

World intelligence - Knowledge, truth and the role of the senses in the age of the Anthropocene

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In this presentation, I will develop some ideas from the "material turn" on how education can support students to deepen their relationship with the world, nature and themselves, to create a more sustainable and just society. Young people today are generally encouraged to examine themselves introspectively to orientate themselves in the world. The notion of personal identity has become a pervasive, subjective, and individualistic concept that pervades nearly all aspects of modern life. The development of artificial intelligence has served to reinforce this tendency towards a more solipsistic culture.

I propose here a different perspective, suggesting that education for young people should begin by supporting an interest in the world and nature around them. Such interest should be encouraged to extend beyond merely acquiring information to include a deeper and meaningful relationship with the world and nature. There are many reasons for students to develop a relationship with nature and the world around them for their thinking, feeling, and acting. One strong aim is to craft a foundation of objective reality in their thinking as a counterbalance to the flood of information, images, and videos that overwhelm young people today. Another purpose is to enable students to develop a stronger sense of judgment and ability to assess the authenticity of what they encounter in the world around them. An education that works through the senses and engages the student's bodily relation in the process of learning must therefore be slow and reflective.

Rudolf Steiner often refers to Goethe's method of approaching knowledge as a means to capture the true essence of a phenomenon through the senses. Steiner also refers to Franz Brentano, who further influenced this view of knowledge as a bodily relationship to the world. A fundamental concept for Brentano was the principle of the intentionality of the senses in interacting with the world. This principle is today actualized in theoretical perspectives that are part of the material turn.

In the presentation, I will make connections between the theoretical legacy of Waldorf education, such as Goethe and Brentano, and theorists who are part of the material turn, such as Tim Ingold, Lambros Malafouris, Edwin



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Hutchins, and Theodore Schatzki. The concept of materiality is about how materials, artifacts, and places shape people's lives, knowledge, thinking, and social relations. Drawing on various interdisciplinary perspectives, I will argue that a material turn in education can provide new ways of engaging with the world and contribute to developing a more sustainable and just society.