

The basic gesture of speech as a means for transforming the Doubles – with reference to the four types of ethers.

by Enrica Dal Zio

If we speak of gesture we mean what man expresses in his movements and in his mimic ability. There are countries where the national soul is directed very much towards the outside world. This shows in strong and differentiated movements of the hands, the arms, and all members of the body, as for instance in the Italian people.

When watching the gestures of a person we may learn a lot about his personality. We can also ask this question in the plant world – what for instance would be the gesture of a plant – and if we observe it carefully we may discover that the gesture of a plant can tell us a lot about its origin, its botanical family, its environment and the working of substances in it.

The gesture reveals to us something that is hidden behind appearances and has to do with the deep inner origins of beings.

In man we can have deeper insights into his being from his gestures but we can also detect the intimate constitution of his soul.

"In the gesture lives the will-expression of the human being, permeated by feelings. The soul-spirit element is present as a picture in the gesture. Insofar as the soul-spirit element let the feeling streams in the picture of the gesture, the human being reveals itself outwardly in the force of its will. We are dealing here with the human being becoming visible in the sense that its inner world is carried outward. But the human being is capable of experiencing his self-mimicking, his gesture in the same way as he becomes aware of the facts and events of the outer world. In the awareness of the gesture is then a kind of fulfillment of our consciousness about the inner nature of the human being."

From Rudolf Steiner, Marie Steiner von Sievers: *Methodik und Wesen der Sprachgestaltung*. GA 280 Dornach 1983, Seite 216

This ability of the human being to become aware of his own gesture is the background for any kind of healing in the work on gesture as well as speech-formation.

In his lecture on "Overcoming Nervousness" Rudolf Steiner describes that it is good "that man tries to watch himself in the way he walks, how he moves his hand, his head, how he laughs, etc., in short if he tries to visibly account for his gestures".... This activity has a favourable effect not only on the etheric body and its firmness, but also on controlling the etheric body by the astral body.

Artistic work on the gesture means to develop a feeling for the gesture that lives in speech, in this case, and it means to penetrate one's own gestures by self awareness. This leads in a new way towards enhanced self

knowledge through new gestures that are formed by the ego. This may have an ordering, cleansing effect. So we can alter old acquired and encrusted habits by accompanying them with new movements and gestures.

I am speaking about gestures and movements that are made in connection with our breathing – that are carried on our breath, i.e. penetrated by our ego, and not of those that come voluntarily, impulsively or that are hard gestures controlled by the head. In our speech we have a sound-gesture, a word-gesture, a sentence-gesture, and a basic-gesture. Especially in the last one we can clearly see that man can bring out his innermost experiences to the greatest effect only if he is able to let it flow right down into the movement of his hands. The human expression of gesture lives in the life-stream of the soul that reaches as far as his hands and receives its visible expression in them. From there gesture reflects back on speech so that it becomes audible in speech.” (Christa Slezak-Schindler, *Der Schulungsweg der Sprachgestaltung*. Dornach 1994, S.58)

Rudolf Steiner introduces six basic gestures of speech that were cultivated by the ancient Greeks in their mysteries as the six nuances of speech-formation. These gestures are practised in movements and sentences which do not belong to any national language. They are original movements that are behind the language and that arise out of a spiritual region in which there is no definition of national languages.

Apart from these six revelations of speech there are no others. We hardly ever find them in pure gesture but always mixed in endless variations and possibilities of expression.

"And if we want to raise our speaking to consciousness, we should try to study how these shades of feelings come to expression in speech.

