product of her body and environment. Or take every situation of life as a challenge and a possibility to develop oneself further (ibid, pp 14-21). It’s not only the pupils that have an endless striving and natural powers for development but the teachers can find these in themselves by taking the steps in this path Smit describes.

In his lectures ‘Henkinen koulutus ja elämäkäytäntö’ (The spiritual guidance and the practise of life) (1989b) Smit like goes further from his above mentioned book and gives practical approaches

and exercises for waking up the inner abilities such as concentration and creating inner pictures without external models. Smit describes, how the practitioner can for example notice how she is actually more egotistic than she thinks or how she has the power to surpass oneself.

Characteristically he, as a SW-teacher, points out that a “strong wish to have a recipe” (Smit, 1989b, p 51; my translation) is not adequate when it’s a question of spiritual development or SW-education because they both are in itself actually “a way of many possibilities” (ibid).

An unpublished paper by Jost Schieren (2008), ‘The establishment of intuitive abilities in pedagogy’, gives an insight into the possibilities to use a ‘higher’ ability of intuition in everyday educational work. By grasping a clear insight of this inner activity and by developing it one as a teacher has a greater possibility to create holistic and contextualized education for meaningful orientation.

During the years 1977-2004 some SW-teachers (Leber, Tautz. et al.) collected from the lectures of Rudolf Steiner and other sources (interne material never published) a collection of text that for the first time in year 1990 received the name ‘Towards the deepening of Waldorf Education’. The latest German version was published in 2004; in 2008 the Finnish version was published, which I edited and extended. In this collection of texts, verses and meditations is the kernel of inner work of the SW-teacher.

In this book there are some quotations from Steiner’s lectures in which he points out the spiritual approach to the education and teacher’s inner work to gain spiritual insights as well as to her work as a faculty member. The second part contains meditations for teachers, verses for the lessons and verses through which one can deepen ones attitude towards teaching. This book deals with the question of whether the self-educational impulse of a teacher, the spiritual side of education and individual human growth could be put into the centre of all pedagogical issues. In this book Steiner gets into the most intimate perspectives of the inner relationship between a teacher and a pupil. “... it will become clear to you with the help of meditative deepening - - - in reality something invisible in the educator educates something invisible in the pupil.” (Taskinen 2008) In this book there are ideals, verses, inner pictures and meditations.

Through the sheer courage of doing such research SW-teachers give themselves the possibility to take a path between two extremes: a tendency to keep close to traditions or to throw everything traditional away. Could meditative research bring light upon this dilemma: to see why SW-education is doing what it’s doing and also to give new and up-to-date perspectives, what is the contemporary way of working from the source?

2.4 Current literature on contemplative inquiry in higher education

In the beginning of his book 'Meditation as contemplative inquiry' Arthur Zajonc acknowledges Rudolf Steiner as "modern, scientifically orientated, and philosophically trained" (2009, p 43) and places himself "within this contemplative lineage" (ibid). The book has a strong emphasis on inner freedom, the responsibility for the world, and, instead of rules developing attitudes, taking care of inner values like compassion and love. It also strives to bring these impulses into the midst of life with a modern consciousness. In the last part of his book Zajonc states:

The motive for seeking spiritual knowledge is not idle curiosity but compassion. The proper means for mitigating suffering and collaborating in the true development of humanity must be grounded in an adequate knowledge of human nature and its full multidimensional character (Zajonc, 2009, p 153).

Zajonc also introduces some initiatives regarding the perspective of meditation: "The invaluable contribution that meditation can make to all aspects of our lives, including learning and research, has only begun to be developed and appreciated." (Zajonc, 2009, p 13) He also gives some examples of the activities that have happened in last few years in USA in this realm, mainly through characters that have personal experiences about this approach and how these people have found co-operative ways to come together on a larger scale.

These examples can only mean, even if Zajonc stresses that this work has just begun, that meditation is no longer some doubtful thing in some marginal alternative group. It can be used as a method and tool to deepening the understanding, as well as solving some present day problems that cannot be solved using intellectual thinking, for example problems in education and in the environment.

In his article 'Selbsterziehung und Lehrerbildung' (Self-education and teacher training) Fritz Bohnsack (Kiersch & Paschen 2001) describes how through self-education a teacher can find a deeper meaning and dimensions in her work. He stresses that the act of self-education is a highly individual process; there isn't any one right way to do it. He puts forward the question, what is really important in a professional teacher and what is the most important own (inner) qualification – and adds: what is the consequence of the possible answer? This short but dense article sets the question: how to find such an approach for the inner practising so that every teacher can find her own way to starting it? Because it is not only a question of how to practise, but also the reasons for practising that a teacher has to find by herself.

2.5 Steiner's general impulses for inner practising

In 1904 Rudolf Steiner published a book 'The knowledge of the higher worlds and its attainment'. The contents are mainly guidelines for spiritual development, a description of an inner path with guiding principles in life, exercises and the results of exercising. Steiner stresses in these contexts how the development that is gained through these exercises happens for the benefit of the world. "He does not learn in order to accumulate learning as his own treasure, but in order that he may devote his learning to the service of the world." (Steiner, 1987, p 21)

Rudolf Steiner's books 'Theosophy' and 'An Occult Science' both have a chapter about methods of inner development. The main aspects are the same as above mentioned but the perspective is more introductory and they give a different view to the life of practising.

Rudolf Steiner has given a rich number of exercises, verses and meditations. By reading slowly for example his book "The knowledge of the higher worlds and its attainment" which is full of implicit exercises and meditations of every level in addition to explicit exercises. Later on in this sub-chapter I'll introduce some of exercises Steiner has given. There is something in these exercises, not only for the teacher, but everyone. As I said in the introduction, I will only introduce exercises that I have personally experienced.

2.5.1 The six exercises

The six basic exercises that Rudolf Steiner has given (Steiner, 1987; Steiner, 2001; Lowndes, 1997; Lipson, 2002; Pingel, 2004) build a foundation for any further exercises, for a balanced inner life, and through that for meditative practising. To balance the one-sided tendencies that everybody more or less has and to avoid the one-sidedness in practising these six exercises are practised together. A practitioner is supposed to practise these exercises for one month at the time in order to get a real feeling of the exercise. The original German name 'Nebenübungen' (adjacent-exercises) meant that beside the *renewal* meditative praxis the practitioner benefits the *balancing* effect of these six exercises.

These exercises with their name and aim are in short:

- control of thinking – concentration, mastering the course of ones thinking
- control of will – initiative of action, mastering ones impulses of will
- equilibrium of feelings – balance of the soul, to stay above lust and sorrow
- positivity – to look at the upside, beauty and truth in all, tolerance
- freedom from prejudice – unbiased, continues to-be-open

- at the end all these together – finding different combinations of these five and practise these combinations in harmony within the same time frame to find an inner balance.

I will describe two of them closer later in this chapter.

The first three exercises one could call strengthening the thinking, willing and feeling. Everyone can find a need for practising of any of these areas: if one hasn't become conscious of this need in everyday life, one will by practising them. The following two 'social exercises' a teacher can practise for example in meeting the pupils, colleagues and parents. The last one of these six should bring these five in balance and by exercising them one can gain first an insight of ones one-sided tendencies and know what one could do about it and secondly during this process of balancing them one can practise according to the individual need in order to gain the balance.

Now will follow some analysis of the books regarding the six (basic) exercises given by Steiner. Florin Lowndes' gives his all-inclusive presentation of these exercises in his book 'Die Belebung des Herzchakra' (Lowndes 1997). After giving a detailed background Lowndes goes very precisely through each exercise with the practical point of view: what is essential according to the aim, what is there to avoid etc. Based on quotations of Steiner he develops the exercises in detail – as far as I know no-one besides him has done it so completely. For example by the exercise of control of thinking Lowndes describes a frame that a practitioner can easily follow or by positivity how a practitioner creates the positive aspects in the encounter through perception.

Michael Lipson gives in his book 'Stairway of Surprise' (Lipson, 2002) a long, life orientated descriptions of every quality (thinking, willing etc.) from literature and from his practise as a psychologist before leading the reader to the practising itself. His view is that one can develop these entirely everyday abilities infinitely to live a richer and deeper life. He names these six exercises Thinking, Doing, Feeling, Loving, Opening and Thanking and his finding ways to see the possibilities to exercise these activities gives an example of a natural way of dealing with these exercises in everyday life.

A German SW-teacher Hans-Jürgen Pingel describes his own path through Steiner's six basic exercises in his booklet 'Hinweise zu den sechs Nebenübungen des anthroposophischen Schulungsweges' (Pingel, 2004). The booklet is praxis orientated and gives detailed personal remarks about the exercises and the challenges involved in doing them, mainly using Steiner quotations to do so. Pingel points out the balancing quality of these exercises and the endless possibilities there is to develop further in each exercise. Another German SW-teacher Hans-Georg Krauch states in the beginning of his lectures 'Opettajan meditatitiivinen koulutustie' (The

meditative path of schooling of a teacher, 1993) that everything else can be more or less easily adapted from SW-education but not the meditative work, because one has to strive for one's meditative approach to both the subject and to the pupils. Krauch's approach, quoting Steiner, is intimate in relation to pupils through teacher meditation: "A teacher has to put her everyday personality aside like she would hang her raincoat on rack." (1993, p 5: my translation) Both of these booklets are challenging and encourage seeking possibilities to practise.

2.5.2 Practising positivity

An externally simple exercise Rudolf Steiner calls an exercise for positiveness; some might call it positive thinking or positive attitude. The difference is that this exercise requires a strong conscious effort in a single moment and it is not an all-inclusive attitude. "If I meet a man and blame him for his shortcomings, I rob myself of power to attain higher knowledge; but if I try to enter lovingly into his merits, I gather such power." (Steiner, 1987, p 17) The main character of this exercise is that the 'bad sides' of things don't prevent one from seeing the positive sides of the same thing (Steiner, 2001). As an exercise a practitioner tries to find one positive aspect in everything – people, things, experiences – that she meets during the day (Lowndes, 1997). What is also noticeable is that these exercises will help a practitioner to "discover, as time goes on, that these six exercises give one indirectly more than at first appears to be contained in them." (Steiner, 2001, p 227) Thus the character is changing and this change remains usually unconscious.

To remember to do an exercise as an act of will – that is a real willingness to practise. Another side is a reflection of practising: "Every moment that we set ourselves to discover in our consciousness whatever there remains in it of adverse, disparaging and critical judgement of the world and of life; every such moment brings us nearer to higher knowledge." (Steiner, 1987, p 17) Michael Lipson accomplishes this: "As with most exercises, the practise includes great deal of *not* doing. Much is achieved by restraint, by simple refraining from normal negative judgements and reactive patterns." (2002, p 86; authors italics)

This exercise of positivity is for cultivating inner life. Cultivating means: making 'culture' out of the naturally given 'raw' qualities that a human being has been born with and/or that has been developed unconsciously during life. To develop inner qualities starts with bringing the consciousness inside the soul and to mirror the inner life through values. This mirroring may lead to certain contradictory feelings because the inner life doesn't always correspond to the values of the practitioner. It is to "concern ourselves with the ethical foundation of meditation" (Zajonc, 2009, p 19). Steiner introduces the main concern that lies in these ethics lies of this path. Maybe the most

famous quote about this is from his book “Knowledge of the higher worlds and its attainment”:
“For every one step that you take in the pursuit of higher knowledge, take three steps in the perfection of your own character.” (Steiner, 1987, 52; author’s italics) It is not only a question of meditative activity transforming oneself but also a question of transforming oneself in order to meditate in an appropriate way. That’s why all these exercises for preparation are needed – to avoid the problems and confusions later on. Like Zajonc stresses: “Meditation, even meditative accomplishment, does not automatically guarantee that the meditator will possess good moral judgement or practise an ethical life.” (Zajonc, 2009, p 23)

The aim of this exercise is to help to create inner balance so that it is possible to handle more freely and deal with situations from one’s own perspective, and not so much from unconscious impulses as is usually the case. A practitioner cannot choose the encounters from in and out but she can choose her attitude and reaction towards them.

This exercise is very much about improvising as every social situation more or less is (Nachmanovitch, 1990). That’s why within this exercise one cannot master anything and one can progress endlessly. This opens a door to the world of endless striving, to the rest of one’s life. “Each day we begin again the patient work of renewal.” (Zajonc, 2009, p 44) It becomes very clear that the aim cannot be the main thing if a thing at all. It raises a new challenge: how does one stay encouraged and faithful to oneself in a process of struggling when it might not be that rewarding?

2.5.3 The control of thinking

This exercise in short is to guide the thinking through will so that it stays on one subject and does not wander around. Or like Florin Lowndes puts it: “Think thoroughly, harmoniously and structured of one particular object.” (1997, p 79)

In his book ‘Educating the will’ Michael Howard (2004) compares the process of controlling one’s thinking with paddling a kayak against the current. If the practitioner is not used to do it, she will soon be over-powered by the force of stream, i.e. flow of associations. To control thinking is not an innate ability; the power for it has to be developed: “initially our thoughts are not under our direction.” (Zajonc, 2009, p 70) Like Steiner describes: “The thought world of a man who gives himself up to a mental activity determined primarily by his physical brain looks irregular and confused. In it a thought enters, breaks off, is driven out of the field by another.” (Steiner, 1984, p 149) This kind of thinking can seem to be happening by itself without one’s conscious activity. If a practitioner wants to think by herself, she has to activate herself inwardly, thus using her will in thinking.

What kind of thinking is meant here?

In his paper “A path towards thinking” Dahlin tries to get close to the activity and the idea of thinking. “...according to Heidegger, we still have to learn to think.” (2008, p 1) Normally one tends to think that thinking is natural, an everyday ability that one uses fluently from waking up until one falls asleep. “Like Heidegger, Steiner also claimed that we do not know what it means to really think.” (ibid) According to my interpretation this means that there hasn’t really been an experience of thinking, i.e. experiencing the active power behind thinking, not just the stream of associations that are caused by outer events or inner impulses. How can this experience of thinking be reached?

“...only through meditative practice can we directly experience the nature of thinking as mental activity.” (ibid) In confronting the inner activity in this way, there is access to experience the power that creates it. By Heidegger’s insight thinking is “at its roots the relationship between being and being human. It is more a ‘listening’ and receiving than theoretical handling with conceptual equipment.” (Rauhala, 2005, p 150; my translation) It comes close to the experience of meditation.

Perspectives of thinking

What is meant here with thinking? It is something very active and is a conscious act. As Rudolf Steiner writes in his Philosophy of freedom “to the nature of thinking belongs always necessarily that it’s intended;” (1973, p 37) The idea of thinking can also be approached by the concepts of William James “active or voluntary attention and passive attention” (Zajonc, 2009, p 69) Thus it is not just something that wells up from the depths of our minds but it is something that can be created, followed and also observed consciously. Or like Nietzsche puts it: “for thinking one needs a technique... to think one *has to* learn, similarly to a dance one has to learn, a sort of dancing...” (1995, p 60; author’s italics; my translation) There are steps to learn, movements to observe and to learn and the controlled flow is the aim. Pingel (2004) brings one particular example of the wrong control of thinking by calling it memory thinking (Erinnerungsdenken). It’s routine, a practitioner just follows the ‘tracks’ of the scheme she has developed.

It has to be one thing at the time in consciousness, undisturbed. Like Steiner says: “Whereas in everyday life the soul's powers are distributed among many things, and thought-pictures are continually coming and going, in spiritual training everything depends on the entire concentration of the soul upon one idea of thought-picture, placed, by an act of will, in the very centre of consciousness.” (2001, p 206)

2.5.4 What kind of activity is meditation?

Meditative activity is not forceful, pressing activity but its quality is a gentle and sensitive one. It is an open attitude, some kind of devotional curiosity. In this process there are two different gestures that Zajonc introduces as ‘focused attention’ and ‘open attention’. He calls this process ‘cognitive breathing’: “First we are intently focused on an object of contemplation, but then the object is released and our open, non-focal awareness is sustained.” (Zajonc, 2009, 39) It is similar to speaking and listening but grasping and letting go too. In the process of learning to know the world and ones own self both are equally important.

Moreover it is a deepening, this means “to go deep into a self-chosen theme intensively, over and over again” (Lievegoed, 1998, p 81; my translation). From time to time a practitioner can come to an experience where she has been able to penetrate in to the being of the thing to such an extent that it starts to reveal its true qualities. Here too is another quality of deepening: When repeatedly allowed to do so the content lives in consciousness, this content starts to sink deeper in to the being through the level of feelings into the realm of the will. It becomes something that is a part of oneself. From this will there is the possibility to be able to act according to the content of the meditation, this is one perspective of the transforming power of meditation. Manfred Krüger describes it in his book ‘Meditation’ (Krüger, 1988).

Georg Kühlewind (Kühlewind, 2000) speaks about ‘gentle will’ (Sanfte Wille). It’s kind of a listening activity, a kind of passive activity – a waiting in peace, with an open mind, sensitively and delicately, but not without an effort and being prepared for any experience or observation. Karl König defines the difference between concentration and meditation: “In meditation we don’t only direct our will and its power of forming to our thinking, but we put the whole realm of our soul there. When the whole realm of our soul isn’t present in this activity, then we don’t really meditate.” (König, 2001, p 31; my translation) I interpret König’s words to mean: that there has to be involvement and a connection to the feelings through the act of meditation. It’s a special kind of situation because it’s not only feeling but the presence with the feelings and an awareness of the feelings at the same time. Thus in relation to meditative activity “- - - it is far more important to feel - - - than to understand.” (Zajonc, 2009, 122) It’s far from being emotional but it’s not intellectual either, it’s in the direction of sensitive thinking and clear feeling, touching and being touched.

Besides learning to know ones own self “meditation is schooling for experiencing life from the inside.” (Zajonc, 2009, 46) First there is learning to notice these experiences: “Every outside has an inside, but that inside goes largely unobserved.” (ibid, p 47)

It's possible to meditate everything and in many ways. "It can be done in various ways and I urge you to explore methods you find useful. One way of starting is to select a theme or question with which you would like to work." (Zajonc, 2009, p 194).

2.5.5 The review

The other major exercise is called the 'review' ('Rückschau'). It means that at the end of the day a practitioner tries to look back at the day as flowing pictures from the last moment to the first. It gives a picture of the day, the meetings with people and things, and a feeling what was there. The purpose of this exercise is to watch the day as an outsider, which makes it more possible to see what was essential. Two other points that Steiner (Steiner, 1997) saw as essential with this exercise are to learn to follow this process with thoughts as well as with what the senses mediate and through this exercise the thinking is strengthened. The idea is not to stop and, for example, try to figure out what went wrong or emotionally go through again what happened, but more to get a picture of life and what is there to be learned and how one actually is.

Teachers are using this exercise in many ways. Some of the typical ways are: A teacher is looking back over ones school day from the last lesson to the first before she prepares for the next school day. This is more directed towards learning from mistakes and especially to do better next time, but also for the content of teaching: where were the points that could be accomplished and led further? Another way is to look at the day in reverse order at the very end of a day, just before falling asleep. This is not so directly connected to the life of a teacher, but to a being as a human. Thus indirectly this exercise has a lot to do with the education not only as a role model but how a teacher 'exists' to the pupils after seeing oneself hundreds of times as an outsider.

2.5.6 The seed meditation

One exercise Steiner introduces is called 'The seed meditation' (Steiner, 1987, pp 47-48). Steiner's idea here is that the practitioner notices and becomes more conscious of the invisible. First she perceives and describes the form, colour and other qualities of a seed. Then she thinks that when this seed is put into the soil it will grow into a multiform plant. The idea of this exercise is to form the following thought: in this seed there is already hidden – as a power of the whole plant – that which will later grow – the invisible becomes visible. It is important to also deeply feel what is being thought.

A teacher can begin with a questioning image, in which she tries to make an image of a pupil, how this pupil will be in three years, five years, as a high school student, as an adult. The outcome is not

as important as the feeling for the evolving being that a teacher gains through this exercise. A perspective that means what happens on one day, a teacher can put it into this time frame. The preparation that is really involved when a teacher does her teaching, goes beyond one month or a year. It can be seen as a mission like that of the English and geographic teacher David Brierly who states: My task [as a teacher] is to try to uncover the potential of each child.” (Brierly, 2006, p 90) For example a teacher of young pupils is actually sowing seeds for the future, and the life of this pupil will show how the seeds come into being. Besides giving perspective it gives those in education a sense of peace in their everyday meetings with the pupils.

2.5.7 Word meditation

A typical form of meditation is word meditation. It's usually a verse, a dense sentence. By taking it to the centre of our consciousness it has by repetition a transforming character. The idea of word meditation is to let the wisdom of content transform the inner life of the practitioner towards the ideals that are hidden in the content of meditation.

An example of a word meditation is one sentence of Rudolf Steiner taken from his book 'The knowledge of the higher worlds and its attainment' (Steiner, 1987, p 74). In German this sentence is the following: "Beurteile ich das Neue/nach den Alten/so bin ich dem Irrtum unterworfen." ("If we judge something that happens to us today according to the experience of yesterday, we are exposed to a multitude of errors.")

This sentence gives a picture of the possibility to become fixed on old images, attitudes and views and what happens when a practitioner acts through them. By taking this statement the content of a meditation, it can happen for example that the qualities of 'Neue' and 'Alte' can become experiences and feelings, and these can have consequences. In everyday life it's normal to pass by this kind of delicate, inner quality and this kind of change. This sort of 'new feeling' can be used as an aid for the exercises of observation that a teacher does beside their educational work. A teacher pays attention to pupil's physical manifestations, behaviour, ways of moving, ways of working and speaking etc. To make a pupil the object of observation, a teacher may notice that 'Neue/Alte' have something to do with it.

2.6 Summary

This chapter began with the larger picture of human development as a background. Central theme in the reviewed literature is that a person can through her own will make a conscious and active contribution by developing oneself through different exercises. This will was introduced in connection to the work of a SW-teacher. After some literary examples regarding the general aspects of inner practising there then followed the introduction of specific exercises. Some of these exercises are worked on in detailed on chapter 4 where my and other peoples' experiences regarding these exercises are presented.

These literary examples regarding the inner practising give a view of the role of inner practising in SW-education. In the following chapters I will try to research through the experiences and reflections of teachers how inner practising could manifest in the life of a teacher who has a will to become a better educator. This is my praxis-orientated and experience-based contribution to this scene.

3 Methodological reflections and methods

In this chapter I introduce my methods, i.e. my way of doing this research. I begin my introduction with the methodological reflections about the phenomenological and hermeneutical ways of research. After that I go more in detailed into methods that I used: phenomenological 1st person reflections and interviews and hermeneutical writing and keeping the diary. The phenomena that I have tried to get closer are the experiences that a practitioner makes of thoughts and feelings that these exercises create in her soul, and also reflections. The exercises – exercise in eurhythm, positivity, thought control and meditation – and experiences and reflections about them that the interviewees and I have made I have presented closely in chapter 4.

3.1 Methodological reflections

For methods and methodology my main source has been Max van Manen's book "Researching lived experience". His insights have given me courage to go on with my path of doing this kind of a research but also given a basic orientation what the phenomenological research is all about. Charles Taylor (Autenttisuuden etiikka (The ethics of authenticity)) has given a basic orientation of nature and human sciences. Lauri Rauhala (Hermeneuttisen tieteenfilosofian analyyseja ja sovelluksia (The analysis and applications of the philosophy of science of hermeneutics)) has influenced this work in many ways especially with his Heidegger studies. Panu Raatikainen (Ihmistieteet ja filosofia (Human sciences and philosophy)) and Juha Perttula (Kokemus psykologisena tutkimuskohteena: johdatus fenomenologiseen psykologiaan (The experience as psychological research interest: introduction to phenomenological psychology)) have their contribution in this work with their studies about researching the experience and understanding. Hans-Georg Gadamer (Hermeneutiikka (Hermeneutics)) has brought his contribution especially about hermeneutics.

