

## ADOLESCENTS AFTER THE FOURTEENTH YEAR

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By the time students reach their mid-teens, they have already entered puberty. Teachers need to keep this very much in mind well before it actually manifests. We simply need to open our eyes to what happens in growing children, both before and during the process of sexual maturity, to appreciate how important it is to be prepared for this challenge.

We have seen in our studies that until the change of teeth children are imitators and that, while there is still no clear differentiation between organic functions and soul activities, children are inwardly given over to the soul and spiritual forces flowing down from the head, which continue work organically and permeate the whole organism. The most characteristic feature of this stage is the way those soul-spiritual forces work together with the bodily forces.

I will need to use the insights of clairvoyant consciousness to give you a clear description of what happens in young children at this stage of life—not because I think we need to form our ideas in a particular way, but it just may be the best way to understand what has been said so far.

When young children sleep, the soul and spiritual members leave the physical sheaths (just as in any adult) and reenter at the

moment of awaking. In children, however, there is still no significant difference between conscious experiences while awake and unconscious experiences during sleep. Normally, if no memories of daytime events enter the world of sleep (and this rarely happens in childhood), the sleeping life of children moves within realms far beyond the earthly sphere. From these higher worlds, active forces are drawn that then work during the waking state, from the brain down into a child's whole organism.

During the second dentition, certain soul and spiritual forces in children are released from working entirely in the organic sphere. They begin to assume an independent, soul-spiritual quality. Between the change of teeth and puberty, thinking, feeling, and willing in children begin to work more freely. Children are no longer imitators but, through a natural feeling for authority, they develop the consciousness they need to connect with the world. This faith in adult authority is essential, because outer conditions are not enough to ensure that children connect sufficiently with the world. The way adults confront one another, whether verbally or by other means, is very different from the way children encounter adults. Children need the additional support that a sense of authority provides. Consequently, experiences while awake will enter their soul-spiritual life during sleep. So, teachers have the possibility of reaching children through education between the change of teeth and puberty to the same extent that earthly experiences enter children's sleep and replace those of the spiritual world.

With the onset of puberty, an entirely new situation begins, and emerging adolescents are essentially different from what they were prior to sexual maturity. To describe this, it may be helpful to refer back to what was said at the end of yesterday's lecture. Until the change of teeth, it is normal for children to live entirely within the physical body. However, if this state is extended beyond its natural time, when it would no longer be

normal, it results in a very melancholic temperament. During childhood it is natural to have a relationship between the soul-spiritual and physical organization that characterizes an adult melancholic. Bear in mind that what is right and good for one stage of life becomes abnormal in another.

During the second dentition, certain soul-spiritual forces are liberated from previous organic activities, and they flow into what I call the body of formative forces, or ether body. This member of the human being is linked entirely to the outer world, and it is appropriate for children to live in it between the change of teeth and puberty. If, even before the change of teeth, these ether forces were excessive—that is, if the child has lived too much in the etheric sheath before the second dentition—the result is a decidedly phlegmatic temperament. However, children can have a normal and balanced relationship with the ether body, and this is absolutely essential between the seventh and the fourteenth years, between the change of teeth and puberty. Again, if this condition is carried too far into later life, a decidedly phlegmatic temperament develops in the adult.

The true birthplace of the sanguine temperament is the next member of the human being that, under normal circumstances, becomes independent during puberty. Yesterday, I called this the astral body—the member of the human being that lives beyond space and time. If, between the change of teeth and puberty, children draw too much from what should come into its own only with sexual maturity, a sanguine temperament arises. Growing human beings become inwardly mature for sanguinity only with the arrival of puberty. Thus everything in life has a normal period of time. Various abnormalities arise when something that is normal for one period of life is pushed into another. If you survey life from this point of view, you begin to understand the human being more deeply.

