

Cognitive Science and Alexander Technique

Unity of Body and Mind – Unity of Theory and Practice

A workshop with Rachel Zahn

Music School in CH-Rheinfelden / Switzerland

Saturday, 5th – Sunday, 6th July 2014

For several years “Embodied Mind” has been an intensely discussed topic within cognitive sciences. Various disciplines such as philosophy of mind, psychology, robotics, linguistics, evolutionary biology, primatology and neurophysiology, among others, are re-examining the interaction between body and mind.

Rachel believes that as uniquely trained practitioners of embodiment, Alexander Technique teachers can contribute decades of collective and individual psychophysical AT expertise to this discussion. Two recent Embodied Mind Projects in Italy and France have shown that we are recognised as welcome participants. However, some obstacles to our full participation in this exploration remain. We don't have a shared language, a sufficiently in-depth knowledge and understanding of the theory of embodied mind and we do not realize that there are many terms used in the cognitive sciences which we could readily use in explaining the Alexander Technique.

Rachel has been fostering an exchange between the AT and cognitive science for many years. The purpose of this workshop is to provide experienced teachers with an opportunity to prepare for that exchange. Rachel looks forward to meeting you and discovering your unique experience with the Alexander Technique, both personal and professional.

The workshop will consist of both theoretical and practical parts.

Theory: Relevant terms

Since Francisco Varela's work has opened the door to the AT, we will begin with defining his theory of “The Embodied Mind” and how it fits into the current debates in Cognitive Science. We will also look at how his terminology resonates with FM Alexander's philosophy. **Rachel will provide us with four texts of which we are required to read three.** “The Embodied Mind”, “Neurophenomenology”, Varela's “Ethical Know-How” (of “non-doing”), and Varela's theory of 1st, 2nd and 3rd person's perspective. **They will be sent to participants in advance of the workshop.**

The practical #1 :

This part of the workshop will focus on the different challenges teachers encounter in **communicating** the AT to lay people, professionals and scientists. Rachel will also explore the more specific language or jargon used to explain the training of teachers of the AT. You will hear her explain the most common error, “category mistakes” and its solution.

The practical #2 : "Non-Doing"

Very few teachers have experienced the unique training methods of Judith Leibowitz, ACAT, NYC. (Judith was a Biologist and Chemist who began studying the AT after she was semi-paralyzed by Polio. Judith was trained by Lulie Westfeldt, a fellow polio victim, and graduated in 1949. She also had 120 lessons from FM in London).

Judith Leibowitz's method of teaching "non-doing" was based on inviting her trainees to give a "hands on" experience to another trainee, or to Judith herself, while she provided moment to moment feedback. This resulted in a teacher whose hands on were truly capable of non-doing while sensitively, and accurately reading what was happening in the students body.

"When my hands make contact with my student it is as though they are without bones. They are pieces of material that take the shape of the structure under them. Although the hands are non-doing, they do serve a dual function... Because these hands have no preconceived idea of what they feel, they are able to freely experience the student at that moment in time and space... I must leave myself alone and allow all that I know about the Alexander Technique to flow through my body and through my hands to the student". Dare to Be Wrong, Leibowitz, Judith, (edited by K.Miranda 2007)."

Rachel Zahn

was trained as an AT teacher by Judith Leibowitz in the first formal American teacher training program at ACAT, NYC. She graduated in 1966, having received a study grant from the American Conservatory Theatre in preparation to assist Frank Ottiwell. Rachel assisted Judith at the Julliard School of Music and joined the faculty of ACAT in the 1970's. She trained as a psychotherapist during the same period. She has conducted doctoral research in Intercultural Communication and Cognitive Science. She now lives and works in Paris. (<http://www.alexanderscience.org/>)

Organisation:

The complete workshop will be in English, technical terms will be explained.

Date / Schedule: **Saturday, 5th July 2014**
10:00–13:30 // 15:30-19:00 (each with a short tea break)
Sunday, 6th July 2014
09:45 –12:45 // 14:15-16:15 (short tea break in the morning)

Cost: **210 €**
Lunch Saturday: self service Migros Restaurant – same floor in the building
Lunch box for Sunday

Nr. of participants: min. 8 participants

- Location:** Musikschule Rheinfelden, Lindenstrasse 3/1st level - beside Migros Restaurant, 4310 Rheinfelden (see google maps)
- about 5 Min by foot from CH-Rheinfelden train station
- about 25 Min. by foot from D-Rheinfelden train station
- Confirmation:** Confirmation for 12 hrs continuous learning
(12 hrs. EMR confirmation for CH AT teacher)
- Travel:** **Flight:** cheap flights to Airport Mullhouse/Basel
<http://www.euroairport.com/en/>
Bus connection 20 Min. to Basel / Train connection 10 Min. to CH-Rheinfelden
<http://www.zurich-airport.com/passengers-and-visitors>
direct trains from Zürich Airport to CH Rheinfelden, departure all hours at .04 duration 1 hr., (last departure 9.04pm)
Trains:
from Germany: to Basel Badischer Bahnhof, change train to D-Rheinfelden ca. 10 Min.
(Rheinfelden/Switzerland & Rheinfelden/Germany are two small towns and only separated by the river Rhein)
- Accommodation &:** cosy and convenient:
Hostel `Tabakhuesli` - <http://www.hostel-tabakhuesli.ch/en/index.php>
PLEASE BOOK IMMEDIATELY
double room CHF 49.-- / 3-bed roomi CHF 47.-- / 4-bedroomi CHF 44.
breakfast included
or
you can find convenient accommodation in Rheinfelden/Germany, with a nice walk of about 20-30 Min. to the workshop place
or
<http://www.tourismus-rheinfelden.ch/de/unterkunftgastro/restaurants>
& <http://www.parkresort.ch/en/>
- CH-Rheinfelden is a beautiful small mediveal town. Bring your bathing-suits and enjoy a relaxing Saturday evening-
- If you need some help with accommodation please write to me.
- Registration:** until **June 10th 2014**
- Organisation:** Rosa Luisa Rossi, Im Theodorshof 13, 4310 Rheinfelden
+41(0)79 655 16 69 - e-mail: rrossi@datacomm.ch