Now we look at the methodology of this study more carefully. Already Wilhelm Dilthey brought up the difference, the contrast between understanding and explanation. The knowledge in the realm of "Geisteswissenschaften, human world characterized by *Geist* – mind, thoughts, consciousness, values, feelings, emotions, actions, and purposes, which find their objectifications in languages, beliefs, arts, and institutions." (Van Manen, 1990, p 3; author's italics) essentially involves interpretation. Nietzsche brought also his contribution to this discussion with his statement that there are no facts, just interpretations. (Gadamer, 2004)

Charles Taylor gives his critical view for the nature sciences in their attempt to use its model in human sciences: “- - it [a model] either brings up to the central position irrelevant questions or falls down to trivialities.” (Taylor, 1995, p 11; my translation) and instead of this “- - as the primary starting point of description of human action should be taken the activator’s own insight of oneself as a being that lays values and aims.” (ibid) It can be said that the basic mistrust towards people and researcher in practise of nature science (distanced attitude and methods) is turned into trust in human sciences. This could be seen for example by the interviews, especially when it became clear to me how much tacit knowledge (Toom, Onnismaa, Kajanto, 2008) the teachers carry with them also regarding inner practising without being conscious about it.

In short one could say that the philosophy of human sciences stresses on understanding through phenomenological approach in a realm of processes that are close to human ‘lifeworld’ (van Manen). The human sciences also seem to reject the traditional view of ‘objectivity’ of the researcher in nature sciences. Next I introduce the reasons why I chose phenomenology and hermeneutics as methods for this study.

Phenomenology

When I decided that my theme will be inner practising and my main interest of it would be the experiences and reflections of the processes of inner practising, there was no other way than to go into issue itself and to see the being itself – the basic will of phenomenology as I understood it. It wasn’t only to follow this methodological way but also to do this way by practising, i.e. living the phenomena, living inside the process of inner practising. In every practising I tried to observe the inner processes that I reflected as my experiences about them. At the same it was a way of practising observation for these very intimate, delicate and “weak” experiences that mostly has to be lived many times before grasping them.

To make it clear what phenomenology strives for is not that easy to grasp like Herbert Spiegelberg writes: “Phenomenology is notorious about that it’s difficult to say what it really is”. (Niiniluoto, I; Saarinen, E, 2002). Still the basic elements of phenomenology are usually seen the reduction or epoché (bracketing of natural common-sense assumptions), to put ones attention to how one gets knowledge and the pure observation. (Mautner, T. 2004; Hetemäki, I, 1999) Husserl’s phenomenology aims at ‘pure consciousness’ although this is nowadays seen impossible and criticised for example by Gadamer (Niiniluoto, I; Saarinen, E, 2002).

Hermeneutics

To understand what these processes and experiences were I had to reflect them in my thinking. I tried to be as “empathical” as possible, somehow to feel as much as I was thinking in order to interpret the experiences right. Like by trying to grasp the experience the same process happened by trying to grasp the understanding. It had to be done all over again in order to get closer to the kernel of experience and its adequate interpretation like in ‘hermeneutical spiral’. Like in any practising this sort of thinking has to be practised.

Perttula reminds that “also the researcher’s understanding is experience... The understanding comes true in that form, in which the research interest appears for a researcher.” (Perttula, 2005, p 143; my translation) Rauhala states: “Also all the so-called scientific observations and the knowledge constructed from them are always engaged to the precedent condition.” (Rauhala, 2005, 145; my translation) This comes close to Heidegger’s term ‘Auslegung’, meaning: never without the precedent condition.

In 20th century hermeneutics developed to the philosophical hermeneutics contrast to classical hermeneutics. (ibid.) “Hermeneutics has since been regarded as a theory of interpretation... of human action...” (Mautner, T., 2004, 248) This gives an insight of the world and issues that human sciences are researching, and it’s close to the ‘inner life world’ that I’m researching. Hermeneutics’ way to understanding and given meaning happens through interpretation the observations and phenomena, thus it can be seen as art of understanding. Also important concepts in hermeneutics – according to Gadamer – are situation and horizon, meaning that when one is interpreting something, it is always interpretation bound on one situation and field of view (horizon). Gadamer concludes that in understanding: it’s a question about “the process that melts together horizons” (Niiniluoto, I; Saarinen, E, 2002, p 340; my translation). For Gadamer it was also important to see hermeneutics as dialogue of language and thinking. One famous hermeneutical method is so-called hermeneutical circle or hermeneutical spiral that has three steps or elements: pre-understanding that is starting-point of gaining knowledge and it changes and transforms when understanding and interpretation moves on; parts and whole – both are understandable only in interaction; the incompleteness of concepts and how researcher questions her prejudices and corrects them when researching proceeds. (Siljander, 1988) One special characteristic of this circle is to see it as process of interaction and a process of learning (Gadamer, 2004).

3.2 Phenomenology

My research strategy has been in trying to approach the phenomena that I call inner practising in its natural environment, thus when I and the interviewees practise inner practising. This means that I have tried to observe and to perceive the activity of inner practising so that there has been strong and clear experiences about it. Thus I have tried to find the essence of the phenomena ‘inner practising’.

Van Manen grasps the basics of the situation to begin to research the world around us, especially the interest of human being through questions to go deeper into the ”secrets”:

From a phenomenological point of view, to do research is always to question the way we experience the world, to want to know the world in which we live as human beings... In doing research we question the world’s very secrets and intimacies which are constitutive of the world, and which bring the world as world into being for us and in us... we want to know that which is most essential to being. (van Manen, 1990, p 5)

Perttula (2005) takes this even further requiring that the relationship between researcher and research interest reveals the essential of object. The understanding happens in absorbing with the object. This is what has happened to me while practising and also while observing my practising – I have experienced how it requires the whole human being to be involved with it – like meditation but in a different quality. Through this process “the researcher as a research system changes all the time.” (Rauhala, 2005, p 152; my translation. That has also been one interesting evolution by this study: because my evolving self-knowledge and my abilities to execute both inner exercises and this research have changed.

For the practitioner the practising is an obvious part of the everyday life. Like practising also this kind of way to research offers the possibility to get closer to the world that we live in.

“Phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences... it offers us the possible of plausible insights that bring us in more direct contact with the world.” (van Manen, 1990, p 9) With these words one can, as a researcher, through penetrating the everyday experiences, not only have a possibility to gain deeper understanding but also a deeper relation with the lifeworld in which one lives as a teacher. Like in everyday evaluating ones daily work or doing this kind of expanded action research, it is always important that one “stays with the experience itself “(Zajonc, 2009, p 145). This ‘loyalty’ to experience only has revealed its value as a way to deeper understanding in this process of ‘extended’ keeping oneself in the level experiences and not to interpret.

In this inquiry I have seen my steps to get closer: my interest to the phenomena of inner practising, living with the questions about its inner manifestations, by being confronted with my self-knowledge. I have bailed my confidence from my inner and living with these things over 20 years and given time for them. Perttula (2005) describes this four steps path for phenomenological researcher in following way: loving attitude, concentrated wondering, trust in feelings and thoughts that appear in this wondering and conscious ‘delaying’ so that understanding of the being of the researched reality can come true.

This description of Perttula has been easy to follow as my study has proceeded: It has been easy to “fall in love” with the experiences that a practitioner gains by practising. The same with staying in this feeling and concentrate on it consequently. To see how slowly the trust and sureness builds on and how these feelings like “This is it! It’s real!” come. Yet the doubt remains because of the interpretation of the experiences: in the beginning my interpretations were so limited that I can say now that they were wrong – because of the parallel worlds that accomplished and brought my interpretation into a different light. Delaying is part of the inner practising and that’s why not that far from researching: to stay in experience, wait patiently until it speaks and meanwhile try to get as sensitive and “ready” for them.

After this overview of my phenomenological approach I will take examples of phenomenological qualities, which will lead the reader more in detail of my way to my methods.

3.2.1 Phenomenology of experience

In this study the main work has been my attempt to get into the experiences of mine and interviewee’s. These experiences, the gentle ones that a practitioner gains through inner practising and especially in meditative activity, have tendency to escape. The challenge in this study has been that “- - - phenomenology aims at *making explicit* and *seeking universal meaning* - - - . (van Manen, 1990, p 19; author’s italics) By trying to reveal these hidden experiences I have noticed that the real hindrance has been the lack of my inner power. (See: sub-chapter 5.4)

Experience is by one definition a direct, observational knowledge of the world. (Honderich, 2005) Perttula defines it as a way of consciousness to give meanings for those realities into which human being is related to (Perttula, 2005). Rauhala goes even further with his claim that the concept of knowledge has to be limited so that it can only be a human experience (Rauhala, 2005). To give meanings in the worlds that a practitioner enters into while practising inner practising brings a basic experience of these insights. It is a process in itself to notice and to see, how by perceiving the new experience that as such doesn’t first ‘belong’ to anywhere and how it then ‘finds’ its way to context

that it belongs. It is obvious how this process can go wrong for example how the experience is 'leaded' into inadequate 'environment'. In this point this study has been trial and error and trying to get to know the "environment". The main problem however also in this study has been the attempt to bring the experiences into understandable language. The challenge also has been like in normal life how to keep them alive, as close to the quality of the experience itself. That's why with experiences it's important "Staying close to the phenomena, we allow them to unfold. We resist the tendency to explain them away - -" (Zajonc, 2009, p 147)

To research the experiences is on the one hand a special way of doing the research but on the other hand, like Rauhala points out, all the research is based on researcher's experiences (Rauhala, 2005).

3.2.2 Subjectivity of phenomenology

One unavoidable danger by researching own experiences is subjectivity, unargued and unjustified feelings and opinions, lacking in validity and matter of personal preference. By having any sound judgement at all, one has a feeling of walking on thin ice. That's why it has been encouraging to find some insights that look at this problem not only as a problem. "I think that the starting point of scientific character of researching experience is the objectivity understood as 'in-accordance-to-object'." (Perttula, 2005, p 136; my translation)

However subjective and personal the study is or seems to be, the striving to be "*true to the object*" (van Manen, 1990, p 20) is always there behind. Like Perttula stresses, the researcher strives to get far from subjectivity, when subjectivity means "individual variety of understanding" (Perttula, 2005, p 144; my translation) by one's one-sided tendencies and desires.

Thus subjectivity doesn't have to be the enemy of research, quite a contrary: "'Subjectivity' means that one needs to be as perceptive, insightful, and discerning as one can be in order to show or disclose the object in its full richness and its greatest depth." (van Manen, 1990, p 20) This gets close to practising openness but it's also a question of self-knowledge. This kind of contemplative inquiry aims at achieving "'objectivity' in a different manner, namely through self-knowledge..." (Zajonc, 2009, p 35) It is the inner truthfulness that I have confronted inside and that becomes stronger through inner practising. As one sees later in this study, self-knowledge is an inseparable 'method' of inner practising and also a method of doing this study. At the same self-knowledge is an ideal and can be only strive for it, like for the "pure consciousness".

The subjectivity itself, very personal and alive experiences of the phenomena, can be thus approached in scientific methods as long as one keeps in mind the university quality of ones

thinking and requirements of being aware of ones general and one-sided tendencies to narrow down the reality.

3.3 Hermeneutics

Gadamer's view (2004) is that the natural abilities of human being to interpret and understand are in hermeneutics put into severe practising process. For me it seems a life-long process, like practising: the everyday process of gaining and dealing with the knowledge in more conscious and critical way is the challenge in hermeneutics.

Beginning with interpretation Gadamer quotes Heidegger that stresses of the duty of interpretation to make sure the quality of the scientific review by "working on the advance put-on, prevision and prejudice about the things themselves." (Gadamer, 2004, p 31; my translation) Thus let go all the preconceptions that one can become conscious about. There Heidegger comes close to Husserl's ideal of phenomenological reduction: to be open enough for new observations and experiences.

This openness in the dialogue of language and thinking was also and especially important by reading and interpreting the interviewees' experiences. How the interviewees had used their thinking in describing their experiences and how I used my thinking as a process in trying to see what was wanted to be said was a happening in itself. Somehow it was easier to look from outside the interviewees' experiences as try to see clearly my own ones.

Gadamer (2004) sees that the questions make like a bridge from interpretation to understanding. The role of the question is not only to understand the issue or other person but the question is simultaneously stated to oneself. There Gadamer sees the double task of the question: it opens up the possibilities and keeps them open, also in enquirer herself.

With this requirement Husserl, Heidegger and Gadamer bring the issue of openness to one of the central issues of inquiry. It is also one of the central abilities practised in the exercises introduced in chapter 3 and 5. For example in meditation this openness is needed in order to orientate in the new inner situation and inner world. It's not only the new in that situation but this 'open' goes all the way from this first encounter through paying attention, 'choosing' the angle to interpret and how ones thinking understand, i.e. can compose and penetrate into this 'life world'.

With this task of the questions comes true one duty of hermeneutics: "to conduct the meaning from one world to another" (Gadamer, 2004, p 40; my translation), thus for example from other person's

experiences to real understanding. Later on his reviews Gadamer end of by one his definitions about hermeneutics: “Hermeneutics can be defined as ability to bring the said and written to ‘talk’ again.” (Gadamer, 2004, p 134; my translation) It is also the ability that van Manen points out by writing about the writing process that should stay close to lived experiences.

Gadamer points out that this understanding begins when something is attractive to us. There the issues like begin to open up and to talk. Heidegger pointed out how the beings are covered and concealed and that has a great value to the thinking of ‘being’. (Gadamer, 2004) With that Heidegger brought out his idea, how long a real way of seeing things is and how much thinking it requires getting to understand them. (See personal experiences about this in sub-chapter 5.4)

Later on Heidegger radicalized this view by saying that the existence self was “understanding” and “interpretation”, to sketch himself for the own possibilities. (Gadamer, 2004, p 56; my translation) Also in this point Heidegger saw that a lot depends on the ability of the researcher to develop her and her abilities. There Gadamer agrees with Heidegger and states that it belongs to the hermeneutics that in all understanding of other person or an issue comes true also self-criticism. Thus not to be critical only to ones scientific abilities but also to herself.

The radicalized hermeneutics by Heidegger comes from a different angle to Steiner’s idea introduced in chapter 3 that by teaching it only doesn’t matter the abilities but the being of the teacher. Heidegger brings thinking and ‘Dasein’ together by stating: “Understanding doesn’t any more mean one function of thinking among others; the act of thinking that can be trained methodically and sharpen for the scientific procedure. Instead it elaborates the basic movement of ‘Dasein’ of human being.” (Gadamer, 2004, p 56; my translation) With this Heidegger stresses the fundamental meaning of understanding for the developmental path of an individual, starting from point of view of a researcher and widening it to a whole human being.

3.4 Methods

My main question has been to clarify what are teacher’s experiences and reflections regarding the challenges, the processes and the consequences by doing inner practising. This study is an attempt for a practise-based clarification of the concept of inner practising based on my own and other people’s experiences about inner practising and its consequences. With my methods I have tried to get closer to the phenomena that I call inner practising. This ‘getting closer’ has also meant a sort of cutting the road to understand the inner practising and what happens through it.

3.4.1 Phenomenology – 1st person experiences and interviews

My method to get closer to inner practising has been phenomenological reflections and descriptions. This kind of autoethnographic approach of research can also be called “autobiographically situated and self-observant research.” (Anderson, 2006)

My methodological circle has been three-fold: I have practised, reflected and written. Practising has been my act of will, consciously decided and designed exercises that I have carried through before I started this inquiry but also during doing this.

Practising itself creates some phenomena that I have reflected: learning, changing, becoming conscious. I have made a 1st person reflection about my experiences as a practitioner by mirroring my experiences. I have reflected my practising while I’m practising (reflection in action; Schön, 1987) and afterwards (reflection on action; *ibid*). Reflection in action has meant to me a conscious following the practising event: how it feels, how I am doing it according to the aim of the exercise, what kind of feelings and thoughts my practising wakes up in me. In meditation this has turned out to be almost impossible in order not to disturb the meditative event itself. Reflection on action has meant more conscious effort by pondering, thinking and making notes. First to get as close to the phenomena as possible and second to be honest and loyal to these experiences, while describing them. Mostly my experience about this process is that this has to have been done over and over again so that I really can evaluate my process from observation to description.

The writing has been a process itself. Before this inquiry I have kept diary and while doing this research I have written about my experiences as a practitioner. My try to formulate my experiences, trying to find words for something that doesn’t easily turn into words that give right to these experiences has brought me back in to the practising itself: Maybe I just have to observe more carefully and precisely. Maybe I just have to let go my pictures and thoughts that I have gained through my former experiences. Maybe I could use more my poetic imagination to grasp the phenomena. Maybe I just have to let go, stop trying, just practising and trying again after a while. The process is slow but so is also human growth. This process van Manen describes in the following way: “In bringing to reflective awareness the nature of events experienced in our natural attitude (original, pre-reflective, pre-theoretical), we are able to transform or remake ourselves in the true sense of *Bildung*.” (van Manen, 1990, p 7; author’s italics) This is one of the key aspects of this study: this process of diving, observing, reflecting, describing and writing is not only a process to bring the experiences of inner practising into light but that this process also changes me as a researcher.

Interviews

The interviews in this study have had a role and a significance of their own. They have been my treasure from which I have been willing to make this study. They have also broadened my view and understanding of my experiences of inner practising. Interviewing, like one form of a conversation, has been a real process for me to come to the universal means of inner practising.

The purpose of interviewing was to find perspectives to my 1st person reflections, to study how limited the individual approaches are, and also to find out, how these people understand their inner practising. On the other hand the limited view of individual perspective is at the same time awakening and refreshing. By inner practising it has especially that power because of the intensiveness of the experiences but also through the fact that a practitioner seldom speaks about her experiences. These experiences that the interviewees have shared have therefore a power of 'abstain and silence' in them. By this perspective these both experiences, theirs and mine, have had an 'enrichening' interaction by noticing, seeing connections and understanding in both directions.

Thus to "develop a richer and deeper understanding of a human phenomena... and about the meaning of an experience" (van Manen, 1990, p 66) can be a multi-level process. Like Kvale (1996) notes, also my interview turned to be an inter view – an open door to the rich inner world of someone's experiences. Borrowing Kvale's terms, it was an experience as such to be a *traveller* and explore those experiences but also being a *miner*, really to dig deeper to those valuable experiences that was revealed to me through working with those interviews.

For my interviews, thus for written answers and written reflections, I choose teachers that I knew they have a long experience as a teacher and also as inner practitioner because then they already have a perspective for the influence of practising into their work. That's because of the way of understanding the experiences I wished to collect: the exercises has to be done hundreds of times before the practitioner gets even close, otherwise experiences are – according to my experience – easily interpret superficial or they are misunderstood. Thus my wish was to find out, how they had experienced their practising, and how they could reflect what they have experienced.

The teachers that I chose are people that I got to know through giving courses about inner practising but mostly they are members of The Hague Circle, the international conference for Steiner Waldorf Education. The main emphasis of the work of the Circle is to create a picture of the world school movement and discuss what is there to be done in very different situations. There are teachers from all over the world, however mainly from Europe. The interviewed teachers are working in lower school, upper school, and in teacher training.

I made 15 interviews altogether. I made only four face to face interviews because the meetings are very dense and there is not enough time to make more interviews properly. That's why I made an e-mail questionnaire with the rest of my interviewees: I sent a questionnaire (Appendix: questioner 1) for the chosen teachers and asked them to answer the questions and send it back to me. Like in a normal face to face interview I asked them back to specify something and there sprang a dialogue that made me understand more and better their experiences. It also happened few times that instead of asking again their experiences by e-mail we had a phone conversation in order to make both my questions and intentions but also the answers of interviewees clearer.

My interview method was a semi-structured interview (Wellington, 2007). Written questionnaires came out to be very challenging for the interviewees. They had to reflect and also formulate, to find expressions for their experiences. It was also sometimes challenging to get answers to the questions because of the attitudes of interviewees (See Discussion and reflections).

The ethics of the interviewing is taken care of to make clear for the interviewees that they are voluntarily participating this study and answering the questions they want and feel right. Their right to withdraw at any time is made clear. Also their rights to confidentiality and anonymity is taken care to the extent that the names of interviewees are mentioned only in acknowledgements after been asked if they agree with this arrangement.

3.4.2 Hermeneutics as a method for writing and contemplative understanding

For next I'll try to describe how the hermeneutic approach has been my method in understanding the phenomena of inner practising.

In this study I have tried to see roots and connections of inner practising in human life (See: chapter 5). In my discussion about the results of my inquiry I have used hermeneutic circle: what is the meaning, my interpretation and understanding. Through the process of observing the phenomena I have given a meaning of it and through my thinking the sense of it. This circulating process has been like a breathing process: in and out, repeatedly closer and afar.

While doing this study it has become clear to me how slow the process of gaining understanding really is. One understands something, and then a little bit more that sometimes not only accomplishes but also corrects ones former understanding. Through this waking up I have questioned my understanding and that has been the way to deepen my knowledge. This process has become familiar to me especially by reading my practising diary and interviews. It has required many 'circles' of reading and writing until it has been possible to develop an insight of meanings,

connections, the importance and the kernel of the experiences. Through these experiences it's easy for me to agree with van Manen: "Hermeneutic phenomenological research is fundamentally a writing activity. Research and writing are aspects of one process." (1990, p 7)

One problem that I have fought with in this research has been my tendency to 'find' words for the things before the experience has 'landed'. Many times I have caught myself with this: this is not a re-search, it's more re-find. But sometimes it happens that the description is almost immediately there, the exact words just come like a poem that I just 'receive'.

This study was not so much about gathering data but giving 'data' to appear through writing process. The data in this context means experiences that were buried in the depths of my mind – but simultaneously present while practising – and that could only arise into the daylight in these writing processes like 'revealing' more than I thought I would write.

This means that through the processes of writing and re-writing I have gone through like different phases of my inner evolution but also "multiple layers of meaning" (van Manen, 1990, p 131). It has been my method to penetrate to my and interviewees' experiences, to understand them and give an expression to them. In re-writing I have like started from the new expressions and through them I have come back to my experiences like shedding new light to them or sometimes even 'find' new experiences.

Diary

Keeping a diary is a special form of writing. When it's in most cases writing to oneself, on the one hand it hasn't necessarily have the requirements of accuracy and clarity but on the other hand it's quite always honest and direct, experiences are written and also pondered like they have come about. In this study I have used my diaries that I have kept irregularly from the beginning of my inner practising. Keeping the diary has been a great help for me to reflect and to understand what is happening in my practising process. How the exercising proceeded and what the frequent challenges were, I felt keeping a diary very helpful.

How? To reflect, not just to do. It's like an extra reflection, more intense sinking into experiences because of trying to find the words for my experiences. Slowly becoming aware of myself and through my strengthened self-knowledge I could reflect my self-knowledge. Van Manen describes this process especially as a situation of a teacher: "And pedagogy requires a way with language in order to allow the research process of textual reflection - - -." (van Manen, 1990, p 2) The inner practising is like teaching in a sense of a lifeworld. One acts there with the certain feeling of

presence but only afterwards one can really reflect and hopefully understand what has happened there. It's like sometimes in everyday life: the awareness of feelings follow only afterwards.

I have used my diaries mainly to get a perspective of my experiences in my practising path. The most interesting insights I have got from the experiences that I had when I began my inner practising. But only now I have seen the real value of keeping a diary: to find words for experiences is a long way of practising itself.

A special way of doing hermeneutics is a meditative approach. In this inquiry it meant that I took some experiences 'under the loop' and tried to penetrate them with the meditative touch: inner silence, a gentle question, let the experience live in me for a certain while. When I could silence myself and let my question give me a direction to get closer the phenomena, it suddenly revealed more about the experience than a normal pondering. It was like an extra help through extra effort. It was also like given space and time to this experience to 'grow' and also to get deeper into it. But as normal meditative procedure and like usual hermeneutic circle, this method also needed repetition, i.e. one comes back again and again and tries to understand the depths and widths of experiences.

