

The broken neck: the Wound and the Other

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ABSTRACT: This paper is a phenomenological-poetic study or meditation of personal experiences in encountering the other – and myself through the other. The point of departure is the split between the intellect and the rest of our life world, which seem to have permeated the whole of western culture. This “vertical” split causes what I consider a soul and spirit “disease” in the individual, which affects the relation between individuals, and thus also becomes a “horizontal” split or wound. Thinking (head) and willing (body) is connected through the feeling realm (heart). But the feelings are continually wounded through the difficulties in the relation to the other.

However, through a heart felt relation to the other, which shifts my attention from my own wound and recognises the wound in the world outside me, my thinking and willing are connected and I have an impulse to action. Through working for the other (in a broad sense), I find that my own wound is being healed. But again: as soon as I try to hold onto this healing, it dissolves away.

These experiences are shown to be part of a schooling process. In this paper I relate my personal experience to certain aspects of Rudolf Steiner's thinking, as his concept of an I-sense (sympathy/antipathy), of freedom, and of confidence/trust in human relations in our time.

I also relate to poststructuralism, and especially Derrida's writings about friendship and the radical vulnerability and openness to what is coming. “Translated” into poststructuralist language, this same schooling process can be seen as a deconstructive reading of my own biography.

*Where I am helpless, where I decide what I cannot fail to decide, freely,
necessarily, receiving my very life from the heartbeat of the other.*

Jacques Derrida

Introduction: localizing – and locating – the theme

Could it possibly make a difference at which place on earth this conference takes place? Now, we explicitly wanted it to take *this* place. We wanted to start this dialogue here: Up in the hills, in nature, on a farm. In this way we can link science, philosophy, thinking, to the work with nature. And between the two poles: the other.

Every place has a story. And it goes on and on. Now this conference becomes part of the story of this place, and the place becomes part of the story of this theme: dialogue, even dialogue between postmodernism and anthroposophy, trying to see it in a spiritual way. It is a time story and a place story. An encounter in time and space: trying to create a room for something else to come and visit. If it wants to. This is a very old place.

It is about a place, this place, and a strange stone that looks like a duck. It is about a head that is separated from the body. It is about the other, who, suddenly and unasked, makes me aware of this split. It is about healing. My own story, then, also includes some of the story of this place: It was here, at this particular spot on earth that I realized I was split and wounded. It was also here that I experienced becoming whole. And again, here, at this very place I made the painful experience that this becoming whole was not something which *belonged to me*, but rather something that was lost in the very moment I tried to keep it. So this healing – even if it is part of *my* story – is bound to be spread out, to be universalized, shared, if it is to become true! Because it can only be owned through being given, it can only be real in the encounter; it can only *be* through being sacrificed, through being given up, through being lost.

This stone duck with the broken neck became a speaking image of my own wound. I didn't know that I had this split in me. The very sight of it made me feel uncomfortable. But it may also be seen as an image of the wound of our western culture, where the disconnected head has for some hundred years been not only normal but seen as an ideal. The human life was not to mess up the world of science and objectivity. With this broken neck as a point of departure I will look at some aspects of my own biography.

In this writing – especially in the first part – one finds experiences more or less connected through a succession in time. And then there are thoughts and reflections related to these experiences, trying to give sense to them, but also interrupting them, and crossing the time line, since the themes and questions are always inherent in the events of wound and healing, and there is no easy answer to what comes first and last and what belongs together. And then the *place* of the conference and of some decisive moments of my life is more or less present, mostly in the background, but also coming to the surface, speaking with its own silent voice. What from one point of view can be seen as “steps” in a narrative, might also be seen as – and are indeed experienced as – inner states or rather rooms or *places*. Places to fly to, to escape from, to struggle with, to try to get out of – or into; to make friends with.

As I write, the notions of development and “steps” on a path become increasingly problematic. Nothing seems to be really *new*, and whether I use the past tense or the present tense in writing, nothing is really *past*. It is somewhat hard to discover this, since the idea of *schooling* easily calls forth a picture of going *up* and leaving the previous steps when getting to the next.

I sometimes stop and ask myself if I am now “back” where I started, or if I am going “forward” at all. At least I am becoming older – even if an old lady that I know recently exclaimed that I had become so much younger! – and I don't know what is the better, and if it is possible to become younger *and* wiser, or if the wisdom belongs to the old only –. At least, time passes, and event is

added to event, but the old doesn't leave when the new comes; I cannot leave behind the stages I go through, I carry them with me. Therefore the struggling also goes on, and every time I think I have won, I have lost, lost connection to the wound. And even if I like to think I have learned something, I often find myself doing the same mistake over again, and I don't even know if it was a *mistake* the first time, or a *necessity*, or what I really mean by those two words, or if I *ought to* have done it better, or if it *could* have been different – or what possible meaning those words have, looking back.

