

Abstract

Deepening Waldorf didactic using the concept of materiality

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In the lecture I will sketch out the possibilities of a didactic practice informed by a 'material turn'. Parallel with and sometimes as a counter movement to the rapid digitalization of almost everything that reaches humans senses has grown a deeper interest for the significant qualities of the material world. The concept 'materiality' is to be found in a wide range of academic as well as artistic discourses, such as archeology, social anthropology, technology, psychology, architecture and art.

In the lecture the exploration of 'materiality' takes a starting point in the academic interest in human relations with structures, textures, consistence, density, smells and weight of material objects and matter around us. The significance of space within and in-between bodies and objects are also researchable qualities in focus in using the concept materiality. The use of materiality draws attention to the human body as a sensory organ gaining identity, agency, meaning and memories through its interconnectedness with a material world (Arcidiacono & Pontecorvo, 2019; Gallahager, 2019; Shlunke, 2013). The view of interconnectedness of human being and world also leads to loosing up 'organic' and 'inorganic' life and matter as discrete categories (Gallahager, 2019.) Lettow (2017) uses the term 'the material turn' for such orientations towards an understanding of human life as interlinked with the world through our senses. I find such epistemological approaches in line with Rudolf Steiner's anthropology and theory of knowledge.

In the lecture I will investigate the didactic tradition in waldorf schools of an extensive use of a wide range of materials. From the suggested perspective of 'materiality' this is not only an expression of a normative esthetic but pedagogical resources, aiming to deepen pupil's relation with the multitude's forms of life and objects of the world and own self.

I will propose that waldorf education on a theoretical level could enter into dialogue with some discourses within the 'material turn'. The future human role, positions and moral responsibilities towards other living beings and nature are huge and demanding issues. A turn towards materiality will challenge the idea of human beings as superior other forms of life and the view on the material world as "resources". In the light of a material turn, the didactic practices in waldorf schools can be developed and deepened. This way, the concept materiality can on both a theoretical level and on a practical didactic level, be educationally beneficial for future schools and society.