This method I used for example by the first exercise that I introduce in chapter 5, Exercise in eurythmy. I did this exercise always in the morning and in the evening I reflected it in my meditative review. What I experienced there were the 'strange' connections between this physical exercise and meditative exercise: it's easier to become conscious about the experiences when I do both. Even more 'strange' was that after this kind of irregular review it happened the same on the next morning: by doing the eurythmy exercise these connections were 'there' but like seen from angle of the physical exercise.

As a personal note I would say at the end that the nights have been maybe still the most important 'method' of this study. After worked hard with this study and done my inner practising of that day, waking up in the morning after deep sleep the best and the deepest comprehensions were sometimes there as a first thing in the morning, sometimes ready to be written down.

In my study I have tried to approach the inner practising from the following perspectives: observation, self-reflection, interviews, literature, and writing. It has been a process in which these different methods have been in close and intense interaction, in weaving with each other.

4 Presentation

In this chapter I will introduce the empirical material of my research. These results are based on the interviews that I executed and my experiences as a practitioner.

The interviews are based on my questionnaire (See: Appendix 1). The questions go through all the exercises except the exercise in eurythmy for which I only interviewed and discussed with one eurythmist. The first and last question of my questionnaire touches the realms beyond practising: the motives for practising and the meanings and purposes for practising. I introduce my questions in the sub-chapters about motives and meaning and in every exercise. The interviewees I have introduced in chapter 3.

As described in chapter 3, the phenomena that I have tried to focus on are the experiences that a practitioner finds in the thoughts, feelings, and reflections that these exercises create in her soul. The exercises that I have chosen are the following:

First there is a simple eurythmy exercise, actually not more than a step back and forth. It is a kind of exploration of changing the gesture and position and what it creates inside. In this study it's more like a "curiosity," one example of a physical exercise that can be considered as inner practising, and it serves as an introduction to the idea of practising.

It follows a social exercise called the positivity exercise. Its purpose is to find a positive side or an angle on everything in order to stop the naturally arising negativity, and through that to make room for a more objective relation to the world.

In an exercise called control of thought, a practitioner tries to lead one thought to another without losing the trail while keeping her thoughts focused on one theme at least five minutes.

Finally we'll get into a meditation exercise. Here meditation is taken as a practical way of exercising one's inner ability and inner peace in order to sensitively approach the chosen content in the soul in order to understand the world better and to have basic experiences of the qualities of the inner life.

There are many ways to approach inner practising. I have chosen to give some examples of this vast area in order to give a picture of it. One remark still: I only introduce the exercises that I have done myself. I hope that through these examples it becomes clearer what the characteristics of inner practising is.

Every practising has a challenge or conditions or turning point, process and consequences. I have structured the next sub-chapters according to these three main approaches, although these approaches easily overlap. Another aspect of my presentation, whenever possible, is first to introduce the experiences and reflection of interviewees and then mine.

4.1 Motives of practising

The ideals of human being like surpassing oneself or to be more human doesn't seem to be achieved easily. The challenge to be a human or to become a human is confronted by inner practising. As seen in the previous chapter, this confrontation requires will and motivation and they have to be convincing in order to sustain the temptations and hardships.

In my questionnaire I asked about the motives for practising with the following question: What made you do the exercises/the meditations? There were various and very personal answers, but their common factor was that they were all conscious motives that presented a need for inner practising.

For some of the interviewees the impulse came from the 'outside', i.e. they considered, for example, their families materialistic, and there rose a need to search for spiritual dimensions of life. Mostly the motives were put into words like "my wish to change and improve myself" (Interview), varying degrees of self-consciousness underlying them all. To find ones love for work and the ideals or like one interviewed teacher felt the unbalance "between ideals and reality", thus the ideals of SW-education were too far from her being and the abilities that she had and as a way to "fill this gap" she started to practise. Another one saw the challenges as a motive for the inner work:

The beginning of this practice came at the hand of my recognition that I could not only rely on my daily intelligence to access some of the deeper questions which came to me in the face of life questions. This was especially so with questions about my work with the children and colleagues in the Waldorf school. I could not be a big enough man without this [inner] work. (Interview)

Also the motives of some interviewees to be more "I wanted to become stronger inside and gain more peace and light" or "to become whole" were not uncommon. One interviewee gave a clear picture of many different motives to start the inner practising:

One reason was to better master my soul forces, thinking, feelings/responses and will force. Also a wish to begin to engage with a consciousness that moved beyond the sense world. At a certain point in my life I became aware that there was more to life than what I experienced through the senses. I had a strong need to be independent, I could not tolerate anything mystical or suggestive, but I began to realise that there was more working into life than the senses revealed. If I was to find a healthy relationship to

the spiritual/non-sense perceptible world, I had to find a healthy way to meet and work with it. (Interview)

One of my personal motives was awakening when as a young student I was riding on a bus and suddenly felt strongly the noisy world around me and the immediate thought penetrated my mind: “If I’m not doing anything to protect myself from these outer influences, they affect directly by confusing my inner life.” This one moment that I couldn’t just pass by was enough for me to start to practise a few months later.

4.2 Exercise of eurythmy

With this exercise I had discussions with one eurythmist. Because in this study this exercise serves more as an example of practising, this sub-chapter has a slightly different form than the following ones.

The instruction for the exercise is the following: Stand upright both feet next to each other. Move slowly the right foot forward very little so that the weight still stays on the left foot but ‘direct’ or ‘lean’ yourself forward. Move the right foot back next to the left foot. There follows a moment of waiting. Then move the right foot backwards also very little so that the weight still stays on the left foot but now ‘lean’ backwards. Move the right foot back next to the left foot. There is again a moment of waiting. This will be repeated slowly at least three times.

This exercise is a simple movement back and forth through the middle, with a direction change, keeping the balance. At the same time it’s a movement meditation from one gesture to another and finding the balance there between. This exercise consists of separate moments in time, but it feels like a continuous process. These two ‘extremes’: being involved on the one hand and taking distance on the other hand are somehow there in everyday life.

4.2.1 Challenge

Within this exercise there is a challenge – because of the activity of practising – it requires something other than in normal life: As a pre-condition, everything has to slow down so that I can find my inner peace. I have to ‘be there’ while practising. The movement is so slowed that every change can be recognized and felt. My will and feelings give myself an experience of being ‘in.’ I have to have patience to repeat this exercise again and again even if I would feel bored. I have to

focus in every moment and be aware what happens in me and at the same time have in mind why I'm doing this.

After doing this exercise for a while, there came some reflections about the balance. The eurythmist described how one can gain a sense of when one is in or out of balance. When the soul is disturbed it will reflect in the body's gesture. I can sense where I am, in sympathy or antipathy, embracing or rejecting and find my balance in movement. My reflection brought another angle:

I felt like the aim of the exercise itself was to find the right balance in a moment, to become more and more conscious about gestures. Both of these gestures felt suddenly important and needed, that's why learning to deal with them in everyday life is important. My comprehension was: there is no real 'dealing with them' before I get conscious about them to a certain extent. It seems that it is somehow against life to try to keep the balance but to try to find it and gain it again and again through practising it. (Practising diary)

4.2.2 Practising

There came an analogy about learning balance as a child in an upright position and learning balance as part of the inner life as an adult. Through the basics it raised a need to look more carefully at this exercise's three gestures. It's a question of slow, conscious movement and a practitioner tries to feel all the time what this little external movement or gesture does and effects and how it feels inside.

The eurythmist connected it forward to pedagogical situations:

What one actually practises is the gentle transitions between these three 'positions'. In any given moment one can move from one to another without hesitation with the only guideline in mind: what is needed in the situation? This is the aim. (Interview)

I characterized the three gestures in the following way:

Leaning forward: I was interested "in"; I was involved with the events of life. I went out of myself and let the world come in through my senses and how the sense perceptions affected in me in all my experiences and impressions and in some moments I became one with the world.

Leaning backwards: I took my distance; I looked from outside, observed and evaluated. I could also gain a wider perspective by looking and thinking from the distance and I had more space to think from disconnected world.

Waiting: I felt "myself in me" in all peace. After identifying myself with the world and with my thoughts, I now identified myself with me. It was a moment of self-recognition. I decided what will be my next step and into which direction I would go. I lived in silent waiting without any attitude or gesture. I felt free." (Practising diary)

4.2.3 Consequences of practising

The ideas of the eurythmist took my thoughts into a new direction. This exercise was about learning to move from one 'state' to another but also about self-management that could be gained through practising and becoming conscious. Through this exercise it was possible to bring consciousness and conscious will into life that usually just 'happens'. It means that a practitioner takes a step from 'living' into self-guidance and self-direction.

As the eurythmist said, the experience in the middle cannot be maintained as it is the moment, one has it, then lets go to find it again, and this "flowing movement is caught like an in-breath". In the middle a practitioner can be interested while leaving the other free.

By the end of the three months of practising sessions, my thoughts turned back to the practising itself. There came some comprehension about practising in general:

Experiencing the exercising itself strengthened the will to move, for myself to be active and for my willingness to use my will. By practising being more alive and alert, being clearer with me and finding words for my experiences, and knowing better what to do and how to act in the moment. (Practising diary)

There were also questions to take with me, like a question of backspace: Is there a balance between these two spaces, back and front or is another space dominant? This question can be asked and also answered by sensing what happens by practising this exercise and by taking these feelings into everyday life where there is possibility to do observations about the basic gestures "to be" and "to act."

4.2.4 Summary

In this little, simple exercise, there seems to be already many important aspects of practising: presence, repetition through patience, a clear aim, devotion, listening, and concentration. Also the meditative mood in practising seems important. A practitioner can suddenly wake up to the new sides of meditation: instead of sitting in a quiet room contemplating something holy, it can be an act in the middle of daily life.

The first challenge is to be present. Presence means here something that is aware. There is an attention so that one does the exercise and stays with it. On the other hand there is a certain quality of presence that should be able to let go of one's conscious observation so that it won't be disturbing.

When a practitioner repeats the exercise with gentle awareness, she can wait in peace and something happens. The answers will come when she is ready for them. When she has a trust for that, she can easily do the exercises just because of them.

The external aim of this exercise is simple: just to move one's feet. The inner aim is to follow the process that is born by this movement in the soul.

Devotion is needed when a practitioner wants to overcome, for example, her feeling of knowing already what happens there. It is also a driving force so that she can forget the aim and just do the exercise as if it would be the most important thing. (As it also is – in that moment.)

The way of listening to the inner life has its connection with the following changes that happen all the time during the exercise. There can appear a view that there are exercises inside the exercise: I can practise to hear better, I can practise to differentiate the different qualities; I can practise to grasp and describe what I have experienced, etc.

By concentration a practitioner comes close to the presence but concentration has more a will quality. It's like a force that keeps the distractions away from the inner and outer world and helps to focus on the essential, on what happens really. Presence is born from the lap of concentration, and has a feeling quality.

What happens by practising? This small exercise shows something about the quality of practising and also where it could take the practitioner. It seems that in practising, in encounter with the issue or the world that was unfamiliar before, a practitioner becomes more conscious. By doing something, she gets to know the world that she is dealing with and through her feelings and thoughts, she learns also something about herself.

4.3 Positivity

The exercise of positivity differs from other exercises that are dealt here by the fact that it's a social exercise, i.e. it is practised mostly in social situations. The aim of this exercise is to find one positive aspect of any encounter: in a situation, person, issue, oneself, etc. This happens in many present situations, in which it is not unusual that there rise negative or antipathetic feelings in an encounter. Practitioner's feelings usually tell more about the *relation* to a person or to an issue, not so much about the things *itself*. That's why practising is important and might bring some help in order to get a more valid picture of the world and balance the social situations. It is basically something that a practitioner by practising resists in herself, the natural tendency to fall into

negativity: this is an innate antipathy towards some qualities and phenomena, blaming somebody – including oneself sometimes – for something that happened or didn't happen. She tries to find another way with her emotions and another way of looking at the things. This exercise is meant to be a try out for this approach. It is a question of will for this struggle and imagination for something new, for something different. Many interviewees have during the decades of practising this exercise found their own way to practising it in many situations. A note: it's still allowed to be angry and to evaluate what is not good but resisted is to fall into one-sided views and feelings.

My interview questions regarding this exercise were the following: Can you describe a situation when you practised this exercise? Can you describe something that happens in you when you do this exercise? Does it make a difference in you in some direction? If yes, can you feel that difference in your everyday life? Can you describe your learning process within this exercise?

4.3.1 Challenge: a turning point

It seems that mostly this exercise “ignites” in social contexts when something goes wrong, i.e. is in a negative sense unexpected or one's negative feelings rise towards someone. This can be a turning point of a conscious will: not to let the natural happen but to be activated inside and decide to try something else, something different. Many interviewees described how they first – after becoming conscious about this – try to calm down and control their temper. This is already an exercise of not doing, just letting go or not answering the same way to the unpleasant things instead of repeating the learnt pattern or to “glue” into one's feelings, as one interviewee described it.

It can be a small inner movement like an interviewee described when she had a situation with one parent of her class.

Suddenly I tried to listen to her and understood that all she actually wanted was that she knows for sure that everything goes well with her daughter. Her way to confirm it was for me disgusting, but as I saw it I could feel some compassion for her and when she somehow felt my 'new' attitude we found our way out of the situation. (Interview)

There is already to be seen a clear consequence by this small inner gesture even if in some moments even this little gesture is too much to ask for. Many interviewees described their experiences of how little it requires in many similar situations and the change in feeling or in the atmosphere which happens. Another possible way of dealing with this exercise and the situation is the following:

I had a quarrel with a colleague and that made me very angry. After that situation I wrote down very clearly the positive sides of him, the anger 'gave in' and I could let go of anger. That has been my method. (Interview)

First this interviewee told that it's totally impossible for him to make any kind of change in his feelings when the situation is there. That's why he had developed a method to list afterwards positive views to release his anger.

The next step after avoiding judgement is to use the imagination or to create some way in the situation instead of to react from natural feelings.

There are so many times, big and small, when this practice is a tonic. For example, if I get to one of my classes without a book I was intending to use, instead of going into a panic, I can consider what to do instead. Or if I am waiting in line at the post office (the classic example) instead of getting impatient, I can calmly observe the people.

(Interview)

These examples show that it doesn't have to be an impossible challenge to find one's own ways instead of the ways that can be in some moments felt to be alien. It's possible to stop, to change into the new direction and keep the contact with oneself. When exercising continues in some moments, a practitioner can notice her "wrong" attitude. She has suddenly a question of her prejudicial attitude to enter into situation:

I had this image that I always bring the whole package with me, a viewpoint and "load." Can I free myself from it, in that moment? Yes, I can but I need my awareness and will, also to create something new. (Interview)

Or it can be an easy change by trying to see through one's own feelings in the moment of antipathy. As one interviewee described, this small inner movement made it possible "to go into his thoughts and work with him."

The challenge to stay loyal to the practising and "not look for excuses to avoid it" has been a part of the learning process, partly because "the more I do, the more I discover that there is further to go" as one interviewee told.

I have had similar experiences in situations that raised small questions like a following one: "It raises a natural feeling of dislike and before I notice anything, it moves already forward. How can I (learn to) notice it earlier?" (Practising diary)

Or some embarrassing situations that happened now and then: "I was about to tell him off but in a split second I considered: what good that would bring regarding the issue and especially the relation. But because I was so angry, it was impossible for me to find another gesture, so I just stood there..." (Practising diary)

4.3.2 Practising

By practising there come some reflections of what this exercise is all about.

According to the interviewees it usually requires some practising before a practitioner has found a consciousness, an attitude and imagination to perceive concretely something positive, not something that one has just made up. This practising of inner abilities can be a real joy of discovering but also a surpassing when noticing not being able to do it before– there is also sometimes a precondition:

I felt I needed a sensitive attention to find an “entrance” to that, I mean what is beautiful in the other person or in the situation I could see. When a pupil had had some sort of fury attack, I could see the beauty of the bits of glass or the rage in the eyes – there was a lot of beauty in them.” (Interview)

The interviewee felt freer in her reaction because there was this experience that she had made by herself between her and the pupil, and this experience restrained her from the immediate reaction. For her externally, the difference was not so big and it could hardly be measured in time.

Many interviewees described how moving on the path of practising there comes a comprehension how they are “part of the problem”, i.e. how their views, feelings and attitudes create the situation as it occurs. One way of becoming “part of solution” is to try to see the higher side of other person:

Suddenly I have a feeling that I understand the other person. It brings us into another level in conversation. I make this conversion and I do not invade. When I get closer to other person with a positive attitude and reverence I can suddenly see why this person speaks how he speaks. Sometimes I can see the wound in him, and after that it’s much easier to accept his way of doing this. Actually it brings such a joy into the encounter. (Interview)

As stated in the introduction this exercise is usually practised in a ‘live-situation’, i.e. in social encounters. But it can also be practised separately, in thoughts and images. There this exercise can be seen as preparation for the day’s encounters by taking another relation to persons, like “hammering the ‘surface’ of the encounter”. (Interview) It can be as effective. It seems that it always depends on how much effort a practitioner can put into it: how serious and true the will is.

One interviewee told how he begins his morning by imaging the good sides of someone he doesn’t like. These images emergence into daily life and has through constant practising consequences, if practising has been successful.

I try to be aware about my feelings, then to see other sides, the higher sides of the teacher or the pupil. I think that in everyone there is a higher side, and everyone wants to act from it. I feel that there is my responsibility because – strongly simplified – when I don’t do it, it easily brings also from other people their lower part in – and that brings the fighting. When I try to bring to higher side out, it is easier for the other person to act from the higher identity. The process is that I have more and more patient, acceptance for people; I can listen to more different kind of people. (Interview)

This exercise comes in some points near to the exercise of thought control. (See next sub-chapter) One interviewee had a comprehension how it is possible to practise this exercise in the level of thoughts. By asking if his image about the person or an issue is real and adequate, he noticed that he can “twist, change and turn my image in a right or wrong direction.” Such as by controlling his thoughts he now controlled his images – as pictures of a person. By repeating this way of practising he tried to become aware of these images and lead them in the right direction.

It’s a question if practising this exercise becomes easier – and maybe life in general – by thinking of it as a learning process. A practitioner lets herself practise it with the question, what she could learn about herself in situations. Also the practising itself is a learning process: to become better in practising, to practise the practising, its attitude and perseverance.

Some interviewees described their experiences as concentrating on the essential: the issue itself and not their feelings and opinions about the person who is expressing it, made the social situations much easier.

By exercising some have noticed the feeling like there would be two different kinds of persons inside herself: the one that a practitioner could identify as herself and the other that she feels alien. This was especially there when some noticed the automatic reactions that felt strange. Also through exercising, a practitioner becomes conscious about her one-sidedness whose origin is unknown, like perfectionism. “When things are not as my inner picture tells me, it’s imperfect and there goes my very critical attitude out” as one interviewee described and by years of practising and overcoming this tendency also the social atmosphere changed so that “people around me can breathe more lightly...“.

With this exercise it is also possible to work in a group. There can be born a fruitful atmosphere when people have their own ideas, also reasons to do this exercise. It gives something to think about and they can also help to understand the exercise, as one interviewee said.

The relation between one’s own attitude and its consequences can wake a practitioner up to see how “something can be born that needs the open attitude”. (Interview) Or as one interviewee did, it’s possible to add to this exercise “the path of reverence“ because of the personal notice that he had a “tendency to perceive only the negative characteristics in my colleagues”.

According to my experience, to pull myself out of the drive that wants to quit and just try to move on is important with this exercise. Becoming conscious about this automatic power led into views how to deal with it:

When I wanted to lead this power to another direction, I had to use my conscious will. I noticed that it really takes energy to transform this automatic life in me – it seems it has a power over me as long as I'm not as strong as it is. To make myself stronger I have to exercise my 'inner muscles'. (Practising diary)

To humanize the emotional life, to make room for that, the practitioner feels right instead of being at the mercy of something that just happens. She has to find an inner balance in order to direct, not be driven by some emotions but to be with them, which “keeps me away from useless staying or to ‘welter’ in some negative emotions.”

One thing that helped me to continue was a comprehension that the difficult social encounters have a meaning in the sense that “these things come to me with a purpose to teach me something and also to give me a chance to learn, develop myself and to be stronger afterwards, after having done my exercise” as I wrote in my practising diary.

When a practitioner stays in her decision and keeps on practising, she tends to be in a constant process. This process makes a creative atmosphere in which there flow questions like, “Why does the negativity rob one of power while positivity creates it? Is it because one is tied to things that one has a negative feeling about while positivity lets things flow? Or is it that negativity keeps one in the past that already should be let go of?” (Practising diary) Or just small insights that life in itself is not always that straight-forward like even if practising in a situation is successful, a couple of hours later there can come a backlash when a practitioner remembers what happened and emotions come up again.

4.3.3 Consequences of practising

In the former descriptions about the exercising there have been implications that the exercise of positivity helps both understanding what happens, i.e. to become conscious about the everyday encounters and through that be encouraged to change the behaviour.

What was felt mostly by interviewees was a sort of transformation process. This process was expressed in ways like “The positivity exercise helps me to transform what comes from the outside and my own prejudice from the inside” or “Before all I'm more reasonable than before, I don't let my own emotionality just pour out” or “I criticise pupils much less”.

The exercise has a social potential, not only personal: “maybe I shouldn't look so much at what is illogical and stupid but just look at the situation as it is.” (Interview) Another example is dealing with negativity such as criticism and cynicism, especially regarding initiatives that are in many cases objected to or thwarted before taking its first step. Positivity would mean in such situations

“to see the potential and when asking questions, ask them so that the person is encouraged to develop and research the subject further.” (Interview)

Surpassing the inner negativity can also be as challenging as in social encounter. As one interviewee described when the public transportation doesn't work: formerly he was always angry, nervous and complained about the situation. By practising this changed and he started looking for the chances this situation was giving to him and what he felt what was most important to do by which he was making the choice, not his emotions.

Practising positivity can also lead to a permanent practice, i.e. a practitioner practises more or less all the time or at least whenever she wants. It becomes a habit, a part of inner attitude. One interviewee told that when she once had a real experience how the positivity exercise functions, all she needs is to remember this experience and she exercises it. She calls this “a permanent recall“. Practising can – as described before – also be not-to-do, when a practitioner rejects her ”good“ or ”bad“, ”I like it“ or ”I don't like it“. This has a consequence that she can more easily enjoy what really is there and can also see things that she would otherwise not see.

For the people that have practised it for years, the most important comprehension seemed to be to see oneself as an active self that can make a difference, inside and outside. A practitioner is not put in a situation but through this new view, she has a moment of freedom. This can lead to “a more balanced state of feelings” or as one interviewee described:

An unshakable form of inner life develops. Peace and power that are not depended from external condition, give space for sovereign life management. What is also there is the new creativity to find the way out of situation where the common feeling is hopelessness. (Interview)

To me the most important question was: “Are these emotions really a part of me or are they something alien? Even if I identify myself with these emotions – after all they are MY emotions – I can still ask whether I can really feel me in them.”

Another comprehension occurred when I asked myself: “How does it bring me forward when I keep blaming myself? If not (at all!), could I find another, a better way to move on?”

4.3.4 Summary

When trying to interpret interviewees' descriptions of their experiences regarding the exercise of positivity, I soon noticed the fullness of life that floods from experiences. There are some of the qualities and characteristics included this summary. The three steps – challenge, practising and consequences – I have composed into the following embodiments. These are: 1) to wake up or to

stop, thereby engendering new feelings; 2) to do, so as to change the social situation; 3) to be active, thereby engendering new abilities. Next I'll take some examples of these characteristics.

To wake up is like a first step when noticing that something goes or is wrong in relation to the world or to oneself. On the next step a practitioner tries to stop what she feels that she is doing wrong. She tries to pull herself out of the stream that is carrying her into wrong inner or outer deeds. Or she is not just simply answering to the world in a way that the world is coming towards her or how her feelings naturally would react. This can be very challenging for example, when being angry. To let go of a 'justified' feeling is usually hard.