In this text I go back and forth between “soul observations” (Steiner 1986) and anthroposophical and poststructural writings trying to come to an open situation, an open room, open for what is to come (Derrida)¹.

The Wound – and a place to escape

How do I start? Where does it start? The Wound seems to be more wounds: sometimes I think it is in *me*, my own, my problem, but then I see it everywhere, like the “Ur”wound. As old as the Tree of Knowledge perhaps, or at least as old as Socrates, or as Descartes? Or does it belong specially to our time? I can't decide, it seems to be all in one and one in all; the same and not the same, expressing its reality in different ways in different times. So that each time and culture – and each individual – has its own wound that is shown to be part of this same Wound.

You might know the feeling of not getting *in touch*, in contact with oneself – with ones Self? Like my talking is not my talking, it might as well have been someone else's, or some other place and time. My words fall down like stones, and the short sharp sounds keep echoing in an empty inner landscape. This is the end of a process of losing contact with something which some time ago, maybe yesterday, deeply touched me. It might happen gradually, this slipping-away-from-myself, and I might not really notice until after some

time. This vague feeling of not reaching what I am trying to reach may be veiled by a feeling of intellectual certainty. A feeling of being right, saying the right things, telling the truth, showing *them* what is the right way of thinking, and I don't realize my concepts are becoming old, are already dead and finished. How does this happen?

Once, deeply wounded, I tried to escape from the pain. I took refuge in my thinking which I knew as an always faithful friend. From a position "above" my self and my painful feeling life I could observe all the formations of my inner landscape – and feel free. Breathing in this clear air of the ideas; finding rest in this pure, unselfish, sunny atmosphere, the free realm of the eagles: why should I wish to go "down" again into this diffuse, contaminated, self-centred area of my own feelings, where pain and anxiety were lurking behind every corner, ready to draw me into their black abysses? I promised myself I would never, *ever* let anything or anyone disturb my thinking any more!

Now, how do you keep such a promise? Or rather: how do you keep from keeping it, having made it in a moment of despair, clinging to the only ray of light? Even if it doesn't seem quite right as time goes by and the pain fades; will it not just sink down below the surface of clear consciousness and live its silent life in the shadows? I think this is what happened. But even if I carried a vague resentment against whatever felt or seemed emotional in me, I was mostly quite relaxed in encountering strong feelings expressed by others. After all, the feelings of others couldn't hurt *me*. I felt strong; I thought I was whole.

In the *Philosophy of Spiritual Activity* Rudolf Steiner (1986) stresses *thinking* as that which constitutes our reality out of the flow of disconnected sensual impressions. To overcome duality and hence the belief in any "thing in itself" (see for instance chapter VII) was and is a main theme for me. Trying to get my thinking alive and movable, I prefer questioning before answering. Unanswered, unanswerable questions are what I feel (!) as the most fruitful, always bringing forth new thoughts and wonder. I cannot remember when I

became aware of this area of openness in thinking. Perhaps it was always there, emerging slowly as I woke up in thinking, reading Steiner and trying not to fix the concepts into representations.

In the second half of this book mentioned above Steiner steps from the “The science of spiritual activity (Freiheit)” to “The reality of spiritual activity”, developing his ethical individualism. One description of this ethical freedom is acting out of “love for the action”, or also: “my *love* for the object which I want to realize through my action” (Steiner 1986, chapter IX, italics in original)². Didn’t I read and meditate these words and chapters for years, trying to make them become real in everyday life, and bring these impulses with me in every kind of social setting? Of course this has nothing at all to do with *feeling*, if not the feelings inherent in *living thinking*: “the power of love in spiritual form” (Steiner 1986, addition to chapter VIII). I recognise this (not feeling!) love in the same shiny atmosphere where I found my equanimity. So I found this realm of feeling-that-is-not-feeling, and I believed I could stay safe and sound there.

The other side of thinking

Is it possible to be right and wrong at the same time, be wrong in being right so to speak? To be so right that it becomes wrong, a failure, a false gesture of thought and speech?

How did it happen, that I – being occupied with living thinking, detesting all these right answers that you always get when you try to move something, the answers putting an end to every process – how could it be that I became cold? That I froze up? Just a little, not in every respect, but still ... I thought I was *so* right. I understood what it was all about: anthroposophy, Steiner’s philosophy. I would never say I *had* it, of course not, I *knew* it should be living, movable. Didn’t I see I was building up my own structure of thoughts? Didn’t I feel just a little wiser than the people who declared they didn’t understand philosophy?