What really happens as children mature sexually? During the past few days we have already illuminated this somewhat. We have seen how children continue, after the change of teeth, to work inwardly with forces that have to a certain degree become liberated soul-spiritual forces. During the following stages, children incarnate via the system of breathing and blood circulation, and the tendons and the muscles grow more firmly onto the bones. They incarnate from within out, toward the human periphery, and at the time of sexual maturity young adolescents break through into the outer world. Only then do they stand fully in the world.

This dramatic development makes it imperative for teachers to approach adolescents, who have passed through sexual maturity, quite differently from the way they dealt with the children before. Basically, the previous processes, before puberty, involved emancipated soul-spiritual forces that still had nothing to do with sex in its own realm. True, boys or girls show definite predispositions toward their own sexes, but this cannot be considered sexuality as such. Sexuality develops only after the breakthrough into the external world, when a new relationship with the outer world is established.

But then, at this time, something happens in the realm of an adolescent's soul and bodily nature, and this is not unlike what occurred previously during the second dentition. During the change of teeth, forces were liberated to become active in a child's forces of thinking, feeling, and willing, which were then directed more toward the memory. The powers of memory were then released. Now, at puberty, something else becomes available for free activity in the soul realm. These are powers that previously entered the rhythms of breathing and, subsequently, strived to introduce rhythmic qualities into the musculature and even the skeleton. This rhythmic element is now transformed into an adolescent receptiveness to the realm of creative ideas

and fantasy. Fundamentally, true powers of fantasy are not born until puberty, because they come into their own only after the astral body is born. The astral body exists beyond time and space and links together past, present, and future according to its own principles, as we experience it in our dreams.

What is it that adolescents bring with them when they break through into the outer world via the skeletal system? It is what they originally brought with them from pre-earthly existence; it was gradually interwoven with their whole inner being. And now, with the onset of sexual maturity, adolescents are, as it were, cast out of the spiritual world. Without exaggerating, we can express it that strongly, because it represents the facts; with the coming of puberty, young people are cast out of the living world of spirit and thrown into the outer world, which they perceive only through the physical and ether bodies. Although adolescents are not aware of what is happening inside them, subconsciously this plays a very important role. Subconsciously, or semi-consciously, it makes adolescents compare the world they have now entered with the one they formerly held within themselves. Previously, they had not experienced the spiritual world consciously, but they nevertheless found it possible to live in harmony with it. Their inner being felt attuned to it and prepared to cooperate freely with the soul-spiritual realm. But now, conditions have changed, and the external world no longer offers such possibilities. It presents all sorts of hindrances that, in themselves, create a desire to overcome them. This, in turn, leads to a tumultuous relationship between adolescents and the surrounding world, which lasts from fourteen or fifteen until the early twenties.

This inner upheaval is bound to come, and teachers do well to be aware of it before it arrives. There may be overly sensitive people who believe that it would be better to save teenagers from this inner turmoil, only to find that they have become

their greatest enemy. It would be quite incorrect to try to spare them this tempestuous time of life. It is far better to plan ahead in your educational goals, so that what you do before they reach puberty comes to help and support adolescents in their struggles of soul and spirit.

Teachers must be clear that, with the arrival of puberty, a completely different being emerges, born out of a new relationship with the world. It is no good appealing to students' previous sense of authority; now they will demand reasons for all that is expected of them. Teachers must get into the habit of approaching a young man or woman rationally. For example, think of an adolescent boy whom the spiritual world has led into this earthly world and who now becomes rebellious because it is so different from what he expected. The adult must try to show him (and without any pedantry) that everything he meets in this world has "prehistory." The adult must get this adolescent to see that present conditions are the consequences of what went before. You must act the part of an expert who really understands why things have come to be as they are.

From now on, you will accomplish nothing by way of authority. You have to convince adolescents through the sheer weight of your indisputable knowledge and expertise and provide waterproof reasons for everything you do or expect of them. If, at this stage, students cannot see sound reasons in the material you give them, if conditions in the world seem to make no sense to them, they begin to doubt the rightness of their earlier life. They feel they are in opposition to what they experienced during those years that, seemingly, merely led to the present, unacceptable conditions. And if, during this inner turmoil, they cannot find contact with someone who can reassure them, to some extent at least, that there are good reasons for what is happening in the world, then the inner stress may become so intolerable that they might break down altogether.