When a practitioner has woken up and tried to do something, there arises new feelings and questions about herself. They are for example connected to the limited and unpractised: these are naturally one-sided tendencies to perceive only certain things or to have a certain feeling with which she enters into social situations. She can ask herself, if she has a complete picture of the situation or if she is even striving for it. Or does she naturally think that she is always right and the others are wrong? Through these feelings, her reflection about her own part of the creation of the social situation becomes clearer.

Finally a practitioner does something to make a change in her attitudes, in her reactions and by creating something, thus she begins to practise. It starts with refraining from judging and evaluating everything and instead to be open for what comes. She changes her point of view and through that she lets go, makes room also for herself and moves on. There is space for new feelings that she creates in herself: acceptance, admiration and respect.

A practitioner can take a step forward from changing her own attitude and behaviour into a bigger realm by trying to make a real change in a social situation. For example in meetings she can try to encourage developing new initiatives and ideas by finding the up-sides of them or through new creativity she finds ways out of dead-end situations.

Through that she has already come to the state when she has noticed that she doesn't have to be at the mercy of the outside world or situation but that she can be the active one, an agent that makes a change. It seems that the unconscious forces like antipathy and sympathy or the tendency for resignation make her life rigid. But in any moment she can activate herself and by deciding, she can make choices that make a change.

This pathway itself has been like a process: a practitioner has not only practised but in different situations she has practised practising in order to gain some new abilities. These can be inner peace

or unshakeable inner life, as one interviewee described. But also a form of memory through which she is able to remember the right way of acting and exercising in any situation, a kind of “permanent recall”. So even if life and social situations are every day new and unpredictable, a practitioner doesn’t have to start from the scratch, there are already some capacity and abilities. Not to talk about the ‘stoic’ attitude towards anything that comes.

4.4 Thought control

The exercise of controlling the thoughts is usually a five minute session at the same moment during the day. It’s about concentrating the thoughts on one simple theme, for example a safety-pin, a match, or a pencil, and letting one’s thoughts live consequently around it. The practitioner leads and moves her thoughts consciously and at least in the beginning on a short “leash”. It’s a “try out” to find a certain balance between dreaming away with one’s associations and controlling too much so that new thoughts cannot enter into “scene”. It belongs to the nature of exercise that it brings the abilities to its limits and through faithful repetition also maybe beyond former limits.

My interview questions regarding this exercise were the following: How is it to begin the daily exercise? Can you describe something that happens in you when you do this exercise? Does it make a difference in you in some direction? Can you feel that difference in your everyday life?

4.4.1 Challenge

How is it to start the exercise everyday? These are some descriptions about the daily routine and how it happens.

Some interviewees mentioned a threshold that is always there like a challenge. In the beginning it was more like a wall or a huge challenge even to concentrate the thoughts for a moment. A common experience was that the threshold becomes lower through practising. But it is always an effort to get going. There is a feeling of inadequacy given the task, of not having enough concentration, and being too easily distracted. On the other hand one interviewee described how she knows “when I am ‘in the zone,’ when I am not in the ordinary realm of thought. The experience is analogous to being IN the music, rather than just playing it.” (Interview)

There is some sort of routine in the beginning, but where the controlled, in-the-moment-born thoughts take one to, it’s always different. There is a certain strange contradiction between control and creation of thoughts. But after years of practising it can become simple and clear: “The

structure: observing the object as precisely as possible with one's senses, then absolute distance and peace (I'm not available for anything else)." (Interview)

As the exercise of positivity was possible to do alone, outside the social situation, the exercise of thought control can be done in social encounter. This is an example how individually a practitioner can vary and create these exercises according to the individual needs and situations in life.

I do it when I have a conversation for example with the parents. I stick to one theme, reject other inappropriate thoughts – so it's one moment in daily life. I decide that in that moment and then I do it. (Interview)

Seeking balance between sense perception and thinking is one of the basics of inner work. Some felt that "without conscious will in thinking, I am continually under the pressure of perceptions. One can say that thinking "neutralizes" the inner situation." Another balance is between inner and outer life, which came to one interviewee who described his experience in the following way: "I can go as much out as I can go in." Through the inner experiences a practitioner can see and penetrate the outer world, i.e. without them she passes many things easily by because there is no 'echo' in her.

As one interviewee described, after a few days she goes through a dead-space in which she is repeating what she has observed, or looking for patterns in her observation. This observation of repetition of thoughts that one has been thinking before is something that many interviewees noticed. This is also one of the challenges of this exercise: one is exercising the power of controlling new, "in-that-moment-born-thoughts" and not something that one can recall.

One difficulty is that a practitioner creates a 'system'. She follows a course of thoughts like a track, and it becomes dead and just a routine.

When I started, there were many kind of distractions: New thoughts about what was experienced that day (past) or what would be done next (future). There was a selection of songs sounding in mind simultaneously, the buzz of different kinds of associations. Also there was a wish to change my position very often – anything but not to be there.

There were two main challenges at the time: How to come along with the new ability to think when it feels like taking the first steps as a child? How be faithful to the free decision to practise when it was as rewarding as emptying the sea with a spoon?

4.4.2 Practising

Here are some descriptions about the inner experiences and observations, what the process and procedures are during the exercise. These reflections seem to reveal something about the nature of the exercise itself but also the power of observing the activity of thinking and the ability to describe, to put it into words what really happens there inside.

A practitioner just starts to form her thoughts. One leads to another, they are like born from somewhere. Then she loses the thread, then she has to find herself again, the peace and concentration, and then she can continue. This may happen many times during the few minutes that this session lasts. She just dreams away, it was maybe a lack of power to concentrate and keep the thoughts on a short leash: everyday things, associations, emotions that can take her very far... But then something wakes her up and then she comes back to herself.

The thoughts that are born during the exercise vary a lot. Every day is also different. Is there enough intense willpower to stay on one 'line'? One interviewee crystallized the exercise in the following way:

Basically, the exercise "pulls me together." What is always unexpected is that if you persist with a particular object, you can have new thoughts about it, even when you were sure you had already exhausted the subject. You begin to see the object metaphorically with ever more depth and meaning to it. (Interview)

But even if a practitioner is already able to carry out the exercise it still stays as an exercise that has to be practised, "getting focused and peaceful" every time anew, as one interviewee said. It is also not always the case that new thoughts just flow. But it helps when she focuses without an intent, then something new arises, interest ignites and she can stay with the object longer.

I noticed that the flow of the exercise seems to differ with the mood of the day, for example how much a practitioner has to protect her thinking from horizontal, 'right' or 'wrong' thoughts regarding of the content of the exercise.

Thought control exercise also brings a practitioner into very intimate encounter with her thinking: "I learn closely to know how I think: what kind of irrelevant thoughts live their own life and how I relate to them. Not a very pleasant encounter because it shows clearly that it's not what I imagined. This is a real awaking!" (Practising diary)

4.4.3 Consequences of practising

After practising this exercise for years a practitioner can notice some consequences of this strict attempt to control one's thoughts.

A practitioner can follow how her moods come and go.

But this exercise takes me like a step away and after the (practising) session it is different. I'm much more relevant, rational, and friendly – it is like it is. I can do very fast that what I have to do. (Interview)

For example in conversation she can notice quite soon when someone is only preaching and when there is something to take seriously, she can differentiate between the essential and the insignificant.

It also seems that this exercise transforms the life of thinking by bringing thinking into connection with perception.

To penetrate the perception with one's thought; take over that (content) what perception brings with it. The aim is that thinking would be in accordance with perceptions. Thinking itself warms the perception up and "frees" it, thinking becomes alive. (Interview)

One interviewee described also the process of evolution of thoughts by describing how the thoughts become energetic, movable and less "material". This process creates a feeling of light and of purifying one's thoughts.

The difference can be noticed in many ways. What it creates when a practitioner puts aside some time on a regular basis but also when she doesn't. The difference can be very subtle and it requires practising to notice the small changes. But as one interviewee said, it "enables unexpected solutions to evolve in daily life" such as "meeting the right person at the right moment so that that person can help you solve a particular problem even though you had not thought of that person as part of the solution until you met them". These kinds of things may not happen without practising – or they remain unnoticed.

Practising leads to a different kind of relation to the social life: "Also the environment has felt warmth instead of cold when I, for example, 'correct' the people around me." (Interview) On the other hand some interviewees had noticed when there passed days without practising: "It's much more chaotic and I'm more unsatisfied with myself." Or if she stops the practice for more than three days, she begins to feel "untuned" with respect to a subtle but definite feeling of being "in synch" or "in harmony" with her own tasks, with her "destiny tasks." (Interview)

The thought control exercise seems to bring also practical benefits. Interviewees brought experiences like being more able to make “an adequate analysis of the problem or resolve a complicated situation, etc. I have a new courage and clarity for that.” It also has brought new dimensions of time and peace. “I can stay longer with a thought, listen better, and observe with greater clarity – taking time to SEE.” as one interviewee said. Another interviewee had also noticed what has happened to him in his normal routines.

Normally my thoughts just come and go. Then I planned what I wanted to think and just thought that. This was a new potential. I also had the problem that I walked in nature and I didn't see nature. I could have my thinking as my chosen activity and then look at nature, not mixing these two but separating them. (Interview)

My experience was that through the exercising, it's possible to feel an inner grip towards the thinking. A practitioner can hold her thought, stop everything (the flow of thoughts) and keep only that one thought and not just let it lead to other thoughts. It can be described like an inner hand that could keep a thought in its grip and look at it from various points of view. This can be a powerful experience: “If I close, nothing can open it; if I open, nothing can close it.” (Practising diary)

Also that which I had undertaken was suddenly done very fast and there developed the ability to penetrate other people's thoughts and follow the course of their thinking. This happened also with my own thinking when I was preparing something and suddenly I could see clearly the right directions how to proceed with my thoughts. There can also be a new clarity. I could feel more effective because distraction around couldn't affect me so much and there was less distraction in me.

Thus this exercise “helped me with new capacity to meet the challenges in the world's many distractions, where clear thinking is asked in a moment.” (Practising diary)

4.4.4 Summary

Within this exercise there are some characteristics that are pointed out next. The three steps – challenge, practising and consequences – I have composed into following categories: preparation, presence and thinking, distractions, death of thinking, evolution of thinking, and some positive consequences of practising.

Many interviewees described how there is a pre-condition to start the exercise. Like a preparation for this exercise a practitioner comes to oneself, finds her inner peace and quiet and pulls herself together.

When a practitioner starts the exercise there is lower or higher threshold, depending mostly on how long and how often she manages to do this exercise. There are thresholds into two factors in this exercise: Coming into presence, i.e. that she really comes into the moment and puts everything else aside. Then coming into thinking that requires one to strive, struggle and exert effort, because it's not natural.

There are many kinds of distractions that a practitioner only becomes conscious of when she starts to practise. Her emotional life creates inadequate thoughts from inside, while there are quite often something to distract from outside. There she notices how much power she has and would need in order to keep the distractions away. She experiences also her laziness during the exercise and how tiredness affects in the situation.

When a practitioner has concentrated on one thing for awhile, she notices that her interest decreases. It can happen that she starts to follow the thoughts that she has already thought for many times before along with the patterns that go with them. Or she tries to find a new approach or thought in the 'old'.

After a while a practitioner notices that there is some evolution in thinking and in thoughts if she is able to compare them to the former ones. Thoughts come to have more form and clarity; thinking has more power on its own.

There opens up the world of consequences that a practitioner can experience when she regularly does this exercise. She finds in herself a new power to concentrate, fewer distractions from inside and less effect from outer distractions. She notices more awareness, interest and through that a new quality of listening. She can stay longer with one thing, in one situation, and a new 'slowness' appears, for example, to really see things. In thinking she can feel herself more logical; she can make adequate analysis and more precise solutions in situations. She feels a new grip to grasp things with her thinking.

4.5 Meditation

Meditation in this context means something practical, more like a tool for better understanding the world and oneself and through that to be more part of the world, to feel oneself connected with it. Having a picture of meditation that is alien to the world or some sort of an escape from reality means the opposite of this. Here, it is an approach that tries to penetrate the surface to see the width

and depth of things. This usually requires as a precondition an inner peace through which a person comes to herself rather than only being involved with sense perceptions. In this quietness she is able to turn her gentle awareness to the content she has decided to meditate. In this listening quality an encounter between one and the content can come into being.

My interview questions regarding this exercise were the following: How do you find the moment for inner peace in order to meditate? Can you describe something that happens in meditation according to your experience? What are your experiences of being able to gain knowledge/to gain powers through meditation? Have you experienced deeper insights about the things you have meditated? If yes, what kind of deeper insights have you come upon? Have you experienced any difference in meditating issues and meditating humans? If yes, can you describe something about that difference? Have you noticed a difference regarding your inner power through meditation? If yes, what kind of difference and does this difference have a relation to your everyday life?

4.5.1 Challenge

The following descriptions show how individually people organize their lives and on the other hand what it requires for someone to have the right conditions for this inner state.

Some interviewees meditate as a first thing in the morning before they get involved with the daily routines. Some mentioned that after doing something in the morning it is much more difficult to get into the meditative mood any more. Getting to oneself and finding an appropriate peace is already a challenge that can take several minutes depending on one's inner state. When doing it in the middle of a day is also a challenge, because there is always something that can be seen as a temptation not to do it. Some do it in the evening while others find it almost impossible because of tiredness.

The rhythm of meditation is a big help in confronting that challenge: a practitioner doesn't have to start from the scratch every time because rhythm lowers the threshold. The stronger the rhythm, the more easily it becomes part of a good habit life. Some interviewees said that they have come to the conclusion that they use five minutes in a day for something totally empty and how easily and unnoticed this happens – it was an awakening for them.

To have a regular meditative life is also a social question. With the family it has to be organized in one way or another – both can work... Some interviewees meditate so that no-one else knows about it and they don't want to talk about it with anyone – for example when no-one else is at home or when preparing lessons. Some have openly declared it to a spouse but as one interviewee expressed: "I think that my inner peace and my meditative life is more problematic to my wife than it is for

me...” Withdrawing from social life is part of the life of the practitioner. It also seems that most of the interviewees carry this part of their lives secretly in themselves.

It can also happen that a practitioner is observing her process:

I become aware of this and fall out of the meditation. So part of the struggle is to *stay* in the process, not to get there and lose it. Often sounds in the environment distract me, although fortunately, I have a quiet situation. But if the central heat comes on or the candle crackles, it can throw me off. Another distraction is the body. Something itches, or is stiff. (Interview)

Even if a practitioner has practised meditation already for years, it still means that she struggles with herself and distractions. It’s not easy to be in another world even for a moment while being in this world.

Many interviewees described their preparation, often some sort of routine through which they “tune” themselves into the right inner mood. It can be as little as to breathe out and then she is ready “for the open movement, something like searching. I go into myself and I’m open for that what comes.” (Interview) Or it can happen “through movement such as eurythmy; listening to the world around and letting it go; finding a comfortable posture and entering the stillness.” (Interview) Habits are as various as the ways of meditating; notable is that almost anyone has noticed a need to prepare themselves in order to be ready for ‘going in’.

Some interviewees mentioned also that they search for a quiet place to be alone. Others said that they do it mostly by travelling and by being in noisy or crowded railway stations.

I had noticed a difference regarding the meditation between these two:

When I really want to go deep, then I need a total peace and quite, the less distraction from within and without the better. In a train there is an extra effort to put all the noises away and I feel that part of the power that would go for deepening the content goes for concentrating and keeping myself together despite of the surroundings. (Practising diary)

For me it seemed that really to do a meditation is never a routine that a practitioner just does because it requires always an effort, putting oneself into it, readiness to step into the new and unknown. Thus it requires “courage, devotion and will, and again will”. (Practising diary)

4.5.2 Practising

To be able to answer the question about practising seemed to require careful observation, practical skill to describe, and sort of sensitiveness that one doesn’t say more than one is able to. It follows some encounters with the realm of meditation.

A practitioner starts to meditate; eyes closed, repeating words silently, in oneself but in no place, rather to be nowhere. There is a dialogue between her and these words but not in a normal sense. It is more intense, more sensitive and fragile. A dialogue ensues in that she holds herself back on the one side and looses herself on the other side, between courage to enter the new and fear to step into the unknown.

Another aspect involves to see, like one interviewee described, how the thoughts leave the ordinary realm of daily experience, enter a different realm, losing track of time, and having time become elastic. A split second can be infinite or one minute can be very long. When time is not experienced in the normal way, then a practitioner knows she is where she wants to be in the process.

Through meditation a practitioner can become aware how the space behind is important. By nature, however, it's weak. But when this 'backspace' comes to awareness, it can be a strong experience. The words transform themselves into movements, gestures and courses. It's as though words would do something, the concepts disappear, and the word itself goes quiet. Therefore, for example, like one interviewee mentioned, "a divine light" cannot be grasped otherwise than through meditation. When this concept is thought externally, a practitioner gets nowhere or just a short way but when she meditates, then she has a possibility to think with pictures that are full of a quality of experience, and through them one gets forward and into the depths.

One interviewee described when she enters the "space of meditation – space takes on another dimension, I would describe it as expanding; time stands still or expands; the sense world dissolves and there is an awareness of being not bound by body." To meditate is entering into the world above/beyond the senses. In living with a word, thoughts may play with it, images arise, and gradually a practitioner finds that a word also has its own life.

When a practitioner meditates a verse she tries to dive into the word. Then the word has an effect, it comes maybe a picture or an experience. She can understand the verse differently, there is a new thought that wasn't there before, or a connection becomes obvious. It can be like going through the 'knot'. Like a squeezed concentration and release. Or drops from above that simply flow... Some descriptions move into the direction of the poetic, "the only way to catch them", as one interviewee said.

Some of the interviewees described their experiences of how the meditation belongs to their everyday life and how it lives there. One interviewee described that "even after a harmonious day, the tools have to be sharpened and the working room has to be cleaned, that is what happens: cleaning, preparing, and understanding." These words come close to the experience that many

interviewees had that they stay as human being in real sense only by doing inner work. When these three procedures are done regularly the relation to the world is open and less loaded by yesterday's issues.

Some interviewees pointed out how it's all the same what happens, for the meditation stays. It makes a feeling of independence whatever happens in life. For example searching for happiness can be a motive but this kind of activity is independent of it. It also makes some interviewees strive more strongly for meaningful deeds, so that the world makes sense for the pupils. It also brings to the encounter with oneself: "On the one hand it gives courage and trust; on the other hand it wakes the self-consciousness up and shows me what I'm still not able to reach or do..."

In meditation there is a practitioner and her will, she keeps repeating the words and keeps the distractions away but that is like an external side of the inside. There is the world within these words and her sentient soul (the soul that feels) touching these words gently. Somewhere in the background there is also her consciousness trying to hold this 'everything' – including herself – together. (Practising diary)

This was a bewildering observation: how many different kinds of "consciousness" can there be in one moment?

In some point I noticed how my feelings and attitudes became meditative activity. I lived a moment with the words that had certain content that I trust, that is true and right for me. Through repeating these words I get to know them more closely. They can open themselves like flowers, slowly. They are much more than by first look I can foresee, they have deeper dimensions. First they are just words, something in everyday sense, but when repeating them I notice that there are worlds in them, gestures and pictures, and they have a deep moral content. This penetration and finding something universal, meanings in words, is because of this dialogue. Something new happens when I open towards this 'new'. (Practising diary)

Interest plays an important part in meditation. There is warmth that is felt in body temperature or in relation to the words. This happens when this interest is

real, true and selfless – based on true interest. A good meditation session is like a right and honestly-put question. It's open and it's listening, not striving for an aim and not forcing for something. It feels like a classical question put in the evening and it wanders through the night and in the morning there may be an answer, if a practitioner is ready for it. It feels like it's a real answer, not something quick and superficial. (Practising diary)

Meditation brings a new relation to the words that are used everyday. Meditation seems to give the originality, the original feeling of the words back, after they have been 'worn out' by the everyday talking that has flattened them. Words seem to be magical after meditation; there are the depths and

secrets there that can be revealed by having courage to move on the path towards the heart of the word.

Or they can turn into strange dream-like pictures:

I saw the words like bombs that have an explosive character, and I was a man who disposed of the bombs. Very gently I had to get closer to the kernel of the bomb; otherwise it would just explode in my face. I think this was the most powerful experience that I ever have had about the quality of the word – they really have this all changing, all re-structuring character. (Practising diary)

4.5.3 Meditating pupils

There are many kinds of meditation and many kinds of meditating pupils. A teacher can meditate with or without using a teacher's meditation. While a class teacher meditates her own pupils, a subject teacher has to develop her own way to deal with sometimes over 300 pupils. Here is my example from the class teacher's perspective.

Through her daily work she makes various observations of her pupils: the qualities in several expressions in being, behaving, and doing becomes familiar but there are always some riddles in them. With these riddles she goes home and after her evening preparation, she goes through her pupils one by one by letting them rise as inner images. She stops at every one of them, looks at them and into their eyes and tries to see the best possible in them. After that she meditates the first teacher meditation that gives her a spiritual attitude for her relation to her pupils and to her work.

As a first thing in the morning she does everything the same but the accent: pupils are more concrete and a reality, connected now through the second teacher's meditation. There she sometimes (and when it flows: quite often) received ideas about what to do with certain pupils and how to deal with some issues with individual pupils or with the class. Meditation 'corrects' her in a sense. When in the evening her image of a pupil is somehow misty, in the morning a pupil looks clearly into her eyes when she has her as a picture. Also when in the evening she had thoughts and ideas what to do, in the morning these thoughts had a will quality: there was something concrete to grasp. Through this new understanding, she gets closer to the pupil and can better help the pupil in her specific challenges and her process of development in general. Here follows an example of the first teacher meditation:

The way the first teacher meditation starts:

“In the semblance of the sense-being”

is for me a gateway to my pupils and for my teaching. It tells me straight that what I see in front of my eyes in the classroom is not more than 'shine' but only through

this 'shine' can I reach out for the real being that is inside in each one of them. By working my way to them through the meditative work has been my path to get to know them, to get a meaningful relation to them. This makes a foundation for my educational work with the pupils. Without this I would go wrong much more easily and my education and teaching would go by and won't reach them. Through these meditative moments with them my pedagogical work is individualized and I have a feeling that they recognize it. (Practising diary)

4.5.4 Meditating subjects

It belongs to the everyday preparation of a teacher that she plans her teaching and educational work for the next day. Obviously there are myriads of individual ways of doing it. When she uses the meditative approach, she does the same 'ground work' as usual, trying to see the issue from many perspectives and trying to understand why she teaches it, what is the essential of it, and what would be the best possible way to deal with it with these particular pupils. Beyond this is that she lets these questions live and 'move' in her meditative consciousness in order to get under the surface of the issue.

Preparing the lessons is an example that one interviewee explained. He starts by asking what he knows about the theme. He takes the theme in his consciousness and he starts to talk with it. He had noticed before that his preparation before was mostly dry and irrelevant. He decided that he can let the tacit knowledge talk and noticed that it gives more for the students, the issue transforms into something simpler and clearer, and comes closer to the people. He thinks that this kind of spiritual effort and its freedom to consider the issues from different angles lets them ascend in the soul. It's his way to achieve much better and livelier results in his teaching. He has a feeling that the younger generations use these kinds of methods more easily than his generation.

Here follows a description by one interviewee about his way of preparing and executing the history lesson in the 10th grade in a Steiner-Waldorf school. To give a comprehensive picture of the preparative and educative work, I quote the description as a whole but divided so that the consequences of this preparation are in the following sub-chapter Consequences:

One takes one theme or idea to the centre of one's concentration. In this case it was a democracy in Greece.

The groundwork that one does is that one studies all the facts that there are about this theme, also the new perspectives and the new results of research. That is so to say the facts that one knows then in one's intellect. And that is also what one can do with one's students during the lesson: for example to make a list of the facts together. In this case the reasons and the circumstances in which the democracy was born, who was there involved in this process etc.