In spite of Steiner's very affirmative description of thinking *as a process*, he also – in his later writings and lectures – often points to another side of thinking, or of our conscious thoughts. To understand this I will make a very short outline of the three human soul-forces in Steiner's world-view: thinking, feeling and willing, connected to the head, the heart and the limbs.³ The sphere of thought is related to words like, light, *awake*, conscious, cold, *dead*, while the sphere of the will is described as *deeply asleep*, unconscious, dark, warm, and *alive*. Between the two is the feeling sphere, which has something of both, half alive, half awake (dreaming) and so on. The understanding of our conscious life as the very surface of the total soul life, is running through the whole of anthroposophy, both like and very unlike psychoanalysis.⁴

However thinking isn't seen as dead as such.⁵ Death is the state which the living, spiritual thinking takes on in order to appear as concepts in our consciousness. It *dies* into our consciousness in the act of constituting what we experience as reality.⁶ The realm of the soul unfolds from the thinking (head), being awake but dead, to the deeply sleeping and living will (body). And the whole method of practice and meditation described by Rudolf Steiner has as its aim to *enliven* the thinking and *wake up* the will, that is: to bring the two opposites of our soul into an inner spiritual connection.⁷

The fear of the other

In a pedagogical course for young people, Rudolf Steiner (2007) talks about the situation of people in our time – meaning the centuries after the renaissance, but also as an increasing tendency. In our time, the age of what Steiner calls the “consciousness soul”,⁸ our heads tend to be closed stores of knowledge. And this cold thing, stuffed with abstract, life-forsaken theory, locks us up with our knowledge and thus becomes an obstacle for us in relating to the world outside:

Today the human head is really always standing between the human being and nature. It is as if everything that comes to man were packed together in his head, as if the head were blocked-up – forgive the hard expression – so that it doesn't let anything get through its dense layers, which could become a relation to the world. (Steiner 2007: 176)⁹

It seems easy to confirm this observation, even easier now than in 1922 when these words were spoken, thinking of how even some small children have so many abstract concepts that seeing the full moon calls forth ideas of its weight, size and surface structure, rather than wonder.¹⁰ And we are still able to follow when he says that this intellectuality is made up of fear – at least for me it seems obvious: the unknown, *unnamed* is often frightening. But Steiner's explanation in this particular course of lectures of why this happens in our time of human evolution was for me totally unexpected. The fear that especially haunts people in the last centuries is the fear of the other human being! For the first time in history – and increasingly – the other faces me as an *uncovered I*. And my only protection – being of course also naked – is this knowledge. So from one point of view this whole dead intellectuality that isolates us from the world and the other is produced for exactly this same purpose:

This is the great shift [Übergang] to the modern time [neueren Zeit]: that human being and human being according to their inner condition [Anlage], according to that which the soul demands, stand without cover before each other. But the capacities for such an uncovered facing-each-other [hüllenlosen Sichgegenüberstehen] is not yet acquired. In particular we have not yet acquired the possibility to find a relation between I and I. (Steiner 2007: 202)¹¹

That is why we are closed up in our heads as in a fortress; staying there we avoid this frightful encounter with the real, naked other. This seems to be a two-way situation, the layers of dead knowledge in our heads become a hindrance in meeting the other, and the fear of the other makes us collect even more dead

knowledge. So in *this* respect there seems to be a perfect communication between head, heart and body ...

In the quoted lectures Steiner speaks to an audience of young people who are all sick and tired of the falseness in the social relationships of the older generation. His language has both power and wit, but the feeling of seriousness and sorrow always shines through:

(...) For many people this is still good, because if they should encounter someone who in their opinion could be at least to some extent a real person [ein richtiger Kerl], and they would comprehend [erfassen] him, then this would be such a strong experience that it would fully overwhelm [übertönen] their own human being. Their I would be even more overwhelmed by the next [real person], and by the third and fourth they wouldn't be able to meet at all, they would already have lost themselves. It is developed far too little inner strength and activity, too little kernel, too little individuality, so that the humans don't want to experience the other human for fear that they will lose themselves. And thus they pass each other by. (Steiner 2007: 189)

Sometimes I meet people – it is always easier to see such things in others than in oneself – holding their concepts and words and systems in front of them as a shield, and I want to shout: “But who are *you*?”

Something long time forgotten

How is the expression “real person” (richtiger Kerl) in the quote from Steiner to be understood? Considering the contextual background and regardless of the masculine words in the German original, I understand it as authentic, upright, true. And somehow these qualities must come forth if there is to be a real meeting.

Yes, I have met “*real persons*”, and we have *met*. Sometimes it happens very suddenly – and it is always unexpected: I have seen it in their eyes; like a curtain is suddenly pulled aside and I look right into the soul. A short moment

and it is gone. Or it can be that the moment is extended and the room opens, and is filled with a speaking silence. It might even happen through a confrontation, with harsh words and accusations, then, if I take a step back, it is there, this *something*.