It will, however, answer our purpose best if we do not at once proceed to a study of the spoken word, but first prepare the ground by a study of gesture, and then afterwards link the word on to the gesture. Proceeding in this way, we shall acquire a right feeling for the forming of speech, whereas by the reverse method, conclusions of an arbitrary nature would be constantly suggesting themselves, -supposing, I mean, we were start with the word (where the gesture has by now disappeared from view), with the idea of passing on thence to gesture. If, however, having recognised that the genius of speech works in these six ways, we then go on to study this genius of speech in gesture, we shall find that the way lies clear before us to go back afterwards to the word." (Rudolf Steiner, *Speech and Drama*, page 55)

The six basic gestures are:

Language expression	gesture	quality of voice
1. effective	pointing	incisive
2. thoughtful	holding on to oneself	full-toned
3. feeling forwards against resistance or questioning	rolling forward movement of arms and hands	wavering, trembling
4. antipathy	flinging the limbs away from the body	hard
5. sympathy	reaching out to touch	soft
1. withdrawing (onto one's own ground)	slanting away of arms and hands from the body	abrupt

In the following I shall try to show some ways of working with the six basic gestures on the different doubles with respect to the four ether qualities.

If we think of the problem of Doubles that live in the warmth-ether we can see that everything is related to the ego. It is however pretending to be an ego and has a strong need for recognition, and is looking for a personality to take the place of the ego, like for example a guru. In this case there is no proper self-awareness and one sways between feelings of inferiority or superiority. Practising the sixth basic gesture could be a help for finding a new balance in the one-sidedness of egocentricity. **Withdrawing** is a gesture that demands a strong, quiet and peaceful sphere and an awareness of uprightness – an acceptance of oneself - the way one is at a given time.

In order to feel the genuine situation a second basic-gesture is helpful. **Thoughtfulness** brings back peace and quiet, and can deepen the situation in which we find ourselves. Speech becomes more full with this gesture and may resound with the wisdom we have been able to achieve.

One last gesture may help to overcome one's problem: this is the third, the **questioning gesture**. When asking a true question I must have the courage to open myself towards my environment, I admit that I do not know everything but that is no reason to think I value less because of that.

If we now turn to the problem of the Doubles living in the light ether and air, then we find ourselves between the danger of confusing associations that arise from too much light and the danger of drying out and hardening of thought by too much air.

In the first case practising the **gesture of antipathy** which implies distance, clarity and firmness, can calm a quick, confusing association of thoughts and can create space for a true summing up of the situation. In the second case the **thoughtful gesture** which is full of warmth and wisdom can melt the harshness of thoughts.

And also in this the **gesture of withdrawal** which calls for a strong presence of mind and true self-awareness in the present situation is a good help for transforming those tendencies that induce us to living in a dream-world.

The Double living in the chemical ether develops apathy –a kind of indifference– that is caused by a too strong, almost “watery” emotional life. This can be transformed by the **gesture of sympathy**. If directed towards the outside this gesture demands an interest and openness for one’s environment and will motivate us.

If in life one is torn too much by emotions and moods the **gesture of antipathy** with its distancing, slightly cold and clear movement is a good way to regain self-control.

In order to escape the dullness that is caused by tedious habits, or mechanical, disinterested automatism which seems overpowering, one can first start practising the **questioning gesture**. If performed in a genuinely questioning mood it can be a gentle help to regain interest and go back to the stream of life. Then, to intensify this process, one can practise the **gesture of effectiveness**. This gesture has a strong power that is directed towards the outside – by performing it one can convince others that the world is interesting.

When we come to the last ether, life ether, we meet with a Double that is deeply involved in power problems and relies on centralism in order to enforce his personal power. Here practising the sixth basic-gesture, **the gesture of withdrawal**, is a chance to experience uprightness and self-centredness. On the other hand the **gesture of sympathy** is a strong means to transform the power of self-destruction in which this double lives very strongly at times. And again the **gestures of sympathy and antipathy** towards oneself and towards the world facing us, as well as **the thoughtful gesture** with its inner richness and warmth are good means to become aware of oneself. This Double has the task to develop a new relationship towards the environment that is not based on power, control or violence. The **questioning gesture** calls for honest dedication and opening oneself towards the other person and can therefore be a first step in this direction.

These elements and interrelationships have slowly emerged in my work with speech formation and learning from destiny and they should serve as an encouragement for further research in this wide and important field.

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