But back to the preparation work: One takes thus one issue in order to deepen it. One looks at the situation and asks what it says to me, not only from historical perspective. Let one live with this question couple of days and slowly there is born an inner picture of the whole situation. And this picture is like a phenomenon of nature and one can look at it, how it speaks for itself. Thus one has to let go of the picture so that it speaks.

What happens through this process is that it gives a larger freedom. First from the studied content – it's not any more only in one's head, one can move more freely inside with the facts, one is not so 'stuck' with the intellectual knowledge. Secondly it's not a rucksack, something that is external and like a bear that one carries into classroom but something that one has made one's own and at the same time it has become something more. Something new that was never before there and that one doubts one could have thought appears through this process. It also seems that one gets nearer to the content so that one connects oneself with the history so that finally it is part of one's life.

(Interview)

4.5.5 Consequences

Through years of repetition some interviewees could describe some things that they have noticed had happened through meditative practising. There are issues such as noticing that the picture of oneself is changing. It is possible to accept this because confronting the strengths and weaknesses makes one stronger. Answering these challenges and the responsibility that one takes on in doing so led some interviewees to feel that, for the first time, they found their inner freedom.

It comes basically from my attitude that I'm faithful to my practising... It has changed my view in relation to my work: I don't have a need to make things as easy as possible, and also this strange experience that I have had in this year that the issues don't 'drive' me more externally. (Interview)

Beginning to understand, to see the world or an issue in all its connections, its place in this world, and its relation to other issues has been one of the main consequences of this work. To begin to feel the depth of things led some interviewees to see that meditation is some sort of "sinking" or diving down.

Some interviewees shared their experiences of how meditation brought insights and a comprehension that one has gained only through meditative work. One interviewee told how he has had certain themes with which he had worked for years, for example the idea of childhood today. He had meditated it and then he wrote a book about it. He said that without this attitude and method, he wouldn't ever write this book. He felt that he had reached a certain wholeness and deep ripeness in this meditative process.

Another interviewee said that meditation has given her the capacity to create a distance without a cold and analytic gesture. It can be seen as taking one's distance with a warm heart. Meditation or

deeper contemplation, the experience is looking beyond the immediate, the surface and seeing connections, possibilities that are not logical. It also helps to remain “on theme” longer.

It’s also true for human relationships; they wake up to reflective thinking that doesn’t give any immediate answers. When a practitioner meditates this kind of thing, she lets them be in the centre of her consciousness and let’s herself start off freely. This can create a kind of impression; she understands something that she feels has to do with destiny. Then she puts a question mark in it, she tests this impression and doesn’t take it overly seriously, because she doesn’t really understand what is it all about and she wants to have a free relationship towards it.

The consequences are in most cases very subtle – the insights are not immediately about the content of the mediation, but come with respect to other things. For example these include ideas about karmic relationships among others, or insights about the practitioner herself. They also encompass ideas about how to deal with human difficulties especially regarding adult students who are struggling with. Ideas about how to teach or to find the strength to keep going.

The consequences are also related to insights, which they deepen, when new insights come up as “unexpected forms of understanding, unexpected richness in experience, unexpected qualities of mercy and friendship occur.” (Interview)

One interviewee noticed how his images are based on pre-judgements and it is difficult to let the images just develop freely and let them link with the things that he didn’t know or even imagine before. But: “When I use meditation, I don’t really know in advance what I’m learning. That’s why freeing oneself from these biases is important.” (Interview)

One question focussed on the matter if there is an experiential difference when a practitioner meditates a person or an issue. Most of the interviewees had experienced a difference. One difference felt was that a person is a bigger mystery, there are more question marks. When a practitioner has had an understanding about someone, she usually has to weigh it in her mind; likewise, interpretation of a human aspect creates still more considerations. That’s why she easily feels that her experience can never explain the utmost being of any human being. That is the reason why her experience of meditation about a person is more difficult; the issues to consider are more straight forward when one can comprehend and compare them altogether as with a non-human subject.

When a practitioner meditates a human being she tries to connect herself with the being of that person. She has seen that this effort helps when she gets together with this person; she gets closer to

that person and more easily finds words that this person can understand and that can therefore help that person.

One interviewee told how with her meditation on a person, it's so that the being of that person comes immediately towards her. That's why it's not always that easy to stay objective and open-hearted because the first encounter with the person is often what he is in all his problematic personality. That's why such work needs some reverence and also caution because already thoughts have an effect. But in short a practitioner would say that when she has intense thoughts about someone then she can usually notice an immediate change in the encounter, and she can guess that the change has happened in her. It is also more difficult to keep focused and objective about a person. Meditating on persons more quickly leads to the soul activity of sympathy/antipathy, which interferes with the purity of the attempt at spiritual experience, of pure thought.

With an issue it is easier for many to stay and to concentrate with one thing much longer and not to be distracted so easily. For example a meditative way of preparing the lessons makes possible a concentrated and intense result that can more effectively reach the audience. It's easier to separate the essential from nonessential and concentrate on the former one.

There is also a possibility to reach some deeper images and experiences about a person as one interviewee did:

Becoming aware of something (about a person) that is not evident in life. For me it gave greater understanding and ability to work with the person. In one person I experienced pain that I could not understand. When I carried this picture without building anything into it, it helped me be with the person. In another I saw in their persona a warrior and this image helped me work with them, appreciating their strength but not being overwhelmed. (Interview)

Some interviewees had experiences that meditation had strengthened their inner power. One of them felt that meditative activity is more about the forces and powers than knowledge and insight. The experience was that she herself becomes in her inner being, sovereign, independent, and more powerful. In everyday life she notices it seldom, and she also thinks that it's not the point of meditation. The meditation affects things more in an unconscious way and what she notices about the connection between the meditation and everyday life is something very spare.

Nevertheless most of the interviewees mentioned many benefits that they have gained through meditative work. Growing patience is one of the most important things that one interviewee could see. But the most important thing for him is the possibility more and more to act and speak from his inner centre. Working with a consciousness of 'the other' decreases the need to be egoistic. Though

it is always there, it is possible to let others act, speak and allow life to evolve. At the same time there can be a heightened awareness of when to act and speak. So a practitioner can be active in two ways: to give space and take it - it's a question of timing.

Some interviewees shared their experiences about the increased general wellbeing that meditative practising brings. For some it really helps, giving insights and energy. When life changes continually, the biggest challenge is finding the balance between the inner and outer worlds. Meditation helps to find it. For another interviewee, her whole life gets an energy boost by continued meditation, also better balance and better health. If continually done, also the intellectual and practical capacities improve.

Through meditation some interviewees attained very intimate encounters and relations to themselves and they could also reflect their experiences. One related that meditation makes it possible to feel more “tuned” and “in tune” with her higher self and her higher tasks. She feels that there is a greater possibility to serve the larger picture. It has to do with gaining some perspective, some distance from herself. One interviewee added her experience about the way to become more authentic:

Practise has probably helped me to give time to the inner life and to work with a greater awareness of the greater workings of life, whatever one chooses to call them. The process of change is to meet the negative side of yourself, accept it and in the process begin to transform it. It can be a real struggle even like having every non-essential aspect of self burnt away, or sometimes drowning or being torn to pieces. Other changes evolve with life like the gradual transformation running water has on a stone. If I have a limp I may not be able to overcome it but I can remember to stand straight and sometimes forget the hindrances and even learn to dance! (Interview)

Another interviewee reflected the origin of power relative to his age. He felt more feeble than powerful. But through meditation he gets some power that makes him feel that he is much younger. If his centre finds a connection, if the connection streams, then he feels the power in him. If he would rely only on himself, he would feel nothing but being old and tired. For him the question of being powerful is not a question of feeling powerful but what one can really give to other people.

Here is the second part of his meditative preparation for lessons:

While teaching, this process shows its benefits. It is possible for one to deal with the content much more freely with the students. When one has everything as possibilities in oneself, one can be more sensitive for the sometimes subtle questions and also to the atmosphere of the class. One can improvise in a sense that really meets the needs of the students in a moment. This creates a true authentic feeling in teaching and it comes close to the idea of *Bildung*. Also the basic feeling through this approach is that – when a teacher really succeeds to make the contents his own – the world is one, the world has

sense. And this is something that the student can feel to be very inviting. The origin of democracy in Greece is not any more some fact outside the student but an experience through which a student can connect herself with the world, to feel a belonging to the world.

As a high school teacher one has a strong feeling that this experience is the one that the students are looking for. They are looking for the experience of presence and with this meditative method a teacher can bring this experience to the students in any subject. It is not that easy always to grasp that the young people are constantly in the process of becoming and in order to reach them one has to step into the same stream. And this is actually some sort of ‘incarnation’ process for both of them: for the teacher to really come to the presence in him within the content and for the student it is like a step to come here, to the earth and to really learn its conditions. This will to learn – says my experience – can a teacher only reach when he has succeeded to bring the teaching into that very moment, into a presence.” (Interview)

I had a feeling that without meditative activity I wouldn’t be able to fulfil or answer the needs that I’d be confronted from the world, both pupils and issues. Especially situations, problems, etc. that are like putting my understanding and my inner powers to the test.

The content that a practitioner meditates sinks into the soul so that there is first an understanding in thought, then a feeling of the connections or a gaining the bigger picture about the things and finally it can lead to an initiative. The thing becomes a part of her. It had gone through a process and transformation and finally it was individualised as through a digestive process. This process could take a long time, but it was sometimes received better than many other similar initiatives, maybe because meditation is to let go on many levels, also by leaving people free to receive the initiative.

Meditative life also sometimes gives a feeling that I don’t have to run after things:

Sometimes I feel I’m even ahead of things; sometimes the things just come towards me as though I could pull them from the world. They are like grace, the opposite of the “teachings” by the positivity exercise. Although those teachings are also grace...
(Practising diary)

4.5.6 Summary

The experiences of meditative activity seemed to be the widest part of the results of this research. Even though people have an individual meditative ‘culture,’ there is still some common qualities and characteristics that many people share.

Next I will point out three steps: conditions, practising and consequences. These appear with the following characteristics: challenge, preparation, resistance and temptation, quality of ‘another world’, attitude, self-knowledge, authenticity, quality of a word, object speaks, empowering, and gaining independence.

Although a practitioner is used to meditate every day and has a strong habit life and rhythm, it seems to remain a challenge and struggle for most of the people to find a time and space for meditation everyday. There are always some things unpredictable, accompanied by new temptations that are testing the will to stay with the decision once made. Through these challenges a practitioner can notice that her inner freedom is put to the test: Am I able to stick to my free decision and am I able to move freely in my meditative activity? Also she has to withdraw from social life – which needs some understanding from the environment.

Quite a few people mentioned a small preparation before starting: let go of everyday life, breathe out and relax. Then a practitioner is present and ready to start.

There are more challenges when she steps into meditation. She finds an inner resistance that doesn't want to enter into the world that meditation penetrates. Behind this resistance is, for example, fear of the unknown: it belongs to meditation that it is unpredictable and a practitioner doesn't know what kind of encounters will happen.

When a practitioner enters into the world of meditation she notices the difference from the sense world. The meditative world is more fragile, intense and sensitive. The ideas, pictures, thoughts, movements and gestures are more alive – they have a life in themselves. Also she notices inner warmth on the one hand in herself but also in relation to the contents.

When a practitioner moves inside this world, she notices that her attitude and gesture towards things becomes more important, or she becomes much more conscious about her relation to things. In order to proceed she feels a need to have an open gesture, a listening and questioning quality. Also the moral qualities such as being real, true and selfless she can feel to be important in an encounter within this world.

In this intimacy and depth, a practitioner also confronts herself. Her self-consciousness and self-understanding come to a new level – she has a possibility to learn to know herself in a much deeper way.

In “word” meditation, the words begin to have a different quality and meaning than in everyday use. The depth of the words can open up, and this process can change a practitioner's relation to speaking and language.

When a practitioner uses meditation as a tool for deepening her relation to the issues or to people, she often starts off freely in order to let the ‘object’ speak for itself so that she is not on the way. Somehow it is also the case that this approach belongs to the proper way to work with her

experiences or impressions. Therefore, she must question and somehow 'test' everything; it's not a question of believing.

A special content of a meditation is a person. Many interviewees described their different attitude and approach to persons. It requires more reverence, respect and caution than for example word meditation. A person stays a mystery even if a practitioner gets closer – that was a common experience. There was also a difficulty of meditating a person and still staying as objective as with some issue.

Many people felt that meditation is an empowering act. Some felt that the power comes from the encounter on the boundary surface, others that it's from the connection "when it flows".

Meditation seemed to have positive consequences from little things like the patience from the experience that allow a practitioner to be able to act more from her centre. Also the qualities like independence and sovereignty were mentioned.

4.6 Meanings for practising

After asking in detailed the descriptions of the experiences of the interviewees it was time to ask, what kind of meaning they give or how they value inner practising in their lives.

One interviewee saw that meditation, especially teacher meditation, has a central place in the life of teachers. By the time it becomes a well for renewal. Without meditative activity the idea side of education, i.e. the ideas and the attitude that come only through this inner work, dries slowly out. One interviewee also experienced how "time is being squeezed away; the will is weak and constantly being undermined."

The cultivation of the inner being puts a practitioner in a position to overcome her egotism. A common example was the ability to connect oneself with the experience of a child who was struggling and how a teacher could better understand where the source of his difficulty lay. Or how one interviewee felt her connection with the boundaries of her 'sources':

Although I always feel inadequate to the task of meditation, I feel that without it I would lose much of my inspiration for the work I do. I have a lot of responsibilities, and I feel that I am "not alone" as long as I remember that I am not alone. I also feel that without it I would more likely succumb to depression.

She also felt that some of her strength for the task of swimming up stream, for standing in the world as a representative of anthroposophy, comes from the inner work. It is not just mediation, but inner work in general which has enabled her to strive to improve on her weaknesses.

The concrete benefits of inner practising for a teacher in everyday working life like presence, stamina and strength to fight burn-out and stay level headed, were pointed out. One interviewee also stressed that after a teacher has given herself in a class room, she should “close the door”. By that he meant that she should shift the intention, chose the direction, put her intention where her inner decision takes her to.

For some it was a question of bringing the development of individuality further and learn to know one’s own individuality better. Meditation had a great value for everyone. Through meditation a practitioner creates “a place in which she can be independent of external impact” (Interview). The more she practises it the easier it goes because it leads her to the essential, the kernel of things, the genuine ideas. It’s possible to have valuable comprehension and become creative.

Through meditation I have a contact with the being of things and through that – together with the exercises of thinking – it’s possible to grasp the being so that by teaching the pupils can easily understand it. (Interview)

For some it was essential that it gives energy. When regularly exercised the soul feels refreshed and energised. A practitioner can also stay calm in the middle of catastrophes. Meeting the spiritual origins of existence helps with setbacks and declines. Because she has peace in her, she can carry load and stress, and through her being she can radiate this peace and maybe give silent orientation for others. Through the inner powers it is also possible to ‘embrace’ the other with the warmth. By practising she concentrates the powers and in situation needed she radiates them out.

For most of the interviewees the practising itself is the centre of real life. For one interviewee the aim was that all the deeds of the day will be impuled through this centre. “Practising is an island of freedom in the stream of necessity.” (Interview) Or it is simply the essence of current existence to do this as well as possible. Inner practising gives independence, power to decisions. It’s an impulse that has a lot to do with the personal development, not so much with the career. It gives powers to stand in front of the world, “to see its superficiality and injustice and try to do something about it.” (Interview)

To give room for a spirit, to take orientation to everyday life – that doesn’t come by itself, a practitioner has to will it and she can only find the route for that through practising. This part of spirituality – gained through practising – brings meaning to things; otherwise it can stay as

irrelevant and indifferent. For one interviewee practising equals life: “It’s a part of me and my life, like eating and sleeping. Inner practising was my first own impulse. It comes still first, it goes through everything.” (Interview)

For some it was an inner conviction that through meditation he learns to know the spiritual world instead of believing in it. “Practising is searching, not finding.” (Interview) When some of the interviewees didn’t practise for a while they felt “there is a gap, emptiness in my soul”, but when they did it they felt better prepared for my day – better “equipped”.

“For me it has been part of my life ever since I started. It has also given a feeling for me that I can stay on my decision, that nothing is stronger than that. I have made a deal with my life and I have a power to keep it whatever comes.

The moments of inner practising like ‘radiate’ into life. First to the moments before practising and then I slowly become aware, somehow sensible for the whole life: I have a will that my practising has a better, stronger impact – taking care of the depths into which practising effects. Through this ‘taking care’ I also become conscious that I easily destroy something that I cannot see. I think that it has a lot to do with the ability of observation, noticing, presence and becoming more sensitive, both inwardly and externally.

To my working life it has had a structuring quality. I have always started my preparation for the lessons with my inner practising and also closed the session with it. My inner practising has made it easy on the one hand to work with things in certain quality beyond everyday life – the same quality that I have been striving for lessons and my pupils – and on the other hand the regular work of preparing for the next day at school has given structure for my inner practising.” (Practising diary)

5 Discussion and reflections

In this chapter I will discuss my presentation in connection with my research questions presented in chapter one: What are the teacher's experiences and reflections regarding the challenges, the processes and the consequences of doing inner practising, what idea of human being emerges as a fruit of inner practising, and what is the nature of inner practising.

This chapter is structured in the following way: First there are general characteristics about inner practising. Before the processes of practising – challenges, practising and consequences – there are introduced the motives of practising and afterwards the meanings of practising. At the end there are some reflections about this study, and some perspectives about the question of the idea of human being.

5.1 Inner practising

When a practitioner takes a ball into her hand and tries to throw it to her other hand so that it always makes always the same kind of a curve, she is already practising consciously something very simple and at the same time something very difficult. Actually, in this simple exercise there are the elements of practising: there is an intention and aim (purpose), there is an actual act (movement), there is an experience and a feeling (of presence, confidence, and flow) before and during this act and also afterwards, there is an outcome, effect and result even if it's hidden. In short: it's a process.

If a teacher takes a stand of willing to learn from experiences and meetings in every day classroom situations, she is already approaching the idea of inner practising. What is inner practising? It's an act of will to change and transform something, to develop something further and to learn something new. It is the willingness to do something for one's being and for one's abilities in order to make things better, to "get into the evolutionary flow" like one interviewee described. There are other names for this act of will like inner schooling or inner work but I prefer inner practising because a teacher can take herself as a practitioner. A practitioner consciously allows herself to be on the path and to be a developing human being. She practises honestly and with commitment and the practising itself takes care of the rest – the entire extra she has to have are moments of peace to reflect her practising and its consequences.

Interestingly this is the core of education – or ‘human bildung’ (Menschenbildung). This is what a teacher tries to fish out in her pupils and students: learning, an interest for something new, also about themselves. Some interviewees noticed that this act is much easier when they can show or even be an example of an inner practitioner. According to my experience to be in this sense ‘in the same boat’ with pupils can change everything from the discipline to the most intimate atmospheres in a class room. When a teacher sees herself as practitioner in a process, she gives herself a better chance to understand her pupils. When the pupils feel – and they do! – that an adult is in a process of continuous change and in process of finding things, the process of learning becomes much more interesting for them.

What is perhaps the hardest part of practising is that it requires some denial of comfort and convenience of everyday life; withdrawal from social life and persistent struggle against pain in surpassing and self-confronting of oneself. On the other hand there might be benefits like for an athlete “as an outcome of sacrifice an athlete has raised to a quite new physical and mental level. He has achieved a touch to the hidden resources of the deepest corners of his soul.” (Niemi, 2008, p 241; my translation)

In order to really put herself on practising a practitioner has to strengthen her perseverance and will to confront difficulties, hindrances, and also temptations. It is important to see through her pretences, not to fall into self-deception, during the exercises. When she comes to her limits, the only way to progress is to learn to love the pain and the motivation and will to go on. To do one’s best is always a challenge, also in inner practising.

Learning by practising can be characterized in the following way: to be able to be disciplined, sticking into decisions, to be willing to sacrifice some comfort and through practising get to know oneself: one’s limits, abilities, and possibilities.

Thus real practising means first of all meaningful, regular repetition with the presence – sweat and feeling uncomfortable because of the resistance and transformation and letting go of the gained abilities, i.e. the safe ground. But as a reward there is a deep joy of development and being on ones way to oneself. This joy can be with justification compared with the joy of the child’s first steps.

The sense of inner practising, the transforming principle Nietzsche puts aphoristically into a larger scale: “And this secret spoke to me the life itself: “Look”, it said, “I am the one *that always has to surpass oneself.*” (Nietzsche, 2008, p 155; author’s italics; my translation) A practitioner is nothing that stays like she is – and some part of her also wants to keep her as she is – in these processes of practising but she is in continuous change.

5.2 Motives and will to practise

Bohnsack (2001) asks for individual motives for teachers (See chapter 2). To become motivated and to find ones will is possible by the various ways as the interviewees described.

In order to start to practise most interviewees seemed to go through a common way from becoming conscious that something's missing or is not in balance with feeling of the need to do something about it. According to my experience this step to the concrete deed is the biggest one and is not that often taken. It seems that those who take this step to inner practising are for some reasons convinced that inner practising will help their need. How – that could have been a further question.

There are two main motives to these answers. One motive is to develop oneself, i.e. to transform one's one-sided and 'raw' being and finding the will to practise again like as a child. To improve, change and become whole and stronger are the motives mentioned. There behind one can already sense different motive directions and different need that aim for certain exercises.

Another motive is to seek for balance. This seeking seems to be based on the consciousness about an unbalance, a consciousness that has a penetrating power to take one to practise. But first this consciousness has to be developed strong enough, and that leads again to the depths of an individual: why some people seem to live in unbalance without this kind of consciousness and what actually makes this consciousness become strong enough? However, to find a balance is something that belongs to the life of a human being; for example to find a balance between the ideals and one's being mean a life long seeking, like to find a mental balance requires some inner powers in everyday life. To develop oneself in order to be able to better meet the challenges of being a teacher is one way of seeking balance between two experiences in one: not to be able to and got to find some other sources.

There are two things to be noticed: a response to seek for better sources for strengthening ones inner, and to become conscious that one has to awake 'the real self'. Those sources a practitioner also needs when she is striving for balance between external and spiritual life – to become whole and to make her life whole. Notable is that once the consciousness has been woken up there is like no way to escape from it without doing something about it. In this process it is also possible to gain independence by confronting the individual challenges and solutions.

When interviewees described their motives – and also their practising – the individuality and individual life appears. The way the practitioner is connected with her life of practising and how she

deals with it is maybe an understatement to say that it is a way of life. It's a question if it could be otherwise, i.e. is it possible to lead the life of practising without given oneself to it.

5.3 Processes of practising

Here I reflect some of the processes of the exercises that were introduced in chapter 2 and described in detail through the practitioners' experiences in chapter 4. This sub-chapter is structured in the same way as the chapter presentation: challenge, practising, and consequences.

5.3.1 Challenge

Exercise in eurythmy

The small eurythmy exercise brings some basic challenges of will to the consciousness of a practitioner.

The exercise itself asks for balance in many ways. A practitioner soon notices that she cannot *have* balance – an analogue to a standing person who has to gain it in every moment – but she can through practising *find* it more easily than earlier because she practises all the time.

This exercise is seeking balance in movement from one 'state' to another. These tiny movements give possibilities to try to find a balance in the inner being so that it can also reflect in the external movement. Thus this exercise is no longer physical but through this new awareness a practitioner is more attentive and can also keep closer contact with herself. With this contact to herself a practitioner learns to value her path of practising because it becomes her inner guide through the processes of practising.

It's not a question of doing exercises only; a practitioner has to have a relation to both what she is doing and to herself. In this process she tries to find the right balance between effort and rest, struggle and pause (rhythm) and learns to listen to her. When she succeeds in this, the result can be as in an example from the world of sports: "a well-rested athlete looks forward to workouts, enjoys doing them, feels sharp and in control during training sessions and grows stronger afterward." (Fried, 1998, p 8) This would be an ideal for a teacher on her path to inner practising.