Now, right now, before going any further in relation to the other human being, I will jump to the place of the conference, to Foldsæ, the farming school with its surroundings of wood and mountains, lakes and river. Because for me this is a special place of encounter, a place of special encounters. It is a place where streams meet, the streams of my life. This paper is written for a conference, and the conference, so to speak, took place in the middle of my writing, before the paper was finished, and it took place at Foldsæ. Thus my writing is closely connected to this time and place context, and it is not to be separated from it.

Here at Foldsæ I had the amazing experience of this same – or very similar – *something* in relation to beings and processes of nature that I sometimes experience in relation to people. I realized that Nature also has a voice. And when I listen it speaks insistently, though mostly soft and with friendship, always revealing new – or very old forgotten – secrets. Talking to my heart it helped me to go on with my struggle, pointing to hidden paths in the inner and outer landscape.

Looking back to my first times here I remember us working with earth and water, and with trees, observation exercises being an important part of the new master degree programme.¹² Can the muddy stream with the thin current of clear water in the middle speak to me? And the river with the pool of almost still water beneath the waterfall? And the tall pine trees at the riverside? The aspen tree with its yellow falling leaves in the autumn, of what secrets, of what wound and sorrow did the shivering leaves whisper to me, as I sat there listening while trying to come to grips with my own sorrow – the sorrow of the broken neck? There seemed to be a connection between the dead, falling leaves and my own

wound: What is dying in me, and where do I find the new buds of the future? It seemed like everything said and done and every incident in this intense atmosphere of encounters were pointing at this split in me, saying: it can't be this way; the time is over when you could fly away from what is painful. There are other ways.

I don't know if I understand this language "rightly", and I am still working to get into the other ways, but at least my thinking has started being "disturbed", being moved and puzzled, which I accept though not without some resistance. On the other hand: how could I believe that my thinking could come into contact with human reality, with my own reality, without being disturbed? Something in me started to thaw back then, just as I realized it had been frozen. Fortunately, despite my old forgotten promise, some good angel of mercy has kept me from running away from significant events of my life, and has made me recognize them.

Recognizing them first of all means recognizing the other – who has something to tell me. Only a couple of times in my life it has been this clear that the other is now talking with the voice of my Self. Thus, mysteriously recognising this voice from outside I have to listen, lest I miss out on something crucial for my life. And so I started listening. Not only to the words – words being but one part of our total language –; I "listened" to the soul gestures. And I was deeply moved.

I guess this is a chance we have to take, facing a real person. We risk being moved, being disturbed in our straightforward travel and finding ourselves on a new road. At least this happened to me. And starting being moved, I become generally movable, touchable by new others and new thoughts. Not least, this movability led to amazing new encounters with people I thought I already knew.

What is it that I meet when meeting the other? Sometimes it is like recognizing something that I once knew, but had forgotten.¹³ And to be reminded

of this – since it is very dear to me – makes such a strong impression that I cannot stay the same afterwards. Even my “old knowledge”, to be reminded of it in a new way gives it a new quality, since it now contains something of the other.

But on the other hand, the otherness of the other might be something totally different, not recognizable at all – so that I really meet something entirely new, and this new, unknown makes an impression as deep, because it is mysterious?¹⁴ We are now of course speaking only of the “real” other, real persons, according to the quotes from Steiner, and of real meetings, *seeing* each other if only for a short moment.

What is strange is that I cannot really decide for myself about the one or the other person whom I’ve met, if it is the recognizable or the unknown that touches me. And as I think about such childish and existential questions, I become all the more confused and mystified, and the known and the unknown, the same and the other seem to change places all the time.

Of course: if the other were just like me, he or she wouldn’t be the Other. So even for the recognition of something known, if it didn’t have something unknown in it, it would have nothing to *tell* me. That is the problem of “knowing” each other too well; we don’t *see* each other any more. We only see our own representations. Thus it has to be the known, recognizable *in* the unknown; the unknown, unpredictable in the known that touches me. When I suddenly recognize my own thought in the other, it is certainly something else than having my own thought in me. But knowing someone well for many years, what makes an impression on me is rather the experience of the unknown in the familiar, a glimpse of something that I couldn’t foresee, which reminds me that I am dealing with the Other, whom I don’t fully *know*.