This newly emerged astral body is not of this world, and these young people have been cast out of the astral world. They willingly enter this earthly world only if they can be convinced of its right to exist.

It would be a complete misunderstanding of what I have been describing to think that adolescents are the least bit aware of what is happening in them. During ordinary consciousness, this struggle arises in dim feelings from the unconscious. It surges up through blunted will impulses. It lives in the disappointment of seemingly unattainable ideals, in frustrated desires, and perhaps in a certain inner numbness to what manifests in the unreasonable events of the world.

If education is to be effective at all during this stage (which it must be for any young person willing to learn), then your teaching must be communicated in the appropriate form. It must be a preparation for the years to come—up to the early twenties and even later in life. Having suffered the wounds of life and having retaliated in their various ways, young people from fifteen to the early twenties must eventually find their way back into the world from which they were evicted during puberty. The duration of this period varies, especially during our chaotic times, which tend to prolong it even longer into adult life. Young people must feel they are accepted again and be able to renew contact with the spiritual world, for without it, life is impossible. However, should they feel any coercion from those in authority, this new link loses all meaning and value for life.

If we are aware of these difficulties well before the arrival of puberty, we can make good use of the inborn longing for authority in children, bringing them to the point at which there is no longer any need for an authoritarian approach. And this stage should coincide with the coming of sexual maturity. By then, however, educators must be ready to give convincing reasons for everything they ask of their students.

Seen from a broader, spiritual perspective, we can observe the grand metamorphosis taking place in a young person during the period of sexual maturity. It is very important to realize that the whole question of sex becomes a reality only during puberty, when adolescents enter the external world as I have described it. Naturally, since everything in life is relative, this, too, must be taken as a relative truth. Nevertheless, you should realize that, until sexual maturity, children live more as generic human beings; it is not until the onset of puberty that they experience the world differently, according to whether they are men or women. This realization (which in our generally intellectual and naturalistic civilization cannot be assumed) allows real insight into the relationship between the sexes for those who work with open minds toward knowledge of the human being. It also helps them understand the problem of women's position in society, not just during our time but also in the future.

Once you appreciate the tremendous transformation that occurs in the male organism during the change of voice (to use one example), you will be able to understand the statement that, until the age of sexual maturity, a child retains a more general human nature, one still undivided into the sexes. Similar processes occur in the female organism, but in a different area. The human voice, with its ability to moderate and form sounds and tones, is a manifestation of our general human nature. It is born from the soul-spiritual substance that works on children until puberty. Changes of pitch and register, on the other hand, which occur during this mutation, are the result of outer influences. They are forced on adolescents from outside, so to speak, and they are the ways that a boy places himself into the outer world with his innermost being. It is not just a case of the softer parts in the larynx relating more strongly to the bones, but a slight ossification of the larynx itself takes place that amounts,



essentially, to a withdrawal of the larynx from the purely human inner nature toward a more earthly existence.

This act of stepping out into the world should really be seen in a much wider context than is generally the case. Usually, people think that the capacity to love, which awakens at this time, is linked directly to sexual attraction, but this is not really the whole story. The power to love, born during sexual maturity, embraces everything within an adolescent's entire sphere. Love between the sexes is only one specific, limited aspect of love in the world. Only when we see human love in this light can we understand it correctly, and then we can also understand its task in the world.

What really happens in human beings during the process of sexual maturity? Prior to this, as children, their relationship to the world was one in which they first imitated their surroundings and then came under the power of authority. Outer influences worked on them, because at that time their inner being mainly represented what they brought with them from pre-earthly life. Humanity as a whole had to work on them externally, first through the principle of imitation and then through authority. Now, at puberty, having found their own way into the human race and no longer depending on outer support as a younger child does, a new feeling arises in them, along with a whole new appraisal of humankind as a whole. And this new experience of humankind represents a spiritual counterpart to the physical capacity to reproduce. Physically, they gain the ability to procreate; spiritually, they gain the ability to experience humankind as a whole.

