

OVERCOMING REACTIONS TO CHILDREN with Psychophonetics¹

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The most destructive dynamics in human relationships are defensive, repetitive, automatic reactions. These come in two forms:

- 1) Exploded reactions—destroy the interpersonal space and damage people and relationship,
- 2) Imploded reactions—as bad as the exploded reaction, but swallowed and held inside, destroying one's own body, soul and spirit.

Defensive reactions, both exploded and imploded, are the major cause for the destruction of families, relationships, parenthood and personal health. Apart from its destruction of adult health, defensive reactions also destroy children's health on all levels, with destructive consequences for the rest of their lives. I have worked as an anthroposophical psychotherapist and consultant in medical clinics and private practice in Australia, South Africa, UK, and throughout Europe for over 30 years, and most of the soul wounds people suffer from are caused by aggressive parental reactivity, experienced as children. This is a worldwide phenomenon and one of the major sicknesses of our time.

Automatic, destructive, defensive reactions can be overcome, but this requires heightened self-awareness, taking responsibility for one's own inner life, and self-transformation. Time alone and aging only make reactive patterns worse and more toxic. It does not matter how much education, information, experience, pedagogical knowledge and skills one has acquired; reactive patterns will only change by a person's initiative and determination for honest self-observation and change, starting from taking personal responsibility for one's own emotions and habits. The work of parents and educators in overcoming defensive reactions to children, partners, colleagues, is essential for their educational work. All their well-meant efforts will be undone and made useless and even destructive if their defensive reactivity is not brought under control.

The origin of automatic, repetitive defensive reactions is in the instinctive defensive patterns of our untransformed astrality², which is the basic element of our constitution we have in common with the animal kingdom. Pure astral, automatic reactivity works well for animals as that is how they conduct their lives, repeating these defensive patterns for the rest of their lives, if humans don't interrupt with

¹ Psychophonetics is a form of Anthroposophical psychotherapy, coaching, counselling, consultancy and adult education, based on Yehuda Tagar's development of Rudolf Steiner's Psychosophy (1910).

² Steiner, R. *Theosophy*, chapter 1: The Essential Nature of Man.

our domesticating manipulations. In the human constitution, the astral activity is divided into two parts:

1. Body-based: Rudolf Steiner calls this the *Sentient Body* and
2. Soul-based: Steiner calls *Sentient Soul*.

A long time ago in the evolutionary process of the human constitution, a part-transformation of our animal nature took place during the creation of the individual human soul³: the pre-individualised human 'I', with the help of the other spiritual hierarchies transformed the raw material of human astrality, the human *Sentient Soul*, into an individual soul on the basic level. Other transformations took place in the same way (Etheric Body being transformed into Mind Soul and physical body being transformed into Consciousness Soul) —until it was possible for the individual human 'I' to enter into the individual soul and continue to transform the three other body sheaths further, from the inside⁴.

This process started in the Egyptian and the early Hebrew period and became grounded in the cultural life of the Greek and Roman periods of evolution (the creation of personal thinking, philosophy and law). We are now past one third of the evolution of the next level of evolution, the period of *Consciousness Soul*, in which human souls are consolidating their individual consciousness on the basis of the individual human 'I'. This has never happened before in human evolution and therefore, there is nothing for us to follow in the cultivation of human consciousness, including in the areas of personal relationship, parenting and education.

In order to go further in the evolution of individuation, furthering the incarnation of the human spirit through the individual 'I', the present individual soul has to be expanded. The cosmic transformational process that developed our soul to this point, now has to become an individual process, initiated by the individual 'I' from inside of the soul.

Personal emotional defensive reactions mark the threshold between the transformed and the not-yet-transformed aspects of the human soul. Reactions are coming up with more and more intensity and more damaging effects. They cannot change without a conscious self-transformational act which is based on personal initiative and accepting personal responsibility for one's own actions. The 'I' wants to incarnate further into the soul. There is no stopping it and there is no way back, only forward. If this is not happening consciously, it has to happen through endless reactions: if the Persephone forces, the human spirit stuck in matter (Hades) will not come through consciousness, she will come through the blood. Rivers of blood were poured violently in the course of the 20th century⁵ and have

³ Steiner, R. *Esoteric Science*. chapter 4: The evolution of the cosmos and Man.

⁴ Steiner, R. *Esoteric Science*. chapter 4: The evolution of the cosmos and man.