Sensing the I – or the enemy friend

In Steiner's time the "standard" explanation of how we conceive the other person is the conclusion by analogy. Because the other person resembles me on the outside, he or she must also resemble me on the "inside", have feelings, thinking and so on. Steiner (1966) finds this a ridiculous and abstract idea. According to him, we sense the innermost soul of the other, the I or ego, with a sense organ that is spread out over the whole of our being. In his description this I-sense balances in a rhythm of sameness and otherness, or between the soul gestures of being one with the world and separating oneself from the world and hence becoming conscious of oneself. The first is in Steiner's vocabulary called sympathy, the second antipathy. He describes an encounter with the other like this:

You perceive a man [Mensch] for a short time; he makes an impression on you. The impression disturbs you inwardly; you feel that the man, who is really a similar being to yourself, makes an impression on you like an attack. The result is that you "defend" yourself in your inner being, that you oppose yourself to this attack, that you become inwardly aggressive towards him. This feeling abates and your aggression ceases; hence he can now make another impression on you. Then your aggressive force has time to rise again, and again you have an aggressive feeling. Once more it abates and the other makes a fresh impression on you and so on. That is the relationship which exists when one man meets another and perceives his ego [das Ich]: giving yourself up [Hingabe] to the other human being – inwardly warding him off [Wehren]; giving yourself up again – warding him off; sympathy – antipathy; sympathy – antipathy. I am not speaking of what takes place in the feeling life, but what takes place in perception when you confront a man. The soul vibrates: sympathy – antipathy; sympathy – antipathy; sympathy – antipathy. (...)

This however is not all. In that sympathy is active you sleep into the other human being; in that antipathy is active you wake up again, and so on. There is this quick alternation in vibrations between waking and sleeping when we meet another man. (Steiner 1966: Lecture VIII)¹⁵

In following Steiner's description here, it becomes more understandable why this meeting I to I is also threatening. Because I have to develop enough of what

Steiner calls antipathy or even “aggressive force” not to sleep into the other and loose myself, or rather: to wake up again in my own self after having slept into the other self. Some lines later Steiner also connects the sleeping state with the will – which is sleeping as we have seen above – and the wakening to our thinking. I believe this is the state of being aware of the other as *other* and hence as a threat, before I fall asleep again and am united with this other, which is now the *same*.

Even if Steiner talks about “an aggressive *feeling*” etc. he stresses that this isn’t about what takes place in the feeling life, it is a sense. The shifting between sympathy and antipathy happens too fast for us to notice in our ordinary experience. But the more I try to follow this description, the more I think that this “vibrating” is exactly the *something* which I experience when the curtain is pulled away in the eyes of the other. It is an impression of something very vulnerable and very strong in the same instant. This vulnerability draws me to the other, while the strength makes me take a step back.

What Steiner describes as very fast shifts, as states of sympathy and antipathy following each other in *time*, might perhaps as well be seen, and indeed experienced, as two conditions existing together simultaneously in and through each other.

On the other hand; even if, according to Steiner, this is a sense and the sympathy and antipathy are not experienced as such – normally, couldn’t it be that the prolonged state of sympathy would easily call forth a prolonged state of antipathy? So that you feel that now there is too much sympathy, some distance, some antipathy; even enmity is needed – to see each other. To recognize the other as *other*.

Turning to poststructuralist thinking I find this quote from Jacques Derrida (2005) *The Politics of friendship*, expressing something very similar to Steiner, though in a very different way. Derrida reflects on friendship and enmity around a line from William Blake: “Do be my enemy for friendships sake”.

The two concepts [friend/enemy] consequently intersect and ceaselessly change places. They intertwine, as though they loved each other, all along a spiralled hyperbole: the *declared* enemy [...], the true enemy, is a better friend than the friend. For the enemy can hate and wage war on me in the name of friendship, *for friendships sake*, out of friendship for friendship; if in sum he respects the true name of friendship, he will respect my own name. He will hear what my name should, even if it does not, properly name: the irreplaceable singularity which bears it, and to which the enemy then bears himself and refers. [...] if he addresses me, me myself, he respects me, at hate's distance, me beyond me, beyond my own consciousness. And if he desires my death, at least he desires it, perhaps, him, mine, singularly. The declared friend would not accomplish as much in simply declaring himself a friend while missing out on the name: that which imparts the name both to friendship and to singularity. That which deserves the name. (Page 72)

As we can see, this isn't an ordinary enemy like those we read about in the newspapers or see on TV. It is a *personal* enemy. To be my personal enemy, you have to see me. The most numerous enemies are very impersonal. Either they don't know why they are enemies at all, or they are group enemies. Members of one group or nationality or race or family or sex hate the other. Not in person, but because they belong to this group. Not so for Derrida's enemy in this text: he is a personal enemy. And even though this enemy seems also to be able to hate me; he – or she – is a better friend than the friend.