During this new stage, the polarity between man and woman becomes quite obvious. Any realization of human potential on earth is possible only through a real understanding of the other sex by means of social interaction; and this applies to the realm of soul and spirit as well. Both men and women fully represent

humankind, but in different ways. A woman sees humanity as a gift of the metaphysical worlds. Fundamentally, she sees humanity as the result of divine abundance. Unconsciously, in the depths of her soul, she holds a picture of humankind as her standard of values, and she evaluates and assesses human beings according to this standard. If these remarks are not generally accepted today, it is because our current civilization bears all the signs of a male-dominated society.

For a long time, the most powerful influences in our civilization have displayed a decidedly masculine nature. An example of this (however grotesque it may sound) may be found in Freemasonry. It is symbolic of our times that men, if they wish to keep certain matters to themselves, isolate themselves in the lodges of Freemasonry. There are also lodges in which both men and women congregate, but Freemasonry has already become blunted in these, and they no longer bear its original stamp. The constitution of Freemasonry is a specific example, but it nevertheless expresses the male-dominated character of our society. Women, too, have absorbed a great deal of the masculine element from our civilization, and because of this they actually prevent the specifically feminine element from coming into its own. This is why we so often get the impression that, in terms of inner substance and outer form, there is very little difference between the ideals and programs of the various women's movements and those of men—even in the tone of the speeches they deliver. Obviously, these movements differ insofar as, on the one side, there are demands to safeguard women's interests, while, on the other, the demands are on behalf of men. But, in terms of their inner substance, they are barely distinguishable.

When you take a good look at modern medicine in all its materialistic aspects, you can see how it fails to understand human nature, especially in terms of its physical elements, so

that it depends on experimentation. If you observe modern medicine, you find the product of a distinctly masculine attitude, however strange this may sound to you. In fact, one could hardly find a better illustration of male thinking than in what modern medicine so blatantly reveals to us. For a man, in his innermost being, experiences humanity as something of an enigma. To him it appears unfathomable and poses endless questions whose solutions seem to lie beyond his powers. This typically masculine characteristic is expressed in all the mysterious ceremony and the dry and manly atmosphere of freemasonry. This same male tendency has permeated our culture to such an extent that, although women suffer under it, they nevertheless wish to emulate it and to make it part of their own lives.

If we speak the truth today, people tend to think that we do so merely to present contrary statements to the world. Yet the reality is often unorthodox. Therefore, if we want to speak the truth, we must put up with seeming contrary, however inconvenient this might be.

Women live more in the images they create of humanity, while men experience humanity in more wishful and enigmatic ways. To understand this, we need to be clear about a symptom that is especially significant for the art of teaching today. When people speak of love today, they seldom differentiate between the various types of love. Naturally, we can generalize the concept of love, just as one can speak about condiments in a general way. But when people speculate abstractly about certain matters and then hold forth about them, it always strikes me as if they were talking about salt, sugar, or pepper merely in terms of condiments. We only need to apply such abstractions to practical life by putting salt instead of sugar in our coffee—they are both condiments, after all—to realize such foolishness. Anyone who indulges in general speculation instead of entering the concrete realities of life commits the same folly.

The love of a woman is very different from that of a man. Her love originates in the realm of imagination and constantly makes pictures. A woman does not love a man just as he is, standing there before her in ordinary, humdrum life (forgive me, but men, after all, are not exactly the sort that a healthy imagination could fall in love with). Rather, she weaves into her love the ideal she received as a gift from heaven. A man's love, on the other hand, is tinged with desire; it has a wishful nature. This difference needs to be noted, regardless of whether it is expressed more in an idealistic or a realistic way. Ideal love may inspire longings of an ideal quality. The instinctive and sensuous kind may be a mere product of fancy. But this fundamental difference between love as it lives in a man and as it lives in a woman is a reality. A woman's love is steeped in imagination, and in a man's love there is an element of desire. And because these two kinds of love are complementary, they can become harmonized in life.

