

Intellect and Intuition

The primary focus of today's system of higher education is oriented to cognitive development for the purpose of preparing students for their future professional life. What has been taught up to this point, with few exceptions, concerns the training of the INTELLECT. Through rational thinking, connections are to be recognized by the mind. Skills such as reasoning, estimating, arguing, drawing conclusions and making choices are taught, enabling students to arrive at conclusive judgements, to acquire knowledge and to develop expertise.

However there is also another way that knowledge is acquired, which has little to do with the above-mentioned intellectual approach: INTUITION. This provides us with access to knowledge that is not achieved through a discursive approach. To use the words of Albert Einstein (1879-1955) again: "The intellect has little to do on the road to discovery. There is a leap of consciousness, call it intuition or what you will, and the solution comes to you and you don't know how or why."¹ Intuitive perception arises immediately and proceeds without methodical and conscious conclusions; it is infallible and able to grasp the "truth" holistically.

Intuition inspires (lat. inspiratio, "breathing in") and animates (spiritus) us. An appropriate definition of intuition, including its innate relationship to the self, or the soul, can be found in the work of Paramahansa Yogananda (1893-1952), the Indian founder of the Self-Realization Fellowship, who in the 1920s spread yoga and meditation in the West: "Intuition is that faculty of the soul which at once directly perceives the truth about anything. Without the power of intuition, you cannot know Truth. Intuition means 'soul-perception', and is the knowing power of the soul, without the help of the senses or the mind. Intuition can give you knowledge about things that your senses and understanding can never give."² And because intuition contains this connection to another source of inspiration, another LEVEL OF CONSCIOUSNESS, it is often the basis for creative discoveries of a spiritual and/or material nature.

If, for example, one looks at the genesis of the works of the great masters in painting or music, it is not uncommon to mention a connection with the "Divine" as a source of inspiration for the creative process. It is known of the composer Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

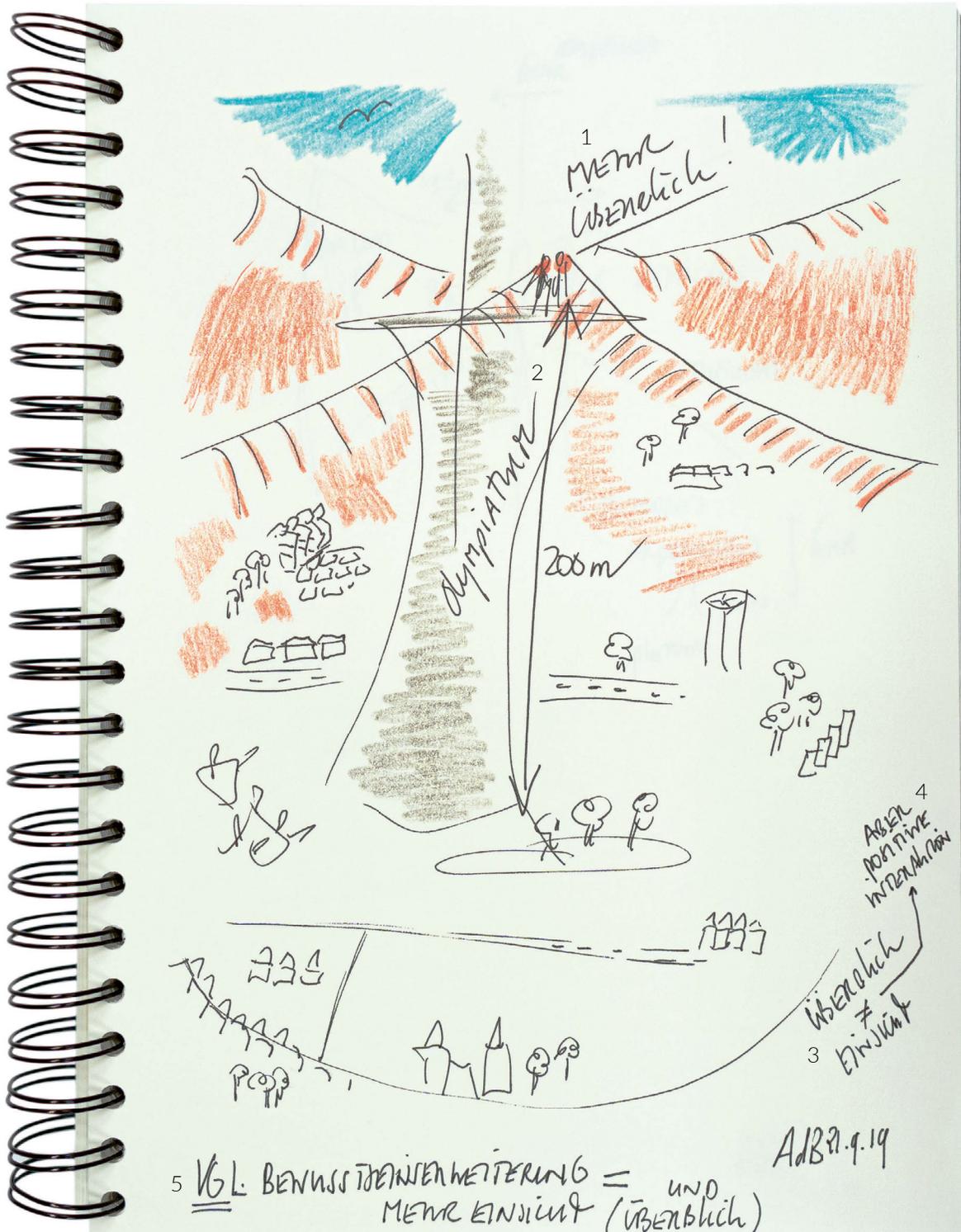
*Intuition is a divine gift,
the thinking mind a faithful servant.
It is paradoxical that nowadays
we have begun to worship the servant
and desecrate the divine gift.*