These are enigmatic words; some would perhaps even find them without meaning. But to me they seem to point – in another way – to the sympathy/antipathy relation that Steiner calls I-sense. The resemblance – not so much in words as in the overall feeling, is that Steiner as well as Derrida accepts the enmity (Steiner: “aggressive force”) in the middle of friendship. As a condition for the possibility of real, true friendship. Because only as an enemy you can know *my name*. For naming something (which is an act of thinking) antipathy, distance is needed. And if the declared friend is “missing out on the name”, it might mean that there is a one-sided sympathy, which makes the other

into the same, the friend falls into sleep and forgets the naming. But then we don't meet any more; we don't *see* each other. I don't think this situation is very unusual. There is far too little "real enmity" around, which means far too little real friendship, real encounters with real others. Either we are sleepwalking with our friends, into each other, not experiencing the "attack" not developing the "aggressive force" needed to wake up, or we fear this attack that disturbs us, and keep back, hiding in the forces of our head. Awake and cold-hearted – and safe – we pass each other by.

A messianic moment

As I already said, I had this new experience here at Foldsæ, of coming into a relationship with nature, which my somewhat closed off head had kept away from me. The wound in man, the disconnection of head and body, the abstract theoretical thinking without contact to the heart and life reality, has caused so many bleeding wounds in nature. Actually, when Steiner (2007) talked about the closed head with its "dense layers", he first refers to it as an obstacle in relating to nature, the head is "standing between the human being and *nature*." Further, it doesn't let anything get through "which could become a relation to the *world*." (Steiner 2007: 176, my italics). And then he goes on in the same lecture talking about the fear of the other human being, which we have quoted. According to Steiner, it is the fear of the other that makes us block up our heads. And this blocking up of the head destroys our relation to nature.

So, obviously our relation to the other and our relation to nature are closely connected. I am delighted to see this, since it corresponds to and explains what I myself experience. Taking Steiners description in the opposite direction: if, through the relation to the other, the head starts to open up – the thinking being "disturbed" – this creates a possibility to restore the relationship to nature. Meeting nature through the other and meeting the other through nature: Together they truly made a head-disturbing, heart-melting impression on

me. And since I don't really believe in chance, I don't think it is coincidental that this happened exactly here at Foldsæ. This is a place for meeting the other and meeting nature; where streams come together and are united. A place to be reminded of something long ago forgotten and a place to come into contact with ones heart.

Being in a process together with others, learning to know them as “real persons”, sharing deep questions of our lives. Working – with the other – for an idea that transcends my own small self. Being allowed to “give something back” to nature by spreading biodynamic¹⁶ preparations. All these pictures and impressions flowing through my mind as I sit on a tree stump in the sunshine; I feel all the themes and streams of my biography coming into one.¹⁷ It is like the snap of something falling into place. In this *messianic* moment (Derrida in Mouffe 1996) the different parts of me, thinking, feeling and willing, become one whole person. It is truly an event of *belonging*. I belong to the earth where I am sitting; I belong to the other; I belong to a vision.

This word “heart”

For me the word “heart” is a very strong word. I am rather shy about it. How can people use it so easily? I really admire those who can use this word naturally – from their heart. I seldom utter it, and when I do, I most often feel strange, as if I am not being quite honest or am saying something better left unsaid. Right now I am in the same situation, looking for an honest, not profaning way to express what is on my – heart. It is much stronger than the word “friendship” and even than the word “love”, the latter being so misused that it is hard to be serious about it. “Heart” is more real in a way; whether you like it or not, it is there.

Though it is difficult for me, I can't deny that everything I work for, everything ever worth working for has to do with the reality of this small word. The heart is the meeting place. It is the meeting place between me and the other – if it is to be a real meeting. The heart is where the forces of my head and body

meet and are connected. When I lose this heart touch – and I lose it over and over again, having to search for it anew – I lose the reason why anything is important to work for. I can sit in my chair with all my thoughts and great ideas flying through my head: and so what? If I am not moved, I don't move. Or I move out of habit and duty.

The feeling of a light touch as of a warm wind or a butterfly wing; the enthusiasm of a vision; the joy of working with something dear; the feeling of being related to a bigger wholeness; the sadness or joy of the other, which “jumps over” to me like a spark of fire: It all belongs to the heart. But pain also belongs to the heart as much as joy. And experience tells me that I cannot want the one without also inviting the other.

The healing and the perhaps

Did I go wrong once more? Did I think I was whole, that I could keep this healing? A new time of harmony, having made friends even with my feelings? Didn't I learn the lesson rightly? How could I rest in this satisfaction, falling asleep and waking up with the feeling that nothing was right at all? The sky was so grey; it seemed like the sun had gone away forever. What did I expect: that this state of bliss should last and be confirmed? It felt like a very deep fall, impossible to comprehend. And why?