Educators need to bear this in mind when faced with sexually mature students. They must realize that one can no longer bring them certain things that belong to the preadolescent stage, and that they have missed the opportunity for doing so. Therefore, to prevent a onesided attitude in later life, we must try to give to prepubescent children enough of the right material to last them through the following stages. Fortunately, coeducation, in both primary and secondary education, is increasingly accepted today, so that boys and girls work side by side and learn to cooperate later on as men and women in society. Consequently, it is especially important to heed what was just said. Through this, a contemporary phenomenon such as the women's movement will have a truly sound and healthy basis.

If we expand these considerations by taking a worldwide perspective, we are led to the fundamental differences that exist between East and West, with Asia on one side and Europe and

America on the other. This difference between East and West is far greater than any other differences we may find when comparing, say, Europe and America. Throughout Asia, there are still traces of ancient, wise civilizations. Externally, they appear completely decadent, but their wisdom nevertheless lives on like a memory. It is revered as a sacred memory, to the extent that, fundamentally, an Asian cannot really understand a European, and vice versa. Those who are under illusions about this fact will delude themselves about the world's greatest historical secret in our time. It is a secret of special significance not only for today, but very much so for the future.

Despite its manifold complexities, life in the West has a more uniform character than life in the East. The main concern of Western people is life in this earthly civilization, a civilization that draws its ideas mostly from what happens between birth and death. The people of the East (at least in their inner religious lives) do not limit their view to the earthly time between birth and death, or life in the outer mechanical civilization. People of the West, however, do live for this earthly time, even in their religious feelings. The people of the East, on the other hand, ask themselves searching questions, such as, Why was I born into this world? Why did I enter this sense-perceptible world at all? Westerners take life in the physical world more or less for granted, even if they end it by suicide. Western people take earthly life for granted, and they have developed an inner receptivity for life after death only because it would be unsatisfying and a disappointment if earthly existence were entirely wiped out.

There is a fundamental difference between these two views. Again, however, we cannot get to the bottom of this merely through abstract descriptions instead of entering life fully. The farther we move from East to West, the more we find that the Western woman, despite her outer consciousness, cherishes a

longing for the spirituality of the East. The man of the West, however, presents a totally different picture. He, too, has his secret longings, but not for anything vague and misty. His longings spring from what he experiences inwardly. From cradle to grave, he is enmeshed in the activities and pressures of his civilization, but something in him longs to get away from it all. We can perceive this mood of soul in all the civilized countries around us, from the River Vistula in Eastern Europe through Germany, France, and Britain, and right across the American continent to the shores of the Pacific Ocean. In all these lands, we find this attribute in common. Educators who deal with adolescents also experience this, perhaps to their despair and without recognizing the underlying causes. Only a teacher wearing blinders could possibly overlook this.

During our previous meetings I mentioned that we really ought to throw away every school textbook, because only a direct and personal relationship between teachers and students should affect children. When it comes to teaching adolescents, however, every available textbook and, for that matter, almost our whole outer civilization become great sources of pain. I know that there are many who are unaware of this, because they do not go into real life with their eyes open wide enough. Here, again, in our outer civilization we find a notably lopsided masculine quality. Any book on history—whether a history of civilization or anthropology—will confirm this trend. As representatives of Western civilization, people long to escape the physical world in which they are caught up, but they lack the necessary courage to do so. People cannot find the bridge from the sensory world into the spiritual world. And so, everywhere in our civilization we find a yearning to get away from it all, and yet an inability to act accordingly.

It is hard enough to establish the right environment for teaching prepubescent children. But those who have to teach

adolescents could almost feel helpless, because the means available for meeting their needs are so inadequate. This alone should kindle a real longing in such teachers for a deeper understanding of the human being. Of course, this longing may already be there in the teachers of younger children, but it is a prerequisite for anyone of sound pedagogical sense who teaches adolescents.

