

Abstract:

Perception and Imagination – Inner and Outer Worlds in Dialogue

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'The imagination then I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent in all human perception, and as a representation in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM.'

(S. T. Coleridge – *Biographia Literaria*, Ch. 13)

'If your imagination is strong enough (and in normal life this occurs only unconsciously), if it is so strong that it permeates your whole being right into the senses, then you have the normal pictures which enable you to think of external things.'

(Rudolf Steiner – *Foundations of Human Experience*, lecture 2)

How do we perceive? Can we perceive, or have we forgotten how to perceive? Every human being is challenged to be in the present. So what is the essential character of this reciprocal flow between the inner self and the enfolding outer world? For a two year old child the flow is all encompassing – she bathes her being within it. For a fifteen year old it is fraught with questions, with joyful enthusiasm and bitter pain. He's awakening out of the flow towards conscious, responsible participation within a dialogue.

This talk will examine the intertwined relationship between perception and imagination. It will explore how at every stage of human development – from the toddler to the mature adult – the imagination can be viewed - as Coleridge put it – as the 'prime agent in all human perception'. If we recognise the significance of this agency, then it sheds light upon the character of both initial and ongoing teacher education. The educator of growing children will be a key participant in the way the flow between inner and outer worlds unfolds and transforms itself.