Albert Einstein (1879-1955)

that once, when asked where he gets his inspiration from, he answered: "Not I, the Father that dwelleth within me, He doeth the works."³ He said that he had to focus very hard in order not to miss a single bit of inspiration. "Straightaway the ideas flow in upon me, directly from God, and not only do I see distinct themes in my mind's eye, but they are clothed in the right forms, harmonies and orchestration."⁴ Brahms continues: "I have to be in a semi-trance condition to get such results – a condition when the conscious mind is in temporary abeyance and the subconscious is in control, for it is through the subconscious mind, which is part of Omnipotence, that the inspiration comes."⁵ He emphasized that this condition is by no means comparable with dreaming, but is like a constant struggle: "I have to be careful, however, not to lose consciousness, otherwise the ideas fade away. [...] Therefore, to evolve and grow, man must learn how to use and develop his own soul forces. All great creative geniuses do this, although some of them do not seem to be as conscious of the process as others."⁶ And although many advanced thinkers, as Brahms states, are not necessarily aware of their own intuitive processes, the question arises as to how man might learn to be conscious of and connect with his own soul forces.

My niece and I on the Olympic Tower in Munich. From above one sees things very differently. One has an overview and sees horizontal connections.

That's what an expansion of consciousness might feel like. But strictly speaking, another dimension must be added to this, to grasp the vertical depth.



¹ more "big picture" | ² Olympic Tower | ³ "big picture" ≠ insight | ⁴ but positive interaction | ⁵ like expansion of consciousness = more insight (and "big picture")

The alignment of the mind

If we compare these two processes, the acquisition of knowledge by means of the intellect versus the intuition, an important difference that emerges has to do with the mind's orientation. On the intellectual path, the thinking faculty is directed outwards and registers the external information and stimuli that are transmitted to the brain via the senses. It also recognizes the sensations and mental ideas that go along with them and correlates it all.

On the intuitive path, the mind turns in a different direction, towards the inner world. Through the process of intuitive perception, soul forces are directed to the thinker's respective area of experience.

The development of this ability requires mental training that leads to connection with the soul.