No doubt I had got into a false expectation even if it took some time to recognize it. Somehow I was closed in my own self, not unlike the description of the closed head. Now it was the closed heart. And, like the head has its gestures of holding, wanting its knowledge for itself and brooding over its treasures, the heart has the same tendency; wanting to keep the other, the moment, the healing. This selfishness of the heart is destined to be its own destruction. As soon as the heart closes itself off from the world, keeping its warmth to itself – perhaps without knowing that this is what happens – it starts to freeze. The more warmth

I receive and experience, the more it turns into frost when trying to keep it. I don't know if I experience this because of my very strong egoism, or if it is because I have received so much warmth and goodness, or both, but I clearly recognise this as a law. Now I found this law also in Steiner's (2005) lecture "Das Wesen des Egoismus", expressed it in many different ways: "Here it is shown that there is a law in the cosmos: the self correction of all being. Where egoism appears in a wrong way, it leads to devastation [Verödung] of being" (page 141, my translation).

Even after recognising this lawfulness it is hard work to let go, to give back what is given. Slowly I realized that this healing isn't something to be owned, but rather something to give away freely. Something to work for, something far too big to be mine, or rather: owning it would destroy it.

Jacques Derrida often has very clear and strong expressions of how to look at such owning-desires. In this quote from *The politics of Friendship* he talks about the truth and about *the perhaps*. The latter is an expression from Nietzsche. In Derrida's writing it is what might come, the unpredictable, that which we cannot foresee. It expresses the uncertain, what we can only hope for:

The friends of the *perhaps* are the friends of truth. But the friends of truth are not, by definition, *in* the truth; they are not installed there as in the padlocked security of a dogma and the stable reliability of an opinion. If there is some truth in the *perhaps*, it can only be that of which friends are friends. Only friends. The friends of truth are without *the* truth, even if friends cannot function without truth. The truth (...) ¹⁸it is impossible to *be it*, to *be there*, to *have it*; one must only be its friend. (Derrida 2005: 43)

If I should at any time talk about the truth, it would doubtless be closely connected to what I have above called *healing*. If I substitute the word "truth" in this text with the word "healing", it expresses what I try to learn from my

experience. I cannot *have* this healing; it is something that might happen, perhaps. It is something that I can only be friends with, friend of the healing, to serve it. Knowing I can fall apart at any moment, having always to struggle to have my head connected to my heart and body, to not “loose my head”, making up ideas and representations not in connection to real life, the feeling willing life. Connecting head and body means creating ideas which I am actually willing to work for, to *do*, because I love them, because they are capable of touching my heart, because I am – in a moment of grace – reachable, touchable, moveable by them. This is what I call healing. This healing, that is all the time needed anew, seems to be exactly what Steiner (1986) talks about in the second part of *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity*, with the expressions “love for the action” and “moral intuition”, expressing this same principle from a feeling-willing and from a thinking perspective. And this intuition which we love in acting out of it, needs the freedom, the total openness of the *perhaps* to come true.

The Wound and the healing

As I started recognizing the wound, I started recognizing the healing. Not only in the way that one might think; in that I realized the need for healing when realizing the wound. Even if this also belongs in the picture, the event of wound and healing transcends this simple logic.

The experienced reality is more that of the wound and healing becoming one and the same:

The healing is to be found *in* the wound, when in my wound I see the Wound of the world and of the other.

My own wound threatens to paralyse me; my pain closes me off from the other, in my own little melancholic world where every small “ressentiment” grows into a big black looming mountain. How do I overcome this self-centredness of the feeling life? I can’t say that I know an easy way to do this. Even if it might involve hard work, I still experience something like a sudden

grace that makes my own pain, my own desire, my own need, my own whatever feeling –, that makes all this become totally unimportant because I am suddenly moved by the need of the other, be it a particular other or a group or situation – or the whole world. This free condition is the same as I tried to describe from the point of view of “the perhaps”.

To mend the broken neck, to mend the gap between my head and body I must experience the ever aching, ever bleeding Wound that transcends my own. Looking back to the moment of belonging and becoming whole that I tried to describe, it was about the same. Sharing the destiny of the wounded earth, the wounded nature, sharing the pain and vulnerability of the other. Sharing in an idea of bringing the disconnected together. It was always about the same. Now I see this Wound and possible-impossible healing everywhere: in the eyes of my young students, in a broken branch of a tree. And *only* while I am touched by *it*, and *act* out of it, my head and body are kept together and I am on my way to healing.

Epilogue: declaration of dependence

I found this wonderful formulation from Derrida which I put at the beginning of my paper. I put it here at the end too: “Where I am helpless, where I decide what I cannot fail to decide, freely, necessarily, receiving my very life from the heartbeat of the other.” (Derrida 2005: 69). Fortunately, this paper wasn't finished before the conference. So I could be helped. You see, I really wanted to come thus far: to this reality that Derrida talks about. But it wasn't that easy. I had my presentation. Every time I tried to prepare it, it became something else. I never got the preparation finished. Actually, the presentation was not finished at all. I tried.