⁵ Steiner, R. *Wonders of the World*.

not stopped. Consciousness, starting from self-consciousness, is the only alternative to the destructive forces of the blood. Defensive reactions on any level are the rebellion of human astrality against its avoidance by human consciousness.

Defensive reactions are NEVER caused by what provokes it in the moment. They are caused by their own internal mechanism which creates unbearable pressure, seeking release through any provocation. It is easy for children to provoke an adults' reaction, because they press all the inner *buttons*. Children cannot defend themselves and fight back and are dependent on the adults, so they suppress their natural responses to adult reactions, until they reach adolescence, when they are bigger, more independent, trusting their perceptions, seeing through the adult's lies of blaming them for their adult reactions. Because the simple truth is, the *real cause* of defensive, repetitive reactions is *inside* the soul, not *outside* of it. The real causes of reactions could be biographical, an unprocessed injury from any stage of one's upbringing, temperament, internal chronic negativity, habit, uncontrolled anger that has nothing to do with the present provocation, one's own Double, the anti-'I'—inside one's soul. The intellect justifies this destructive behaviour by blaming the one who provoked it. That is a lie and children know it is a lie.

Psychophonetics, the first practical application of Rudolf Steiner's Psychosophy⁶ and his drama teaching⁷, is a method of direct observation of one's own internal soul dynamics. It combines verbal and expressive, non-verbal modes of communication with one's own unconscious reality, making it conscious. The deep intelligence of Body-Awareness (Sense of Life), spontaneous gesture (*gebäred* in German⁸), spontaneous visualisation and the sounds of human speech combine in the deep self-perception of one's own soul. On that basis, the consultant of Psychophonetics develops the sharp perceptions of Imagination (See the Soul), Inspiration (Hear the Soul) and Intuition (Know the Soul from its own point of view) in a process of *Methodical Empathy*, enabling the client to start and observe themselves effectively, as a basis for personal change. Psychophonetics⁹ is not traditional therapy: it is consultancy for personal health, change and development. It provides the client with practical tools for self-observation and lasting change.

This is adult work, not child work. This is a process intended to help parents and teachers to overcome their chronic reactions to children in their care. In a methodical self-observation of the dynamics of a defensive reaction, the real source of the reaction can be exposed to consciousness, revealing its true

⁶ Steiner, R. 'Anthroposophy, Psychosophy, Pneumatosophy' Berlin, 1910.

⁷ Steiner, R. 'Speech & Drama' September 1924.

⁸ Steiner, R. 'Speech & Drama' September 1924

⁹ Steele, Robin, 'Psychophonetics Holistic Counselling & Psychotherapy: Stories & Insights from practice' (2011)

nature, enabling healing and real change. The habits of aggressive, defensive reactions are deeply rooted in one's constitution and hard to change, but changing them is possible and essential for good parenting and education of children and adolescents. As a result of such an observation, the hidden, internal dynamics of the reactive mechanism are being revealed. It is always active below the threshold of one's normal consciousness, requiring a penetrating self-observation to observe it. In a hidden place inside, which in Psychophonetics is called: *The Inner Chamber*, this inner dynamic is being revealed: an old unhealed wound, an old injustice never spoken and acknowledged, a truth never spoken, an ongoing pain. Alongside these biographically-caused patterns, there is always personal negativity that is intrinsic to the human soul, to a greater or lesser degree: one's own *Double*: the *Anti-'I'* within the soul. It is always there, and whenever we act on it, it grows bigger and stronger.

The suffering of our children from our defensive reactions can give us a painful reminder of the urgent need to observe ourselves and to transform. This is the most common threshold of our time: self-transformation or destruction. Self-transformation requires direct observation of one's own dynamics. Just intentions, spiritual concepts and anthroposophical/Waldorf tradition is not enough for real personal change.

Overcoming automatic defensive reactions is a powerful step in real personal and spiritual development. It is deeply rewarding and creates a deep sense of confidence in one's own real spirit resulting in a deeper capacity for real understanding of others—Methodical Empathy.

Teachers in Waldorf/Steiner schools can be mentors of parents in the combined act of educating their children. On the basis of developing mastery of one's own reactions, mentoring parents to do the same becomes possible. This capacity of *Self-Empathy* and mastery over one's own reactivity should form an essential part of Waldorf Teachers training, as we are starting to do in Slovakia, both in the Waldorf Kindergarten Teachers Training, and in the new Waldorf school Teachers Training, to be launched in Nova Zamky in August 2022.

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