Surpassing one's being lazy in many ways, for example, by the temptation not to practise or by feeling bored by repetitions, can be a challenge everyday.

In inner practising it is basically a question of continuous repetition of simple inner movements. Repetition requires will to do the same over and over again. But when one looks carefully, it's

never the same. In these process there develops some autonomous life in the practitioner's inner being that she has created on her own. The joy of creation and a feeling of having reached something are the moments that usually carry a practitioner further in her development. The 'finding' that a practitioner can practise anything and learn from every experience is a fruit of being able to be present.

Presence and concentration is a challenge of will in every moment and to this will is connected a will of awareness. It's worth noticing that a practitioner usually first becomes conscious of her not-being-able to focus through practising. "Be present in a manner that can truly welcome all things equally." (Zajonc, 2009, p 95) Before a practitioner even gets close to this ideal there has already been hundreds of moments of practising before it feels easy to be present and her will is strong enough. This is the gateway of getting further; breaking through to the other side where she has never been before. This can also mean a breakthrough to the new level of self-evaluation: do I really practise so that I'm aiming for something new every time?

Inner practising is like interplay: a practitioner does her best and lets the 'world' answer to this attempt. This patient attitude is a crucial foundation in inner practising. In any practising it needs thousands and thousands of repetitions before it starts to flow. With the attitude of patience this is very consoling. On the one hand, because she doesn't have to be something mature already, and on the other hand, because all she has to do is to practise with her soul present. Like Steiner writes: "It is of no importance how far anyone can go in a given time; the point is that he should earnestly seek." (1987, p 28)

This experience gives a practitioner a feeling of breathing out. She doesn't have to be more than a practitioner – actually that is already more - and she doesn't have to be able to do more than she has practised. She is what she is in process – the practising itself, the process is the main thing.

It is something like "stay always 'practitioner'" (Pakkanen & Taskinen, 1996), to do her best and to give herself a possibility to be on her way to the aim, to the ideal. With most things she doesn't have to become 'ready' and for certain things – like to become a human being – she will never be ready. This also comes very close to the idea that a person learns by processes.

Like in all practising these elements have to have a delicate balance, otherwise a practitioner loses the practising or awareness might disturb it, like one interviewee pointed out. Another view to balance is by practising the practitioner's two-dimensional feeling: A practitioner wants to practise because of feeling 'raw' and she aims for becoming more 'ripe'; as long as the experiences stay 'raw' and a practitioner feels more or less the same way, the practising itself stays fresh and she

avoids a feeling of boredom and being ‘ready’, i.e. mastering the exercise, which is usually an illusion.

Positivity

The exercise of positivity is for cultivating a practitioner’s inner life. Cultivating means that by practising she is making ‘culture’ out of the nature given ‘raw’ qualities that she has been born with and/or that have developed unconsciously during her life. A person can start developing inner qualities by bringing her consciousness inside her soul and mirroring her inner life through her values. Before this can happen a practitioner has to become conscious of these qualities. But if a person is at all self-conscious she has already become conscious about them many times before even thinking about starting inner practising.

One of the first things that a practitioner notices is that she is simply used to doing the opposite of positivity: seeing first the ‘bad sides’ and being ready to judge by them. This attitude is so spontaneous and it feels so normal that it needs an extra effort even to notice it. To be critical is a sign of one’s intelligence, isn’t it? When a practitioner tries to find positive sides, at least in the beginning, it can feel dishonest or like playing. This feeling tells something about the inner reaction towards this trial to transform the attitudes and stances that she is used to identifying herself with. That’s why it is a real turning point when a practitioner doesn’t let this natural reaction happen but tries to get internally active and creative in order to find another way to deal with her emotions and the situation. In this struggle she is confronted with the question if she is able to master her emotional life or not or even: is she the master of her own house or not. As long as the answer is no, she needs to practise.

A practitioner also confronts an enormous will *not* to practise. She can sense such a justification towards her thoughts and feelings that it is almost frightening. Deep in her she feels absolute no need to change them or surpass them, she just wants to keep them as they are – a part of herself and her picture of the person. First she finds no reason to change her view while she’s convinced that she’s right. Problems that a practitioner creates by her will only ‘to live’ contain the unwillingness to become aware of the inner and outer reality. “In this sense we are enmeshed in our emotions and thoughts, and we experience a sense of self or identity through them. Such an experience of self is a delusion and a source of problems.” (Zajonc, 2009, pp 26-27) Thus the challenge is to let go and even bigger challenge is to stop identifying oneself with one’s emotions.

The above mentioned question of resistance is central in inner practising as described in chapter 2. Only through resistance a practitioner becomes conscious of her will and learns to use it: to will, to

do, and to practise. Meeting resistance means constant surpassing, practising her will and to becoming stronger – practising is not meant to be easy and when it is, there is no growth of inner powers. There is a certain challenge every time a practitioner tries to achieve something real in her practising. This challenge is there from the first thought when she has an impulse for doing her exercises to the very last ‘drop’ of her practising session, like Zajonc writes: “A surprising number of hindrances arise as one approaches meditation. Some obstacles are of our own manufacture...” (Zajonc, 2009, p 45) A practitioner for example tries to change something in her habits. She notices soon that there is some resistance; something in her wants to act as always. It’s a picture of a stage – a contradictory being of human – on which two actors are pulling the rope in two different directions. One is ‘me’ that has identified herself with her habits and the other one is ‘I’ that has an impulse for transforming these habits and through that also ‘me’.

This point of waking up imagination has two steps: When a practitioner confronts her natural feelings, she decides to do something else. Only by trying this is she already on her way to improvising and for imagination. Even if it’s difficult and the imaginative world of positive images doesn’t open up itself immediately, she has already awoken and on her way to transforming something. She starts to think: “Of dozens of possibilities I have yet chosen only one – what would be the others? How would it be when I for the next time choose for me a stoic attitude, I confront the world as it is and I use my freedom in choosing the attitude how I deal with whatever comes.” A lot more in life is about the unconscious choices than one usually notices – in these moments a practitioner has a possibility to increase the conscious side of them.

In other words the attitudes and reactions and also social behaviour don’t usually correspond to the values and ideals that a practitioner has. Something doesn’t match – this contradiction wakes her up. She notices suddenly what she is carrying into social situations and this ‘load’ affects them in a harmful way. Or she feels strongly that there is automatic life in her that is alien, like someone had already made the script beforehand and she is only an actor in her own life. Moreover, she can suddenly see how she perceives and into what she pays attention – usually negative things because they are exceptional. Or how the negative inner dialogue goes on and on without her active participation. The birth of a self-recognition in this realm happens and a way to deepen her self-knowledge is open: what kind of person I really am.

One specific phenomenon that came through, in my experiences and through the answers of interviewees is the challenge of being humiliated by not-being-able-to. As an inner experience it can be described to stumbling by every step or to finding oneself in ‘ground zero’ with practising.

Like one interviewee asked: “How to be loyal to practising when it’s so humiliating?” This is a fundamental question for the will: she either finds her love for the deed in itself or soon loses her will to go on. “Reasons that influenced him formerly will now disappear. He often acted out of vanity; he will now see how utterly futile all vanity is for the seer.” (Steiner, 1987, p 56) When she finds this love she doesn’t get depressed and actually it doesn’t matter anymore, if she fails by practising because the practising, the act itself, is the only thing that counts. There she is also getting closer to her own will: what she actually is as a being? This point turns the former world of practising upside down. When she wants to achieve something in the external world it is usually important for her that she succeeds, is able to perform and not fails by doing something. She wants to get the ‘reward’ for all the suffering, pain, sacrifice and effort. By inner practising failing has no importance at all or even: failure can teach her much more than success because she can notice more, learn more and grow more from it. Steiner puts this as a motto for the inner practitioner: “I shall forget that I have failed in this matter, and I shall try once more as though this had not happened.” (1987, p 57) Only this example of a challenge gives a feeling that a practitioner has to have a will and she has to be motivated to practise – continuously. That’s why often the motives to practise have to have roots in the kernel of individuality.

Thought control

By thought control the challenge is to surpass the threshold and start to practise. One’s free decision and free will to practise is tempted by many ways but the most difficult one seems to be the fact that thinking itself is not normal (See chapter 2) and that’s why especially in the beginning practising is not at all rewarding. A practitioner confronts a lot of inner distractions by trying to reach the source of her thinking – a challenge in itself. Another challenging side of this exercise is being able to concentrate. In the beginning a practitioner seems to have only weak powers for concentrating and focusing on one theme at a time.

In chapter 2 I introduced the concept of Pingel, memory thinking (Erinnerungsdenken). It means that a practitioner has found herself a scheme of thoughts that she repeats. Some interviewees described their thought control exercise exactly like this. The source of their scheme was Loundes’ book ‘Die Belebung des Herzchakra’ in which this kind of procedure is described in detail. A practitioner needs time for her self-reflection and this is even more important by inner practising while practitioners are not so used to sharing their experiences. A danger that a practitioner repeats her very one-sided way of exercising is therefore not a minor one.

It is characteristic to practising that a practitioner comes to her limits and only through constant will can go beyond them. This can happen by surpassing herself into thinking activity but also by finding the new relation regarding her social life: social withdraw and solitude. To accept her solitude— one of the key aspects of all practising (Zajonc, 2009, pp 19-23) – can be a real challenge for those who naturally lead more a social life. Balancing processes can be set forth by practising social exercises and meditations; therefore there is learning also for those who have tendencies to practise rather alone. According to my experience it is an open secret that a practitioner grows in her inner power on both boundary surfaces: in meeting another person’s being and in meeting herself in her way in.

What does it tell about the human being that it is not natural for her to think but not to focus either – is she something that has to surpass herself?

Meditation

In meditation the challenge is to be present and that usually needs preparation. For a reason the act of practising can be over before one even notices it (and one hasn’t actually practised), it just goes by without leaving trace. A pre-exercise before one starts can be something that ‘tunes in’, puts oneself on the right ‘frequency’ to do the exercise. It can be reading a poem or a paragraph of an appropriate book. Life in the sense-world is so fast that it takes time to slow down. The preparation itself can be seen as a deed that makes it possible that our experience is not “imprisoned and distorted by mental habits and emotional desires.” (Zajonc, 2009, p 153) According to my experience a practitioner is usually in a hurry, occupied in her mind, she comes from other things and is not yet in the mood of practising or she wants to cut through and she is not in her will willing to practise. This can be eased by regularity and the rhythm that a practitioner on the one hand has to create and on the other hand is consequently tempted. To put some time aside to meditate asks the more will the more irregularly it is done.

To let the content of meditative live in the soul is a sensitive thing: to control the process and at the same time give ‘room’ for this meeting to happen. Too much control, the encounter with the unknown doesn’t happen; not enough control, a practitioner just dreams away. By meditation a practitioner is striving for balance the entire time as if standing on one foot with the eyes closed.

Striving for a meditative atmosphere requires certain qualities of will. Qualities such as courage and devotion create together a kind of contrast to routines that a practitioner constantly has to struggle against (See next General challenges). Thus even if meditation is a very sensitive act, it is mainly a will issue through the effort that a practitioner has to create in her sphere of will.

General challenges

Balance-renewal. One perspective – a sort of meta-practising – for the process of different exercises is the one Zajonc gives in short: “the first exercises... are designed to enhance attentional and emotional stability, while the latter exercises are intended to destabilize us.” (2009, p 194) Thus this is the difference between the six exercises introduced earlier and meditation. In order to meditate a practitioner has to find the inner balance and quietness but in meditation she has to leave the safe ground and to be prepared to let go of “our fixed hold on a reality that is grounded in sense experience only.” (ibid) This can be put further: to let go of all that she knows and that she can in order to be as open as she ever can to the new experiences that are a real source for the new inner abilities and new self-consciousness, constantly new ‘self’. This requires a will to step inside: courage, imagination, presence and honesty in order to be ready to perceive what comes towards her on this inner journey.

Courage and fear. A practitioner needs some courage to start inner practising and to continue on the developmental path. “You need courage to sustain and to endure... to overcome the hardships and temptations...” (Salmimies, 2008, pp 260-261; my translation) To let go – the gesture a practitioner has to do constantly and many times a day – requires self-confidence and trust, like Kierkegaard emphasized it in relation to faith: “To take a risk means a momentary losing of foothold. To avoid risks means a definite losing of oneself.” (Alex, 1997, p 122; my translation) Other fears that a practitioner can confront in her path are: the fear of the unknown that a practitioner confronts in meditation, the fear of loneliness by having constantly experiences that cannot be shared, and the basic fear of pain that is the result of self-confrontations and that is involved in human growth.

Imagination and creativity in repetition and routines. Imagination is like a basis for inner practising to keep the practising alive and but it’s also a fruit through constant pursuit to find new ways to deal with different situations. Practising is always related to the practitioner’s will and it always seeks new ways to be connected with. The routines (or rhythm) are there to help a practitioner to get herself to practising, to come into the moment and start to use her will. It lowers the threshold to begin and it’s a great help to surpass distractions and temptations, especially the basic everyday situation: there is always something. But when one starts, there shouldn’t be anything that belongs to that attitude of routine any more. Practising itself is not a routine, it’s the opposite: to try something different and new that lies beyond what one already has gained and knows. It is also a devotional act: a practitioner stands naked confronting herself. In the realm of meditation she cannot reach anything with routine, which in this point actually turns into a form of inner laziness.

Honesty and self-deception. By inner practising nothing really happens before a person confronts herself as she is. “everything depends upon energy, inward truthfulness, and uncompromising sincerity with which we confront our own selves, with all our deeds and actions, as a complete stranger.” (Steiner, 1987, p 28) This statement lays another foundation for her strivings. Practising and self-deception is a chapter in itself. According to the interviews and observations it dwells in the pure resistance for practising, unwillingness to change and unwillingness to confront what a person really is. Nietzsche asks with right: “How much truth can a mind endure, how much truth can a mind dare?” (1968, p 121) A practitioner can always find excuses so that she is unable to practise or it’s not possible to practise at this moment or in these conditions. There are always inner and outer temptations and she cannot overestimate her love for comfort and unwillingness to meet her. But one cannot overestimate the effect and power of self-knowledge in this case either. A practitioner can always do *something* – and mostly much more. The real fight is to try to see herself, her character and her weaknesses as they are. Steiner says the following about the one who is striving for self-schooling: “He must in no case be under any illusion concerning his own self. With a feeling of inner truth he must look his own faults, weaknesses, and unfitness full in the face.” (1987, p 72) When a practitioner has experienced this maybe she could compare this only with the difficulty to transform her old habit: exceedingly difficult and laborious. It raises a profound question, what makes this gap between the self that one imagines to be and the self one in reality is. Again the extra consciousness is needed to direct her will – and deep motives. Practising freedom regarding oneself seems to be the longest path in the world.

5.3.2 Practising

Exercise in eurythmy

One quality that awakes the attention in this exercise is the slowness of movement. When everything slows down purposely, it’s an opposite world of the hundreds of sensations or thoughts that move through the inner in moments of time. Through slowness a practitioner comes to oneself and into the present moment, begins to listen and sense the realities and the processes inside. These are the qualities of movement meditation in slow tempo: the movements are gentle and the sensitive attention lives in the changing awareness. Even if a practitioner does this exercise only a few times, she can feel the pulse, the rhythm in it. This rhythm is there in daily life and it’s easy to lose balance by ‘leaning’ too much into one direction.

This small exercise shows something about the quality of practising and also where it could take the practitioner. It seems that in practising, the practitioner becomes more conscious of issues or worlds

previously hidden. By doing something she gets to know the world that she is dealing with and through her feelings and thoughts she also learns something about herself. In this process as in recognizing the rhythm in daily life, a practitioner begins her slow path in bringing her practising and her life together.

By wanting to bring her consciousness into this exercise, she changes her focus and follows the inner experiences with her consciousness. She can feel the changes, how and where they appear and what kind of effects they have. This opens possibilities for try outs, i.e. to her creativity. When she takes these new steps her consciousness can compare the new experiences to the former ones. This can be the beginning of individualizing this exercise. But it's not only that: Like the eurythmist mentioned (See presentation), it's also a question of *what is needed in the situation*. When this 'external need' unites with the practitioner's inner impulse, it individualizes the situation. When she has experienced this many times, she can slowly feel how she is also 'individualized', i.e. she follows intuitively her own voice in situations.

Positivity

In the positivity exercise it's about practising the right gestures and especially *feelings* depending on the situation and on the people that are present there. It's much more improvising; to grasp the situation in order to practise fully, than in this sense more simple physical exercises. It is improvising in the real sense of the word: creating consciously in a moment. Before a practitioner is practising to notice, she goes easily by the most of what happens. But the ability to notice and to do something can change rapidly: first she notices only the roughest events but then she learns to see for example how the situations are created through some subtle processes. The interviewees reported how through these kinds of observations a practitioner learns to see her own part of the process as part of the solution. This has great importance for a teacher because she can get involved into situations in the classroom before things go very wrong but also before for example wrong interpretations lead into deeds. Even though seeing her part of the process is difficult in the beginning through self-reflection she can practise it.

This exercise is good practise towards the ideal of transforming a practitioner's inner pictures of fellow human beings – and through that also herself. This reflective side of the exercise Rudolf Steiner describes in the following way: "It would be a good ideal for living, when we would take as an assessment, to revise the image of the person that bind us in unconsciousness." (1992, p 17; my translation) When a practitioner takes this seriously it requires a real will to penetrate her extra-

ordinary one-sided and emotional images of the fellow human beings that have developed by 'themselves' in the unconscious in connection with her innate sympathies and antipathies.

Summarising the natural state of will – negativity, readiness to judge – in this exercise it's possible to say that here a practitioner can see clearly how weak her love for other people actually is; also towards the ones she thinks she loves most. "Love is not sentimental "love," but involves a deep willingness." (Lipson, 2002, pp 80-81) It's about the will just as practising is: one develops to be an artist by drawing the same object again and again – the tenth sketch is probably better than the first one. It's a question of 'the loving eye' of the artist to perceive more precisely – it's the question of the inner eye that can see more clearly the good in other human beings. This capacity to focus on what is good "is no superficial graft from civilization, but a deeply rooted aspect of who we are." (ibid, p 75)

Surpassing her natural feelings is most definitely a pedagogical issue: a person does a lot of harm as an educator if she is 'snowboarding' through her career with her natural emotions, both sympathies and antipathies. Through them she does not perceive the pupil as he is and because of that she is not of help for anyone. Thus natural sympathy doesn't have anything to do with an active interest or real love as "deep willingness" – two necessary dimensions of education. This is a real call for self-education because of the children and because of her responsibility towards them and also responsibility towards fulfilling her ideal as a teacher: to remember why she ever wanted to become a teacher.

A practitioner can put her will at test with a concrete exercise by Steiner of silencing one-self: "Of very great importance for the development of the student is the way in which he listens to others when they speak. He must accustom himself to do this in such a way that, while listening, his inner self is absolutely silent." (Steiner, 1987, p 38) For a practitioner's self-knowledge these moments are golden: she can learn a lot about herself just by observing what and how everything moves in her and how she endogenously reacts these 'movements'. This opens a way to see the positive side of the other person and through that to see that side in everyone – she generalizes the idea and a transformation proceeds into the next level.

Thought control

Like some interviewees brought up practising balance belongs also to this exercise. Normally a person lives one-sidedly in her sense perceptions. Trying to bring her thoughts into sense perception is a balancing act because it creates an inner realm through thinking activity and also harmonizes these two processes with an individual 'touch'. This is a try to find a kind of balance between inner and outer life so that the interaction between these two can enrich and enliven each other. Because if one-sidedness rules in either of these realms a practitioner can't come further: her ability to reach the inner realms depends on her ability to reach outer realms and vice versa.

In the beginning the leash in which a practitioner keeps her thoughts can be very short but after consequent practising she notices that the meaning of this exercise blooms only when she can 'play' with the length of this leash. She is actually more or less all the time on the boundary surface of losing one's trail or repeating ones old thoughts. To stay in balance on this surface, that's the exercise.

Thus it is not so much about achieving something but to struggle. One fundamental thing about this exercise is that the growth of the inner power (self) is dependent on the 'amount' or 'quality' of the effort itself that a practitioner can consciously put into the act of struggle. It is not the question whether she has some innate talents or whether she has already achieved control over her thoughts. It is a question of actual deed in the moment of practising. Only through this act of will the power grows because only then there is this impulse that confronts the resistance. The experience that she can discover is that when she is for example tired and she seems to be unable to control her thought and yet she tries – not how the exercise goes but how strong is her effort to practise, that counts. One eurythmist described: even if the eurythmist feels 'numb', thus has a feeling that nothing comes across, the audience can perceive precisely that effort. (Taskinen, 2004) Thus when a practitioner feels that nothing happens because of inner conditions, she can be sure that the will grows in its power in meeting with resistance.

To try to create every time new thoughts about the simplest object like a paper clip requires some creativity, imagination and openness. When practised every day a practitioner can notice in other connections that practising has created the same qualities that were required in order to do the exercise adequately. Even if this exercise is above all meant to develop control of thinking, at the same it develops other abilities as well. This gives a view for the depths of the six exercises described in chapter 2.

Meditation and teacher's meditation

One of the 'movements' a practitioner constantly practises by meditation is to enter this inner world, to stay there and to hold herself. It sounds simple and actually it is quite simple and still it requires practising when a practitioner wants to do it in a way that she can follow as a whole human being, like König (1987) describes in chapter 2. For example, consciousness is on the one hand needed strongly in the act of meditation but on the other hand consciousness disturbs the meditative encounter when it is too 'present'.

In chapter 2 there was a small description of a seed meditation, which has a kinship to the first teacher meditation (see chapter 4). What a teacher can perceive through her physical senses is a surface, a manifestation of something. This something expresses itself through the being; and other expressions are deeds, words etc. It also develops and a development expresses itself through growth, maturation and gained inner and outer abilities. Some things have their expression but some of the being of a pupil stays hidden and invisible. By this exercise a practitioner has to use her will to exercise something she by nature is not able to.

The interviews made it very clear that the relation between a teacher and pupils is the one that really counts in the classroom and also in learning. Through meditative work a teacher meets the pupils prepared and she knows who she is teaching. For a teacher it is essential to develop her educational strengths and to gain more insight in order to inspire the pupils. This is beneficial to the teacher's work and personal well-being. The pupils can sense their teacher's enthusiasm and at best share it, too. An interest, how she takes pains for them and also how she takes notice of them, one by one – pupils can 'read' this hidden side of education and, according to my experience, they are very pleased with it.

In the meditative 'meeting' with pupils comes up one quality of contemplative inquiry: selflessness. A teacher puts her own will aside, i.e. alters less egotistic, and humbly tries to approach the riddle that every pupil represents without bringing her own ideas on the way. She withdraws with her own will and gives space for the pupil (or subject) to be the centre of her consciousness as the pupil is and lets it live and 'move' there during the meditative act.

Goethe's idea that a practitioner can really through inner work gain new 'sense organs' can be approached in many ways concretely in educational situations. One interviewee told that she meditated the development of a rose for a long time and her understanding started to sense the idea of the rose. After this constant meditative work she began to meet the pupils differently, sensing also their 'idea' in their manifestation. A teacher looks at the physical manifestation of a pupil and

suddenly senses in this appearance the human being itself, who this person is or tries to become. These moments are mostly and especially in the beginning like flashes but they give quite a new dimension to meet pupils. Another interviewee had an experience that led him to an idea that meditation doesn't necessarily have to be a separate thing. He noticed that he can 'meditate' also when he meets people and this activity leads him to penetrate through the outer manifestation of the person.