As I told you, I am very shy about words like “heart”, so I didn't really come to this word in my presentation. But one of the participants had a comment for me. I cannot repeat it, only that it was about heart, and heart problems, heart

diseases. Many people – women I think, with heart diseases – he referred to a study – had not been able to find or to realize their task in life, to realize their abilities. The point was whether we could help others, help each other to find these tasks, to fulfil our possibilities. I probably don't retell this correctly at all, but at least it was about helping the other, and it was *very* helpful to me. It gave me the possibility to come to the whole *point* of my presentation, which I really had no chance of reaching by myself: the dependency of the other. And it gave me the possibility to read this beautiful Derrida quote. Only later I realized that this event of helping and being helped was at the same time a demonstration of this quote and at least to some extent an answer to the question of helping the other to find her way.

So I am very content that my paper wasn't finished, that my presentation wasn't finished, so it was possible to experience this help, this heartbeat, because it is much more precious than any perfect speech. And I know this heartbeat will continue in me, and – I hope – in others reading this, and that it will never be finished: the writing, the presentations; the dialogue.

And in the light of this help that I received, which I receive over and over again, as might be seen throughout this writing; I might also dare to touch, perhaps, that which has been there all the time, through all my trying, in all my intentions, but never really outspoken. The Other. The Other that meets me through the other. I had to mention this at last – once.

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¹Jacques Derrida uses this expression or variations of it almost everywhere in his writings. It is like a promise, something we always wait for, and this – which can only *come*, but never *be*, lest it would lose its power of promise and hope – becomes a positive life force.

²Since I don't normally read this book in English, I quote from an English website. There the 1986 version is put out, but it has no pagination.

³ See for instance Steiner (1966), *The Study of Man* [*Allgemeine Menschenkunde*].

⁴'Like' as in the principle of regarding an unconscious or subconscious part of the soul as often being decisive for our conscious acting, but very 'unlike' when it comes to the spiritual understanding of this "underground" life.

⁵In *Von Seelenrätseln* Steiner (1993) points to the boundaries of our conceptual thinking. There he both talks of a deadening of the representation [*Vorstellung*], and a suppression [*Heradämpfen*] and numbing [*Herablähmung*] of its life. But there he also leaves an opening, because it is not possible to deaden or suppress *all* ideas [*Vorstellungen*]. And the kind that refuse to be deadened, become what Steiner calls boundary representations [*Grenzvorstellungen*]. As I understand this, these are, or could be, open paradoxical questions, that cannot have a fixed answer. See Steiner 1993: 20 ff, and 135 ff.

⁶It could be shown that Steiner's description of how thinking constitutes both the objects and the subject in the same act comes very close to both Derrida's (2006) "différance" and Deleuze's (2005) description of "the Immanence" – the latter which he also called "a Life". In my master thesis, *Logos og Babel* (Jensen 2007) I have tried to go more into this theme, and also the process of cognition according to Steiner's writings and lectures.

⁷ In his book *The New Experience of the Supersensible* (Ben-Aharon 2007) the author develops in his own way the process of waking up the sleeping and enlivening the dead into a conscious spiritual experience.

⁸For a phenomenological description of man's different body, soul and spirit members, see Steiner (1994: 24-60)

⁹This and the other quotes from this book are my translation.

¹⁰I have this particular example from a girlfriend who went for an evening walk with her four year old granddaughter.

¹¹Steiner continues here with pointing at the importance of upbringing/teaching in helping children to develop the capacities needed to meet as human beings.

¹²The Masters Programme in Waldorf education at The Rudolf Steiner University College started in the autumn 2005. The courses are held at Foldsæ.

¹³ Actually, sometimes this is literally happening. I may find in my old diaries knowledge and reflections which are quite similar to what I am now experiencing. And this makes me very thankful to the spiritual world that hasn't given up teaching me, even if I have to learn it over again in a new way, hopefully now being more prepared than the first and even than the second time, to *live* this knowledge.

¹⁴ I am aware of the deep epistemological and ontological questions of knowledge and recognition, going all the way back to Plato. But here the task is only to try to describe an experience.

¹⁵The quote is from an English website without pagination. See note 2.

¹⁶ The preparations belonging to biodynamical agriculture might be seen as a sort of homeopathic medicine for the earth.

¹⁷ I have described the process leading up to this moment in an article about the masters program in Waldorf pedagogy: "To make something whole". The English version is not published, but it is published in Norwegian under the title "Å gjøre noe helt" in *Meddelelser til skolens medarbeidere*, nr 39, September 2006, and with the title "Apropos antroposofi som vitenskap: tilbakeblikk på det første året med mastergradsprogram i steinerpedagogikk" *Antroposofi i Norge IV* 2006.

¹⁸ The remark left out here is " – that of the thinkers to come –", referring to Nietzsche in *Beyond Good and Evil*, where he welcomes the new philosophers, who will think in a new way.