A woman's nostalgia for the ways of the East and a man's wish to be free of the bondage of Western life represent fundamental features of our time. This difference between the sexes is less apparent in preadolescent children, who still bear more general human features. Yet, as soon as we are confronted by adolescents, we meet many difficulties that arise quite concretely.

Imagine, for example, that a German literature teacher wants to recommend to her adolescent student a book that presents a German perspective of Goethe. She would really find herself in a quandary, since there are no suitable books available. If she chooses an available one, her scholar would not get the right picture of Goethe. If she chooses a biography of Goethe written by, say, Lewes, her German scholar would learn the more outward features of Goethe better than from any of the German books on the subject, but again he would not become familiar with the specifically German characteristics of Goethe.<sup>1</sup> This is the situation today, for we simply do not have adequate literature for teaching adolescents. To remedy this, everything depends on women taking their proper place in culture. They should be allowed to contribute their specifically feminine qualities, but they must at the same time be careful not to introduce anything they have adopted from our male-dominated civilization.

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1. George Henry Lewes (1817–1878), *The Life and Works of Goethe* (1855).

During the 1890s, I had a conversation with a German feminist. She expressed her views in radical terms, but I could not help feeling that, instead of enriching society with what only womanhood offers, she was trying to force her way into our onesidedly masculine culture by employing masculine tactics. My meaning must not be taken in a crude or biased way. I felt that I had to say to this free and uncompromising lady, "Your movement does not yet offer what the world really needs. The world does not need women who 'wear the pants' [forgive me, I believe in England that such a remark is unforgivably rude]. Rather, both masculine and feminine qualities make specific contributions toward the general enhancement of our society."

As teachers, whenever we approach growing human beings, we must note the striking contrast between the prepuberty and postpuberty years. Let us take a concrete example: There is Milton's *Paradise Lost*, which would be good to use in our lessons. The question is, when? Those of you who have thought through what has been said so far and have understood my remarks about the right time to introduce narrative and descriptive elements will find that this work by Milton (or epic poetry in general) would be suitable material after the tenth year. Also, Homer will be appreciated best when taught between the tenth and the fourteenth years. On the other hand, it would be premature to use Shakespeare as study material at this stage, since, in order to be ready for dramatic poetry, students must at least have entered puberty. To absorb the dramatic element at an earlier age, students would have to drive something out of themselves prematurely, which, later on, they would definitely miss.

What I tried to describe just now can be experienced vividly when, for example, you have to give history lessons to boys and girls after they enter puberty. Both masculine and feminine forces work during historical events, though in a different form



than they do today. Yet all of the historical accounts available for teaching adolescents bear a decidedly masculine quality, as though they had been compiled by Epimetheus.<sup>2</sup> Girls who have reached sexual maturity show little inclination toward such an approach. Boys may find it somewhat boring, but in their case it is not impossible to use this Epimethean way, which judges and holds onto what can be ascertained and established. But there is also a Promethean way of looking at history, which not only records events that occurred, but also shows their transformation into the ideas of the present time. This approach to history shows how the impulses that led the past have become the current thinking of today, and how impulses, in turn, continue to lead present time further. A Promethean way of looking at history, in particular, appeals strongly to the feminine element.

However, it would be very onesided to teach history in the Promethean style at a girls' school, or in an Epimethean style at a boys' school. The minds of the young men would simply flow back into the past and become even more rigid than they are already. If the Promethean way of teaching history were to be only one applied in a girls' school, the students would be tempted to fly off into futuristic speculations. They would always be attracted to the impulses that they happened to like naturally. We can achieve a more balanced society only if we add a historical view that bears the prophetic marks of Prometheus to the more predominant Epimethean way, which until now has been just about the only one available. Then, if both attitudes are alive in our lessons, we will at last achieve the right approach to history for students who have reached the age of sexual maturity.

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2. Prometheus ("Forethought") and Epimetheus ("Afterthought") were brother Titans in Greek mythology.