It needs some self-consciousness to notice that one's own interest could be deepened. It is an exercise to remind oneself to come out from thoughts, ideas and pictures into the real world. It is a conscious process in which a practitioner reflects what she has received from the world and changes her picture about the world and about herself. When a teacher lives with his pupils with the questions like "What do these experiences tell about me and my pupils?" or "What do these experiences mean to me and my pupils?" the life in the classroom can become much more interesting and fulfilling. Thus above mentioned meditative way is turned here into practical reflection, and yet these reflections can be easily meditated.

The characteristics of the meditative approach above described are like different aspects of openness. The interviewees outlined them with the words like "listening, questioning quality" or "starting off freely" and then something "unpredictable happens in the encounter". Thus openness seems to be a quality that goes through all education, from openness towards the everyday meetings in a class room to the most intimate being-encounter in meditation – and there between an open reflection about ones being-a-teacher.

5.3.3 Consequences

Exercise in eurythmy

The feeling of freedom comes from different angles through this exercise. It can be a process of first becoming conscious of the experiences and effects that the exercise creates, then being able to stop one's intention or way of doing the exercise and making new decisions. It can also be a gesture that leaves the other person free. When a practitioner stops wanting anything and creates through that – an inner peace and patience – a free space into which can come her own impulses or in the external situation the other person when this 'quiet interest' is felt inviting.

A practitioner can see that the movements themselves have a therapeutic element and in that sense they affect in a healthy way as such: strengthening the feeling of the balance of the three states. On

the level of practising this therapeutic effect can be felt by strengthening the will in a sense that it is prepared to act.

By exercising a practitioner seems to wake up from dreaming: suddenly she notices things and 'worlds' that actually were there but she hasn't noticed or become conscious of them before. These new 'findings' can lead to the new ideas and questions. Furthermore, she can use these ideas in practise. This closes the circle and brings her back to practising with a new accent: how could I practise so that this connection between my practising and my everyday life becomes one?

Through this exercise it's possible to become conscious and to become alert. In one moment a practitioner can just decide to change the direction or come back to oneself. When being in the centre, a practitioner can listen and feel herself in herself and act according to this feeling. Through this inner movement she has a relationship to herself and her doing and through that to the world. What was a moment ago separated is again one. That brings balance and health into life through her feelings that connect her with the world.

Positivity

The aim of practising positivity was to find one positive side of everything that a practitioner meets in the world and in oneself. It's about her sensitive inner movements of social situations with a strong introspective accent. When she practises this she can notice soon that even if the effort may be weak and the results low still some merciful processing takes place. The world becomes richer and its multi-level character starts to open for her.

She begins to see things around her which she could not have seen before. She begins to understand that hitherto she had only seen a part of the world around her. A human being standing before her now presents a new and different aspect. (Steiner, 1987, p 18)

A practitioner grows humble again because through practising a practitioner comes to her limits both in doing but also in understanding: she is far from her aim; she seems to understand very little. But instead of getting depressed by this new comprehension, a new self-confidence rises. It may be because now she knows without any doubts that she doesn't know but she does know where to start. This is a step forward from the self-deception and ignorance lurking in the unconscious.

A practitioner struggles for a genuine self and on her way she feels the alien element in her. What can happen by this struggle is that she finds her social environment anew: when she can act more through her genuine being it is easier for people to 'accept' her.

Through negative approach or continuous evaluation a practitioner won't learn anything real about this world – or about herself. That's why the motto of practising positivity could be: "Nothing can reveal itself to us, which we do not love." (Steiner, 1987, p 85) What else one can be seen in this little detail: the meetings in everyday life are perhaps the richest source for self-knowledge and for self-schooling if she is able to take these situations as a challenge in her own learning process and not lose herself in her emotions. By making this choice she gains greater independence and enlarges the inner realm of freedom.

The process of practising offers a person a great opportunity to activate her innermost being and to gain more autonomous in her life. She becomes like a 'creator' through her pro-active attitude and her practised openness. In this state of permanent developing she can see the situation a new by wondering and reverence.

Thought control

Like almost all interviewees said, a practitioner can be more focused as before. One could say that an ideal for this exercise is: "If he sees something it is because he wills to see it, and if he does not voluntarily take notice of something it is actually non-existent for him." (Steiner, 1987, p 106) In other words: nothing can distract a practitioner's thoughts away from the direction she has given to them. When she reaches this even sometimes it gives a strong feeling of possibilities of the self-control in the realm of thinking: a feeling of a grip that also makes possible to be more effective and faster in preparation for the lessons. The thoughts are also more relevant and rational, concentrated on the essential – actually a practitioner is amazed about the difference and especially how she thought she was thinking before.

What also came out by interviewees and is maybe even more important, is that a practitioner can feel: "This is real." Thoughts are not just some shadows or pictures a practitioner can imagine. It's like Steiner describes: "He will soon cease to feel that this thought-world is less real than the everyday things which surround him." (Steiner, 1987, p 29) Thinking is not any more something that 'just happens', a practitioner creates her thoughts and has them in her own control. Thinking itself becomes also independent and loses its bounds to the senses, i.e. she has pictures that she doesn't find in the sense world.

It's clear that even five minutes of practising can make a change, because of a 'radiation' with this exercise. After some time a practitioner can notice that this exercise 'radiates' in both directions: she 'prepares' herself before she does this exercise and after doing this exercise she is different than

before. She notice that it is not only the moments before and after but also the moments in the classroom or in the meeting or in the review exercise (See chapter 2) just before falling asleep.

A practitioner is more conscious of her unclear and wandering thinking and this consciousness usually causes pain. In these five minutes she learns more patience than perhaps in any other exercise. Patience can sometimes be rewarded: “Patience is part of this practise, but we can rest assured that gradually the mud will settle and the water will become clear.” (Zajonc, 2009, p 87) To be able to control her thinking, to give direction to it is the ability that a teacher needs all the time, especially when she goes deep into dialogue with the pupils searching together more accurate understanding of some phenomena. These kinds of processes can also be moments to show how a pupil can develop one’s thinking into the direction of stability and to the power of penetration.

Meditation and teacher’s meditation

Some interviewees told about their experiences of word meditation. The comparison with poetry was mentioned for example regarding the act of grasping the experiences. It is thus worth noticing that by poetry there is also this feeling of reaching out for something that is actually beyond reach. (Zajonc, 2009) Later in his life Heidegger was very interested in poetry and language. According to Heidegger the language in poetry is “tuning to experience that is not said. The language of poetry transcends its thoughts.” (Rauhala, 2005, p 150; my translation) However, meditation has a power to bring back some of the original power of the word. It is lost in every day use even so that a poet can fall into despair with the language: “The disaster of poetry is that it has to happen by using the instrument which is the most ‘un-poetic’, thus only practical.” (Huotariinen, Hytönen, 2009; my translation) Through meditation a practitioner gains a new sensibility to words and speaking: the meaning of the words has freshness and she can more easily than before penetrate into speaking and sense how hollow it sometimes is. By meditation there is again a ‘circle’: first something cannot be said and in order to be able to say it, a practitioner has to transform herself – through meditation.

A practitioner can become conscious of her superficiality. This experience comes during the meditative act when a practitioner notices that suddenly she ‘gets through’. She begins to feel that there are dimensions which she didn’t know about before and to see the connections behind the ‘object’. When a teacher is not willing to be satisfied with teaching separate information a meditation offers an alternative path. She can realise that there are relations and connections between a human being and the situation of life where the pupils are. Through that the meaning of how the subjects can really serve the educational aims can become a reality.

In meditation a practitioner enters to another world but stays awake – this makes it powerful but only when the practitioner is not too awake. After the meditative moment she can really feel like she has fetched power from an everlasting source and she is more than ready to start working: more inspired, more concentrated and full of imagination. At its best that's the experience of flow that Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi describes (2005). When a teacher gets this feeling by preparing for the next day she may have this feeling also on the next day by teaching. When enthusiasm has its origin in meditative activity it is so real that according to my experience the pupils are totally involved with the issues and there is a fountain of questions that this kind of atmosphere awakes. For example when teaching mechanics and balance and through preparation, taking into thoughts the dimension of balance in human being, the pupils are inspired to seek the connections between inner and outer balance.

The important part of meditation is to 'come back'. After the meditative moment a practitioner closes the doorway to the world beyond and starts working. Above this picture was mentioned regarding the moment when a teacher closes the class room door. Zajonc states this by following: "Meditation is no escape. It is only a preparation for life. We come to ourselves deepened, more awake, and reaffirmed by our contact with the infinite, with the mysteries of our own nature, with the divine." (2009, p 40) And adds: "- - - the suffering of the others, the needs of the world, become all the more pressing, and we rise to meet the call with increasing wisdom and strength." (ibid, p 66) These two elements: to be awake in oneself and in the world and to have compassion belong obviously to the ideals of the profession of a teacher. It is possible to see here, how, for example, the teacher's meditation has these both sides in it.

This ability to put oneself aside and give oneself totally to the pupils gives a feeling after the lesson by which a teacher can notice that through this devotional act of education she has got a lot from the pupils. It's inspiration for the next day's preparation, as well as for new more coherent and precise questions, and also the satisfaction of shared experiences.

It might be worth considering why Steiner had such radical insight that a teacher needs to practise meditation in order to be a teacher. One could think that meditative work is the best way to avoid being only on the mercy of the outside world, to deepen one's understanding of oneself, pupils and the content of teaching (the world) and to set one's tendency for life from a bourgeoisie (lazy) attitude to an on-going process. In short: to gain an autonomous relation to the tasks and challenges that the profession of the teacher brings along, including the teacher herself.

When a teacher every evening lets a picture of her pupils arise in her, this process that Goethe describes as meditation as such, starts to evolve. “With every repetition, the cycle of attention and formation is at work fashioning the organs required for contemplative knowing.” (Zajonc, 2009, p 183) In meditation a practitioner moves from observed object to image, in this case from the class room where the pupils were observed to preparation where the images of them were created. When these images become strong enough they start to have an impact of the work in the class room. She can have certain feelings, for example when she compares her relationship to pupils with and without the meditative work with them. According to the experiences without it educating becomes ‘physical’, an external act with less dimensions. It is not only about sensitivity but the feeling that she has a deeper relationship because she has worked for it and pupils feel this like another dimension of interest, a real selfless interest. When a practitioner hasn’t worked meditatively, it lacks ‘under’ and ‘above’ there present in class room situations. A teacher can by practising sense three different streams by teaching: in the ‘middle’ there is explicit teaching and ‘under’ and ‘above’ there are implicit things that one either shouldn’t bring because of age level or are otherwise dimensions that pupils should rather find by themselves. According to my experience this kind of teaching is very economical.

Through this relation between pupils and a teacher there are many processes of education going on without the need that everything has to be said. This experience Steiner brings also when he speaks about “undercurrent relation” between a teacher and a pupil (See sub-chapter 2.2.3). When a practitioner proceeds in her path, she starts to have deeper perceptions about the pupils by looking at them. She can have a moment that she ‘sees’ them, like one interview described. This is like a beginning of something that Goethe concluded: “Every object, well contemplated, opens a new organ in us” (Zajonc, 2009, p 179). When she has done her meditation properly and regularly she perceives the new developed capacities in pupils. This brings new confidence for a teacher to challenge the pupils in a way that wasn’t there before, i.e. her insight leads into educational acts. In general this means that her ‘organ’ to perceive the pupils is all the time up-dated with this circulation of observing and meditating.

Two separate streams to approach the being of a child, an external observation and contemplative approach could be brought together in the described way. This ‘extended interest’ affects in both directions and has also a strong interplay. With intensive observation the practitioner’s meditative approach is richer and fuller; with meditative approach she is more sensitive and alert in her observation. In this process it happens that interest leads to empowered self-knowledge, she meets herself in the world and wakes up. What is characteristic of inner practising is that it’s actually

never something 'direct' for some special occasion but by transforming herself it happens that a practitioner is able to do more and to be more (teacher) in educational situations. This was mentioned quite a few times by the interviewees: the process of transformation is mostly subtle and only the tip of the iceberg is visible, thus also to be put into words.

General consequences of practising

Self-knowledge. Gaining self-knowledge is a part of inner practising from the very beginning. It is partly because of the nature of self-knowledge – a human has to will it, partly because in the beginning a practitioner usually notices only negative aspects of herself. The difficulty to be present, the vast amount of negativity, the inability to concentrate, and to let go of the inner pictures... By every exercise a practitioner learns to know her intimately, come to her limits of her inner abilities and to the greatest challenge in her self-knowledge: how much self-knowledge she can tolerate. When she moves on her path she will soon notice that this wasn't only the beginning, this challenge belongs to inner practising. What really happens through inner practising is that inner practising and becoming conscious of oneself contribute to each other all the way. Inner practising is an endless source for intensified self-knowledge that a practitioner can use by practising to know better what to do. A practitioner also recognizes the powers that are behind those impulses that make one move. Sooner or later, like many interviewees described, a practitioner senses strongly that there are two different beings in her: the one that feels genuine and the one that feels alien. Through this experience it becomes clear that the main aim of inner practising is to strengthen the genuine one and make room for it to evolve and realize itself. A practitioner tries to take the alien side in control and to gain as much self-knowledge as she can endure. The more inner freedom she has gained the more she is free to look at herself without fear of losing the image that she has about herself. This feeling of freedom helps her also to meet the events of life with inner calmness. Through certain experiences like when some interviewees told how they noticed "how the bad originates from them" in a social situation she can confirm this feeling so that it becomes a natural attitude towards her life. "If I am a teacher, and my pupil does not fulfil my expectations, I must not divert my resentment against him but against myself." (Steiner, 1987, p 82) As a teacher it would do good to ponder the attitudes and tendencies to act towards pupils every now and then. Working in this way a teacher gets closer to understanding how the world 'functions' and also closer to her part, her responsibility in it. In this way self-knowledge is a corner stone in being and in becoming one. "Everyday we can learn to see our lacks, our limitations, and that is something of great significance." (Zajonc, 2009, p 86) As important as seeing the best possibilities – accomplishing

each other they form self-knowledge. Thus self-knowledge is a tool, an aim and a fruit of inner practising.

Authenticity. According to the experiences the way to authenticity seems to be a long and hard one and requires a lot of inner struggle is gained that through the self-knowledge. Authenticity can be interpreted as a state where the expression is in harmony with its source. As an expression of that one means what one says, one is true to what one does; and it is something that has a meaning for one and for one's life. "There is some way to be a human, which is my way." (Taylor, 1995, p 58) It means that one's heart is in it and it is original, inimitable, not copied from somewhere – 'my way'. When a practitioner has practised a while she starts to notice the feelings of disturbance towards her deeds, feelings or thoughts that suddenly feel alien to herself. Thus she is asked – from the inside but sometimes from life – to regain her authenticity, in a transformed form to become genuine 'again', true, pure, original, and real as small children are. Her seeking for authenticity depends on her values of life. Her striving for something higher is that "the individual being true to, cultivating, or developing him- or herself occupies a central place." (Guignon, 2004, p IX) Thus the process of inner practising can be valued high in the search for authenticity. Here it can be pointed out that inner practising never occurs automatically – there has to be a conscious decision for that, activity for gaining and reaching herself. Many other impulses a practitioner seems to get for free. Tony Dunderfelt calls these automatically functioning operations or procedures 'scripts'. "Psychological scripts are acquired models through experience and living about how to act in different situations. - - Scripts present "the outside world in us". (2006, pp 44-45; my translation) These scripts a person has adopted as a child and as a youngster and only as an adult one can, as Dunderfelt (ibid) adds, through one's own kernel change this given situation. The process of authenticity can be compared with the process of becoming one-self? Guignon puts this in question of bringing two opposite possibilities: on the one hand 'be all you can be' and on the other hand 'self-loss or releasement' (2004, p 7). The former means something like releasing one's true potential, the latter "is by becoming responsive to the call of something greater than yourself." (Guignon, 2004, p 8) One might already see that these two don't have to be exclusive alternatives. When a practitioner takes this process of becoming herself as a path to her true and selfless being, she is already open to this 'call', an example that was already mentioned in the foreword by Mother Teresa. This is a question and sometimes even a demand from the pupils: are you authentic? One can say that the profession of a teacher offers an extra opportunity to become more authentic. The youngsters seem to clairvoyant, thus almost oversensitive for everything that is fake or untrue. The authenticity in this connection has here an emphasis on a teacher's natural relationship to herself and to the pupils.

Thus it's a very inviting call to live her own truly life and at the same time meet this unfulfilled challenge of young people.

Mystery of will. A practitioner confronts some mysteries of the will in her path. What is necessary and natural with the child – to practise all the time – has to be a conscious decision of an adult. A will has enormous power and even if it's at some connections weak it can be practised and it becomes stronger. When a practitioner has practised for a while she can notice that the practised will has partly become autonomous. It wakes her up in social situations to practise positivity; it wakes her up when she dreams away with associations by thought control. It helps her to surpass the threshold and the scripts in order to practise. It makes it easier to let go – a basic gesture by inner practising that is practised many times every day. This autonomous will has to be developed, it 'exists' only through practising.

When one looks at a small child and her activities, one can immediately recognize the enormous will for development, a vast innate power for learning, interest to know the world and herself. Myself and some interviewees had experienced that as an adult a practitioner can have this feeling of being connected to an everlasting power source. By practising a practitioner seems to connect herself qualitatively to the same powers that she was connected as a child. As an outer picture one can 'see' this feeling in a young child that seems to have endless resources of power by playing the whole day through. Through practising one can find (again) this innate will to practise and the willingness to learn can come close to that eagerness of a child.

5.3.4 Summary

I'll try to put this complex process of inner practising and its consequences together. Certain exercises, like the six basic ones, are balancing the inner life in a way that they give an appropriate direction for renewal without chaos. On the other hand meditative activity 'shakes' a practitioner's inner life, almost like forcing her to loose the safe ground for renewal so that she can gain new perspectives. In other words meditative practising gives dynamics and movement and impulses to the inner balance so that it won't get stiff.

This kind of practising that includes both balancing and 'dynamic' qualities give for a teacher a sure ground to stand on: on the one hand in balance she is able to master chaos and with renewal she is able to be in a developmental stream, the same as where the pupils are, on the other hand, through inner balance she can be more accurate and present in her doing and through dynamics she finds new ways of doing things more easily. These are concrete capacities that a teacher needs in the present day when her will is constantly undermined.

Resistance belongs to the process of inner practising as a natural part of it. A practitioner has to surpass the hindrances and herself in order to proceed. The resistance is on every level and in every practice, that's why it's a question of will and therefore also the will becomes stronger whatever one practises. Thus: when it's easy, it's not practising.

Through inner practising a practitioner prepares and involves herself for two different things that obviously belong together: to be able to look at herself and to be able to work with herself.

Practising as such is simple but it's pushing through the resistance. To see that herself is the actual obstacle is a theme in itself for practising. To look at oneself can anyone, to admit "this is part of me too" is already more difficult but it's an unavoidable step before the practising starts. There a practitioner can see one principle of inner practising: through it she is not only able to do something but she also grows in her power and she can challenge herself more – or the world does it through the everyday encounters. The process of practising is noticing things with the consequence that she notices more differentially than before.

Every observation in which she feels her handicaps she can turn into exercise and practising through her imagination. One of the easiest ways to start with is to imagine how it would be otherwise or how she could do it in another way. It belongs to the nature of practising to try something different and she can notice how little it takes. There are already some things in motion, a stiff and motionless inner 'structure' cracks and the tied powers for transformation become free – also in social situations. This process she can feel quite intensively at the beginning of practising but actually it happens every time she tries something new.

To be movable and to be able to make large movements inside is one aim of all self-education. It is not only for her own good but one can easily imagine how differently she can create social images and social atmospheres and put her soul into different kinds of things and moods.

It is necessary to train the inner 'muscles' to be able to do that. Also to be able to stay in her whatever happens gives enormous strength instead of losing it all the time by being driven by impulses. This practised freedom – if a practitioner is able to decide and carry her decision through – can be already quite convincing for her. The attitude "After practising I'm able to do it" strengthens the will so that she has less self-doubt and she is almost half way there.

Resistance and the process of transforming are part of the process too. Meeting the hardness of the stone she develops first of all will but also insight and strength, which are independent of success. The will generates itself in her attitude and confidence. She can have an image that through this process she becomes a 'growth point' in the world. A point that doesn't prevent the development

around her, but impulses it through her being and doing. This gives a perspective to being a teacher in contact with the most living material, the growing and strongly to the future stretching young people. In this image turning to stone as a teacher would mean giving stones for one's pupils to eat. Pupils are nourished by the teacher's transformation.

Finally it can be asked: what are the motor and the source of this process? The answer to this riddle is the deed itself. It makes the process move on and from the consequences of the deed she can draw power for the new deed.

5.4 Meaning of practising

Bohnsack (2001) put forward the question (See chapter 2), of what really is important in a profession of a teacher and what is the most important own (inner) qualification –and added: what is the consequence of the possible answer?

It was not surprising that every interviewee found inner practising very important. It could be seen that most of them expressed the importance of inner qualification. How could it be otherwise: after all these life changing experiences and the consequences of inner practising that most of them could also put into words? Everyone valued practising in their own way. Like one interviewee stated: “At the same time it is important to understand that every path is individual.” (Interview)

It's possible to see inner practising as a way of surviving as a teacher, especially inner survival, like some interviewees described. Inner practising is recognized as a power source in some ways: a practitioner can through her inner work find her connection to this inner source and also inner practising itself gives feeling of being alive, to become enlivened and to be in her own “evolutional stream” (Interview).

According to my experience and the experiences of interviewees the need for this source and to be constantly empowered comes straight from the daily experience of as a teacher. Otherwise it is not possible to fulfil the ‘inner qualification’ and the outer challenges according to the ideals of SW-education. It was clear in the level of experience that there are two different directions ‘an educational survival’ goes without inner work: either a teacher cannot even strive for the ideals or by trying to reach the ideas she can “fall apart as a human being” (Interview).

The meaning of meditative work was seen in both the being of teacher but also the abilities and capacities. The transforming character of meditation makes it possible for a practitioner to find an autonomous relation to herself, to the sources and to the pupils through individualized education.

Meditation was seen as well as a foundation for a teacher's work and a practical tool to improve the concrete daily work in details, for example, when only the essential regarding the educational ideals are left behind.

Some interviewees mentioned also the power of 'radiation' that meditative work creates. It can be felt as warmth, the inner structuring power but also that "there is more" (Interview) than externally is to be seen. Another dimension of radiation was that the experiences of what inner practising requires and what it creates 'radiates' into life so that life has more and more the same qualities as the moments of practising. Inner practising and life can become one, for example: Some things that a practitioner earlier felt normal create feelings of inadequacy. In the inner depths where the inner practising earlier affected in an unconscious way she can now try to create adequate conditions according to the experiences – confronted qualities by encounters – by inner practising.

One meaning of the inner practising is that it is an own decision, own impulse and through realise it a practitioner experiences inner freedom as an opposite to necessities that everyday life easily is full of. This inner freedom can also be experienced as an inner realm that becomes a centre of the practitioner's life from which she can lead her life. This autonomous part can also bring a new meaning for life because things are not only felt as external events. It can be felt as orientation that lifts her up to the new dimension and helps her to see things in life and herself in a new way.

5.5 Some reflections about this study

In this sub-chapter I try to describe some of my views about this study. I'll start with findings and challenges with methods, and the attitudes towards reflecting the experiences. Then I'll move through the relation to the theory and finally to the second research question about the idea of human being.

Findings

In inner practising the continual inner exertion has its consequences: a practitioner becomes more conscious of herself than she was before and through this process also about the world around. She learns to deal with different inner situations, mainly in confronting different sides and impulses of herself, and these confrontations lead her to act more correctly, for example, in social situations. Empowered by inner practising she is able to gain more self-knowledge and to proceed in inner practising. These two seem to have very strong interaction with each other. Both also help her to find ways to become conscious of the possibilities in her and to become empowered to be able to take these possibilities in use. It looks like executing the deed, the real act of will, to become

conscious and to practise, leads into her individual inner evolution. One of the findings could be put in short: when a practitioner takes care of inner practising, inner practising takes care of her. This is a quite common understanding when a person takes care of her physical condition. It seems that this invariance is valid also on the level of the soul and spirit.

