



Bildung in einer sich wandelnden Welt /
Education in a Rapidly-Changing World

Transformations

Abstract:

The Act of Knowing and Creating the Conditions for the Aha!moment

Liz Attwell

We need to meet the growing challenge of educating today's children by intensifying our activity in two directions: inner and outer. In one we need to deepen our study of the way human beings know, as described by Rudolf Steiner in "The Science of Knowing" and "The Philosophy of Freedom". In the other we need to connect this understanding to the phenomena coming from society in new psychological insights and educational techniques.

One way that I have done this is through researching the connection between the act of knowing and the phenomenon of "Aha!moments"(also known as Epiphany moments) which have been studied by psychologists since 1979. Through teaching English Literature at Michael Hall Steiner/Waldorf School in Sussex, England, I have researched Goethean Science methods of working with literary texts which have resulted in a greater incidence of Aha!moments for my students. Aha!moments, I have realised, happen when the act of knowing becomes immediate and the human being becomes the instrument of a meeting between the visible and the invisible, the percept and the concept.

According to psychologists Aha!moments have seven associated attributes:

1. They come after initial effort and confusion in solving a problem.
2. They are instantaneous.
3. The participant "knows" that the answer is true.
4. They can give a much fuller explanation of the solution than when an answer is arrived at in another way.
5. They remember much more of the solution than when an answer is arrived at in any other way.
6. The participant experiences a positive affective result (a rush of joy).
7. They experience greater engagement of the will.

This has important implications for all teaching (particularly in the Upper School). My talk will go into what the elements are that I have found create the conditions for students to experience the Aha!moment. I will give examples of the use of Goethean Science methods in literature teaching, Socratic questioning and formative assessment techniques. I will consider the wider implications for the teaching of other subjects.