Concentration, meditation and intuition

A conscious orientation of the mind requires CONCENTRATION. The Indian spiritual teacher and peace activist Vishnu Devananda (1927-1993) points out that this helps us to direct the mind in one direction. "The main aim of concentration is to bring the mind to the same point or object again and again by limiting its movements in the beginning to a small circle."⁷ If one manages to keep concentration longer and stay focused, one will – according to Devananda – enter the stage of meditation: "A time will come when the mind will stick to one point alone, like the continuous sound of a church bell. This is meditation, the fruit of constant and protracted practice of concentration."⁸

The silence that meditation creates enables contact with the inner being, with the soul. "It is secured in meditation when the mind is fully concentrated, far away from objects and near the *Atman*, the Self."⁹ It is the level where thoughts are silent and the mind is transformed.¹⁰ "True meditation is to become free from mentation. The moment the thoughts become still, the light of the Self will shine from within."¹¹

The spiritual teacher Sri Chinmoy (1931-2007), a writer, poet, composer, musician, artist and athlete, said: "When we meditate, what we actually do is enter into the deeper part of our being. At that time, we are able to bring to the fore the wealth that we have deep within us."¹²

It's not possible to reach this depth via the intellect, because the mind is directed outwards and consequently operates on the surface level. From this vantage point the intellect is subordinate to the INTUITION.¹³ Nevertheless, the intellect also serves an important function. Nevertheless, the intellect also serves an important function. In order to ultimately manifest the inner potential in the world, the respective "skill", the handling of the corresponding knowledge and thus also the intellect, is required, depending on the subject area. In the case of Brahms this was his ability to compose. If he had not had this gift, he would have heard the music inwardly, but without his capacity to express it, humanity would have been deprived of his compositions.

As the emphasis of education at universities is still based on the training of the intellect, the world is not able to access a wealth of knowledge and inspiration that it could draw from the intuition.

It is therefore advisable that not only the intellect but also the intuition be consciously promoted within the framework of a holistic pursuit of knowledge through universities and other educational institutions. To this end, regular concentration and meditation exercises could serve as a valuable contribution.

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¹ Indirect quotation, source is no longer found [AdB].

² Yogananda 2010, p. 116 f.

³ Abell 1994, p. 4.

⁴ Ibid., p. 5 f.

⁵ Ibid., p. 6.

⁶ Ibid., p. 6 f.

⁷ Vishnu Devananda 1981, p. 31.

⁸ Ibid.; see also Assagioli 2010, S. 162 f.

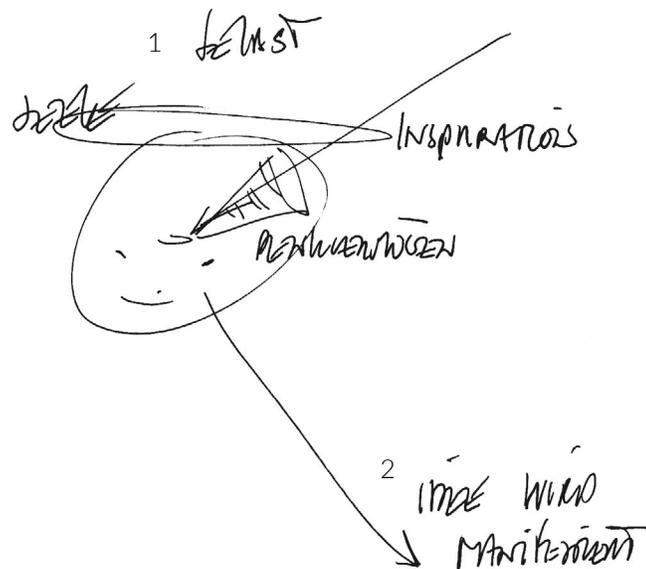
⁹ Vishnu Devananda 1981, p. 35.

¹⁰ Cf. Krishnamurti 1989, p. 196.

¹¹ Muktananda 1999, p. 36.

¹² Sri Chinmoy 1974b, p. 2.

¹³ Cf. Hazrat Inayat Khan 2016, p. 291 f.



When the mind is aligned with the inner silence, inspiration via soul impulses can be recognized as ideas. If the mind is then directed to the outside world, these ideas can be manifested in the world.

¹ soul, self, inspiration, mind | ² ideas are made manifest

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