Challenges with methods

Through my methods, mainly interviews, self-reflection and writing I have reached to the certain extend what I tried to through this study. The findings of this study are results of the processes that I have gone through during my inner practising, trying to dive into my own and other people's experiences and trying to understand them. My purpose to find different perspectives came also true: the experiences of others awake me to see what I had experienced in my inner practising. New perspectives I got both my doing the exercises but also for understanding them – and for my position as a practitioner.

By making the interviews I realized it wasn't always easy for most of them to describe their experiences of their inner practising. In the middle of the process of normal practising life it is not that often that one reflects ones practising, it's pure doing. When one adds to that a try to formulate the experiences as answers for the questionnaire it is a real challenge. Some of interviewees explained in the beginning only their general thoughts or interpretations, how the inner practising should be executed. It is understandable. I made the same experience with myself in the beginning of my work: it's not that easy to dive into the experiences like this. But by asking again and in more detail there were answers of precious quality. It was notable that for women it was mostly much easier to describe their experiences with the most accurate expressions.

With the phenomenological method the challenges were slightly different from the hermeneutics. By trying to reveal the hidden experiences I noticed that the real hindrances were that the observations were not precise enough or there was a lot of distraction, the experiences didn't 'want' to be observed and that's why they constantly 'disappeared' from my sight. This challenge I tried to surpass by putting more conscious will into these activities. Like other inner activities as well, it sometimes requires quite a little in order to make a change for a start with.

By trying to interpret and to understand the observed and reflected experiences the quality of thinking wasn't at a satisfactory level; the words were mostly inadequate. There was more than enough lack of orientation because the thoughts were not clear enough and there was not enough will and courage to surpass the inner resistance to change and transformation. It was also a question of the quality and adequacy of the will with which a practitioner can get closer to her experiences.

In the moment of desperation I wrote with: “It’s an embarrassing mess: I think when I should observe. I imagine when I should think. I dream when I should consciously focus. Is anything going to come out of this, except bits and pieces...?” (Practising diary) Finally there was no other way than with a humble attitude to concentrate and practise these realms of my study.

Attitude towards reflecting the experiences

But it wasn’t only the method but also some sort of attitude that some interviewees also mentioned, not to talk about them who never answered. “Not willing to talk about the experiences”, “the main thing is not to become conscious but to do the meditation”, “even if I could, I would not want to talk about it”. Behind this there can be a rule Steiner gave in his book “Knowledge of the higher worlds”: “...*know how to observe silence concerning your spiritual experiences. Yes, observe silence even toward yourself. Do not attempt to clothe in words what you contemplate in the spirit, or to pore over it with clumsy intellect.*” (1987, p 58; author’s italics) I regard this rule as very important in starting inner practising. At the end of the same paragraph Steiner adds: “Only he who has gained some certainty and steadiness in the observation of inner experiences can speak about them, and thereby stimulate his fellow-men.” (ibid) Thus there could be some upsides in sharing and reflecting one’s experiences and writing about them. One could be the individual development in self-knowledge and in inner practising; another one – like this study also aimed – that other people could gain interest for inner practising.

The relation to the theory

One aspect for writing this study has been the lack of experience based descriptions of the exercises and their consequences in literature. Another aspect is that this study tries to make inner practising explicit, more concrete and more ‘normal’ than former studies. This attempt might have succeeded through various examples. The third aspect is the idea that Rudolf Steiner and Arthur Zajonc have had in their studies and that I have tried to follow. This idea I interpret as striving for a spiritual, meaning and concrete answer to the needs of the world, in this study especially for the pupils. Inner practising seems to lead into spiritual experiences of oneself and through that of the world. Especially meditative activity opens up the dimension of meaning in the sense that a practitioner sees meanings, for example, how her character shows itself or how she reacts. Through meditation also the knowledge becomes meaningful by “bringing the issue in contact with the world and with that it releases it from the loneliness of knowing” like one interviewee said. How the attempts in this realm has character to enforce the power and the abilities of the teacher to be able to be and do

more for the students, thus in this sense answer to the needs of the world, have hopefully become clear through the examples in this study.

The idea of human being

One of the comprehensions that came through this study was actually like a question there aside: what does inner practising tell about the idea of a human being? It is the idea of the evolving self that is directed strongly to the future, from early childhood on. I hope that to a certain extent it became obvious that to be a human being is not just 'be what you are' but the idea of being a human asks for more: 'become what you are'. It seems that without carrying this idea within, one cannot fulfil one's responsibility and one's mission as a human – or as a teacher. Especially the ideals of SW-education, i.e. a teacher penetrates her teaching with educational aims or helps through her own example the pupils in their process of empowerment, a teacher might not fulfil so easily without trying earnestly to become more. This challenge 'to become more' can also be seen also in collaboration with the colleagues and parents. Through this background a teacher might be able to see that practising is not far from this idea of a human as a striving and attempting being. Through practising a practitioner can have a feeling that she has something more or better inside than she knew before and one could take that in use. This process reveals a double nature of practising: through practising she becomes conscious of this feeling – or like Rumi, the Persian medieval philosopher, puts it: "Inside you there's an artist you don't know about." (Zajonc, 2009, p 49) – and through practising she grows in power to become more of what she feels as her innermost nature. If the basic impulses for this weren't given in upbringing and education – and through my observation that wasn't usually the case – a self-education, inner practising comes into play.

A person practises her talents in her training for her profession and through this complex learning process she is ready to give her abilities for the world. The inner practising lifts up this same idea: a practitioner has inner abilities that can only serve the world if they are practised, i.e. developed through the process of learning. Or like Zajonc states: "Quite literally, we become more fully human – a worthy aspiration and sufficient reason to undertake the long journey of personal development through practising." (2009, p 155) It seems that individuality grows in power, uses the human as a tool for its striving, and has the real kernel of human being to be obtained and to revealed. It's like a picture of a human being or human life or the being of human will – human becoming.

What does inner practising tell about the human will? As I mentioned before practising seems to be an inseparable element of human life since early childhood. Without practising a child would never

become a human with all its possibilities: an up-right position that makes possible the hands to become free for working (for his world), the ability to speak, to communicate and express the inner life, and thinking that makes it possible to become independent and to understand the world and oneself. This is the elementary of practising. It has already all the elements to grasp the fundamentals of the meaning of practising. But it's like this will would carry a person to a certain point and from there on this project of becoming human she can bring forward only by herself, by practising. This will to continue the project can be ignited through a practitioner's own powers, through feeling the need and necessity for it in herself and in the world and through conscious decision to start.

Now it is to see how many ideals of the SW-teacher presented in chapter two can be seen in the idea of human as a practising being: conquer yourself, find the balance, a will becomes stronger through practising, be a role model, and individualize your education and pedagogy. Through this process a practitioner can be effecting in a way that has a real educational value: her state of will; being true and interested; being hearty and enthusiastic; work the relations and contents through, deepen and understand them, and individualize them for the pupils; being active and willing. A door to this world opens through inner practising.

6 Conclusions

This thesis is a qualitative study of the experiences and reflections regarding inner practising: confronting the challenges, the processes, and consequences. The purpose of phenomenological-hermeneutical research is not to find results that can be generalized statistically. On the other hand qualitative research can extend the understanding of its subject, and in this way may contribute to a theoretical generalization (Yin, 2003).

The aspects of practising

There are many challenges when starting inner practising and plenty to follow in the practising process itself. To surpass the resistance not to start and all the temptations and scripts that are there to raise a threshold to a wall before one has even started. By practising to be present, surpass one's fears and find the balance and not to fall into depression or self-deception. To stay in the process to be a practitioner and find the meaning from practising itself – the life of a practitioner is full of 'extra' challenges that she 'creates' only by the fact that she practises. One can with right ask what this kind of life of constant confrontations with challenges does to the practitioner. It can raise a picture of an inner adventure strolling through jungles, deserts and falls.

Practice always requires conscious will to surpass the hindrances and resistance and asks for the practitioner's ability to improvise, create and have imagination. Inner practising schools the will to balance the inner and outer world, also on the boundary surface by creating new thoughts that by meditation can 'play' and penetrate the surface. It seems that inner practising touches the mystery of will: what kind of inner life, inner capacities and 'readiness', consciously active will its acts create. It is not only to will but also to reflect and, for example, by meditation to have a certain sensitiveness for different qualities both in ones attitudes and in sensing the 'environment'.

Inner practising has consequences like any other practising: a practitioner gains abilities, gets to know oneself, becomes surer on her own 'territory'. The extra by inner practising is what happens through confrontations with the inner world: intensified waking up by meeting with moral values, with the genuine and alien side of oneself and that being, who pushes one to the confrontation and that whom one then confronts. This process creates a feeling of inner freedom that is based on self-knowledge and gained autonomy through practising. In this realm that a practitioner has created she can find new inspiration and courage for her practising and for work. To deal with the

consequences, i.e. to 'make room' for them and to follow them, is usually a process that proceeds to extend as how far as the practitioner has consciousness of them.

The idea of human

The idea of human being is to surpass oneself, to develop and cultivate the abilities and inner culture in order to get into the evolutionary flow. Without this surpassing which in this study is presented through the processes of inner practising all the potentials will not be developed. Thus the real manifestation of an individual will not take place and the abilities will not come to the service of the world. From this point of view human development is aborted and the expression of the idea of human being will be totally incomplete. Thus when the natural impulse for development ends after puberty, the real evolution of an individual is random. Inner practising seems to bring the idea of human being forth and at the same develops both: the idea and the practitioner.

The nature of inner practising and the life of a SW-teacher

The nature of inner practising is a consciously directed will to develop inner abilities and capacities that a practitioner for many different reasons wants and needs. There is a vast number of different practises and exercises, thus this study is a short introduction to the limited selection of certain exercises. However this study gives a picture of a will and a life of a practitioner: a will that has to be practised and a practised will that helps a practitioner to surpass her weaknesses and her natural love for comfort. It belongs to inner practising that a practitioner has an attitude, a will to practise and a humble consciousness that actually she will always stay as a practitioner regarding the most of these exercises. This realization can awake questions of the meaning and the purpose of life.

Inner practising seems to belong to the life of a SW-teacher, at least in principle. According to this study the ideals of SW-education and especially those ideals that touch the inner being and development of a teacher are not so easy to achieve without inner practising. I argue that part of the work of a teacher in the 21st century is to become much more conscious of herself and her work than was the case with former generations. Inner practising has its role in this evolving consciousness regarding strengthened self-knowledge, the meditative approach towards pupils and their development and also towards the educational content through which the development of a pupil can be helped and supported. My view is that much of the evolution of SW-education is dependent on the inner autonomy and free decisions of a teacher on her path to outer and inner reality in which she, her pupils and the world live. In SW-education this autonomy is crucial: One of the most important tasks of SW-education is to individualize all education. If a teacher doesn't strive for an autonomous relation to the content of education and especially to her relation to the

pupils, i.e. the knowledge of them is based on real and multi-dimensional perception and understanding, the task won't be achieved.

Through meditative practise a teacher becomes a real craft artist of education. This can be seen as a fruit of an autonomous relation. The activities that one brings for the pupils are individualized: they are made for them, according to their needs. The ideas behind these activities are not from the teacher's manual but gained through contemplative work with the pupils; they are not ideas from the outside but from the inside, they are born from the meditative confrontations with the pupils with the question: what do these pupils really need for their inner growth? It seems that the only person who really can answer this question – good ideas one gets also from outside – and also execute the gained ideas is the one, who has the real consciousness and connection with the pupils in the level where the needs of the pupils are. I argue strongly that this can never be achieved through intellectual pondering, the interest and will has to penetrate deeper. Without a meditative dimension educational work would be more superficial and it's a question how much meaningful educational character this work has. This path one can go further by researching the educational process in a meditative way.

A step forward

I regard this study as a beginning. It would be worth while to go deeper, for example, into meditative inquiry, to meditate the experiences like I did in a small scale (See chapter 3). Another aspect for further studies might be to take some of the perspectives of this study 'under the microscope' and study them more precisely.

Inner practising – exercises, sharing experiences, creating networks – can be developed further as a co-operative project in a network.

It might be useful to bring consequently inner practising for the students of SW-education like it has been done in some teacher training centres, for example in Norway and in California, USA. (See appendix 2)

Inner practising can also be a part of the continuous studying and developing the abilities of a teacher in teachers' meeting in SW-schools like it has been tried in some schools (See Appendix 3).

In chapter 2 I brought up the radical and central idea of self-education in SW-education. This idea can be supported consciously by bringing the idea of a practising human being to the pupils (See appendix 4).

Pushing the boundaries

When I first put this title to my work my idea was that the idea of inner practising can push the boundaries of SW-education further, thus the SW-education can develop through inner practising. This idea evolved during researching the phenomena of inner practising.

It seemed to me that inner practising can develop new openness in a teacher. Through practising a teacher can see the possibilities in herself and in her being as a teacher. New possibilities regarding dimensions and extensions of ‘the educational kingdom’ can arise in her. She can also gain the possibly lost meaning back to her work by letting go like Kierkegaard describes the opposite: “to avoid risks means the definite losing of oneself “. (Alex, 1997, p 122; my translation) Inner practising can also create social imagination that is according to my experience needed nowadays all over the world.

Inner practising can also push the boundaries in a person that through meditative activities create encounters of being character with the other persons and herself. These encounters can lead to the comprehension of the meanings and essentials of life in a way that her egotism decreases and she can more easily see what the world really needs from her and what she has to do in order to be able to fulfil these needs.

During this research project I realized that the researching itself can push the boundaries of the SW-education further. I don’t think that it’s so much about the results of studies, i.e. how they can benefit the separate realms of SW-education. But I think that it’s more about the change in SW-culture when more and more SW-teachers go through this kind of severe process of scientific researching. This process can bring forth the essence of SW-education and enforce it when it’s not any more a matter of faith – or based only on traditions. I’m not saying anything against natural born teachers, only that they have always been a minority. The others have to humbly take their stick and start out to the path of practising – and researching.

Through interviewing and especially confronting the open or hidden resistance in the attitudes of some of the interviewees, I realized that also in this realm the ‘pushing’ can help in development. After all, the ‘culture’ of inner practising is still ‘closed’: most of the people that do inner practising seem not to talk about or even reflect their experiences and most people around them don’t even know that these people are practising. With right everyone may remain silent. But in order to bring inner practising into the evolutionary stream it would be good to find ways to open up and share the experiences in an adequate way. This is also the main purpose of this study: to present the individual experiences so that they are like inspiring examples of the ways of walking this path of

inner practising and at the same lower the threshold to begin so that everyone can easily have a taste of this 'nectar of life'. Without illusions that this walking would be nice and convenient, although it's deeply rewarding.

The last word

When I think about the position of inner practising in the present world, I would say: it is open and accessible for everyone and yet very seldom people use this open door. Humorously I end this study with the words of Nietzsche in the subtitle of his 'Zarathustra': a study for everyone and no-one.

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8 APPENDIXES

APPENDIX 1

A questionnaire

1) What made you to do the exercises/the meditations?

2) What kind of a practising life have you had in recent years?

3) Your experiences about exercises of

A. Thought control

- How is it to begin the daily exercise?
- Can you describe something that happens in you when you do this exercise?
- Does it make a difference in you in some direction? Can you feel that difference in your everyday life?

B. Positivity

- Can you describe a situation when you practised this exercise?
- Can you describe something that happens in you when you do this exercise?
- Does it make a difference in you in some direction? If yes, can you feel that difference in your everyday life?
- Can you describe your learning process within this exercise?

C. Meditation

- How do you find the moment for the inner peace in order to meditate?
- Can you describe something that happens in meditation according to your experience?
- What are your experiences to gain knowledge/to gain powers through meditation?
 - o Have you experienced deeper insights about the things you have meditated?
 - o If yes, what kind of deeper insights have you come upon?
 - o Have you experienced the difference in meditating issues or humans?
 - o If yes, can you describe something about that difference?
 - o Have you noticed a difference regarding your inner power through meditation?
 - o If yes, what kind of difference and does this difference have a relation to your everyday life?

4) What kind of meaning do you give to your life of a practising?

APPENDIX 2

The other question that came to my mind during this study was the question of inner practising and teacher training. How could the idea and practise of inner practising be brought into the curriculum of teacher training more consciously and more evidently? In this purpose I interviewed some people involved with teacher training in Snellman College (Finland), Rudolf Steiner University College (Norway), Witten/Annen Institut für Waldorf-Pädagogik (Germany), Stuttgart Freie Hochschule (Germany) and Rudolf Steiner Collage (California, USA).

These interviews showed that the relation to inner practising in present day teacher training can be divided clearly into two: implicit and explicit.

In Finland and in Germany inner practising is integrated to different subjects like studying the human being and different artistic skills. The elements of practising and also reflection are there but I had a feeling that it was that if when inner practising was a separate theme people would regard it as taken out of its natural context.

They saw things quite differently in Norway and the USA. The example from Norway is from the series of weekend courses for upper school subject teachers. In Norway the inner practising was introduced as one of three themes; the other two were studying the specific age level and the approach of SW-education for different subjects. In short: inner practising was introduced; the students could choose one of the introduced exercises and practise it on their own. In the next meeting the experiences were discussed. In the USA they are doing it very explicitly on a course called Inner Work. The student is introduced to the 6 basic exercises and the review (Rückschau), the 'Knowledge of Higher Worlds' as a reader. The exercises are done together or at home. Sharing the experiences and the problems is common. The students also keep a diary for six months marking how they are doing with the exercises and writing a summary of their experiences.

One can see that there are different ways to approach inner practising also in teacher training. What came also out is that the most important thing in bringing this theme for the students is how natural the trainer's own attitude and relation is to inner practising and what kind of stand she can take through it to this issue in training.

APPENDIX 3

Here is a description of an interviewee about his experience in his school how to bring the idea of practising into the teacher's meeting:

“There were two impulses: to act against fatigue and through this to give something for the community.

The idea was to find the renewal forces through doing something. Teachers were divided into groups of five people and every group dealt with the question of regeneration. The groups made decisions what they will do every day for one year. It could be a decision in the group or individual decision. It was a question of regularity, the act itself wasn't that important.

Some kept a learning diary every day for one year; some had a silent moment for 10 minutes every day, some painted a picture. Some could keep it through, for some it was too difficult to hold through but they just started again.

It was easy to start after introduction, people were ready to try and experiment. This has been continuing now for seven years. The most interesting things have been the deep spiritual things in which people have been able to bring their own experiences and go through their own door.

It has also had its consequences: People stay in the school, there is not much change among teachers. Teachers are competent to act and there is a basic understanding and interest for the spiritual background of the SW-education.

The majority is very willing to go on and waits for the time – every year in January-February – to start the work anew. It has become like a cornerstone of the work of the teacher's meetings.”

APPENDIX 4

Project on the 7th grade: practising

In the biology block I introduced the human senses. One accent of our study was to see clearly that the senses are given as such but the mission of human is to develop them further to become more sensitive and more accurate of using them.

At the end of our block every pupil wrote an essay about practising. Here are some quotes of these writings:

“A human being tries through practising to deal with the different situations of life. Practising is ‘mind gym’ and with its help a human can develop for example her ability to think and then it is easier to handle the various challenges in life. That’s why for example school is some sort of practising for life.”

“People are practising in order to learn and the more a person practises the more she learns to practise. Thus practising is not only for learning but to practise the practising.”

“We practise in order to develop. The development doesn’t always happen by itself, sometimes it requires practising. To practise one can for example talk or to take the other people account or even kicking the ball, anything. In practising there is usually repetition, methods, continuous doing, also pondering.”

“The aim of practising is to learn things and to repeat some movement or doing as long as one begins to internalize it. In ones life one practise hundreds of things and one can never practise anything so that one is able to do it too well. Practising is challenging and sometimes frustrating but when one at last learns some thing one gains self-confidence and joy of succeeding which leads one to practise again new things.”

“Practising requires will. It is not lazing around and not only to think that soon I start to practise. Why do people practise then? Because people want to aim at better ‘know-how’, which they can make it through practising. It requires endurance however and interest in the issue because one is not immediately at the top.”

After this description every pupil chose one exercise according to one of the senses. Most of them chose something that they were natural and already good at, like seeing-drawing. During practising they described their inner struggle in their practising diaries. This project continued by personal self-educational thing that everyone chose for the next task. The new task was to renounce for a while something that one likes. After the first week one should evaluate ones struggle and change this exercise according to that for the second week. After these two weeks there was an evaluation how it went and what one could do next. Two weeks later there was a moment for a short review what happened in these two weeks after practising. Here are some quotes from practising diaries:

(renouncing eating chocolate) “1st day: I could almost say that this doesn’t require anything! 2nd day: I take back everything! At the weekend I ate delicious milk chocolate because I had my pause about practising and in this morning the routine won I sub-consciously took two pieces and only after that I realized: “Hey, I shouldn’t do this!” After that the half eaten chocolate bar has haunted in my mind.”

(renouncing cursing) “2nd day: I cursed only a little. I have substituted some four-letter-words for words I have invented. 4th day: Today I didn’t curse even once which is a real success! 5th day: Today it was a real collapse, I forgot the whole exercise. Evaluation: I maybe took a too hard exercise because I failed almost every day. If there would come same kind of two weeks I would choose something else.”

(renouncing candy) “1st day: It feels strange when one is not allowed to eat candy the want to eat them is much stronger. 4th day: My friend stayed the night. It felt peculiar when we didn’t eat candy, as if something was missing from life. Evaluation: Exercise was good. After this I start to eat regularly, then the lust for sweet things is not so big. After two weeks: First I didn’t even think that I want to eat candies but as soon as I bought it I took my old bad habit.”

(only one thing in a day on TV or in computer) “7th day: When I came home I was pondering should I watch TV or not. I thought it doesn’t make any difference but then I felt like itching and there was like a heavy stone on my chest, I could stop myself and I went to upstairs to read. 8th day: When I was downstairs eating I was glancing TV all the time and every time I turned my look away and said “NO!” to myself but it didn’t help much.”

(to read only until 9 pm) “1st day: The book tries to pull me back. 3rd day: Today I didn’t have any time to read now it makes me sad that I’m not allowed to. 5th day: I change the exercise and from now on I’m only allowed to read until 7 pm. From time to time I glance at the book and think that I could read some and no one would know but one has to hold true, it would be self-deception and giving in. 8th day: I only had time for half a page. This is nothing but torture. Evaluation: I think I could have chosen still a more difficult exercise. I will enjoy my freedom.”

(renouncing TV and computer) “7th day: Now there is more time to play the guitar. And although the TV is on I don’t watch it and fortunately the programs are lousy. After two weeks: My using of computer has reduced but every now and then I watch TV. I have practised guitar more often.”

(renouncing the pear juice) “Evaluation: I survived just and just. It was difficult but also interesting because I didn’t ever realize the role of the juice in my life. After two weeks: first I drank it a lot but now it’s strange that I’m not that interested in it any more...”

(renouncing candy) “5th day: Unfortunately I renounced candy today when I was in the movies. I bought pop corn instead but I wanted candy the whole evening through until I now took some ice cream. Evaluation: Now I try to save money and I still cannot bye candy. I would rather not do this again.”

(renouncing soda) “1st day: I’m so used to drinking soda when I’m with my friends so it is not nice to say no. I’m a little bit addicted to everything. I need a lot of will power if I want to keep away from something. Evaluation: Somehow it went, without tearing my hair off. After two weeks: I have lived freely but I learnt self-discipline.”

(only 30 min. chatting on the net) “6th day: Today I wasn’t satisfied with myself at all. I thought I just drop in but when I came back I noticed that I had been there 45 minutes. I was so angry to myself because I could have kept my promise as good as in the beginning of the week. I decided to ‘punish’ myself so that I will chat only for one hour on the entire weekend although I had planned to have ‘holiday’ from my limitations...”