

First Report

# **(RE)Search**

## **The Spiritual Striving of Youth: Shaping Our Reality**

Initial Findings and Observations  
extracted from a youth-led social study  
by the Youth Section of the Goetheanum  
School of Spiritual Science.



**YouthSection**  
GOETHEANUM

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**Andrea de la Cruz, Ioana Viscrianu and Constanza Kaliks**

<sup>1</sup> For information on Two Much RS and their public studies visit: [www.twomuchrs.com](http://www.twomuchrs.com)



### **The Purpose of the Research**

The research project run by the Youth Section ('The Section for the Spiritual Striving of Youth') wishes to help us understand that which lives inside young people today. We particularly wish to hear what young people have to say about the fundamental realities of life and the shaping of the present, and especially how these relate to the future.

Many studies and surveys<sup>2</sup> have sought to understand youth, for example the comprehensive research by Shell which, since 1953, has been undertaking an empirical study of young people in Germany. The exploration of the cultural, political, and psychological aspects of youth is an academically recognized, interdisciplinary research field, which constitutes an important part of a full picture of society.

The research goals of the Youth Section – a faculty of the Goetheanum School of Spiritual Science – can make a particular contribution to this picture, since it is a study that has been shaped and carried out by young people themselves. The aim is not to interrogate and articulate what it is to be young from the perspective of another generation; rather to allow the youth of today to reflect upon and express itself. It should be possible to experience this reflection and conscious articulation by young people as part of being young. The research thus attempts to be part of life itself.

This working method reflects the task of the Youth Section: to create an open space for the questions of young people, in which the aims, challenges, hopes, and impulses of each new generation can be formulated by that generation itself. The Youth Section should make space for such spiritual striving – the search for one's own path in connection with what is in the world whilst being aware of one's own potential for becoming and changing – and for the creative forces which reside in the perception of others and the world.<sup>3</sup>

Today this purpose is perceived by a global network made of and for young people who meet, take part in initiatives, and engage in the process of exchange. Through conferences, meetings, and working groups on various themes and projects, the experience of taking part in shared and individual creation can be realized and renewed.



## Living with the Question:

### Questioners and Questioned

It was a process of self-questioning of this sort which led to the research project at hand. At its heart is a central question: How does the challenge posed by the present time, that which enables change, manifest itself in young people? How does the spirit of the times live, appear, and speak in the perceptions and experiences of the young generation of today? This is what a group of young people asked themselves when they came together in 2017 in the Youth Section, and which led them to embark on further research through interviews. In the resulting process a question emerged which formulation would serve as a point of departure for the research: a question with which one might wish to live, which is itself alive, and through which one can experience a metamorphose when confronting it.

The determination to formulate such a question can itself be seen as part of the research. It showed what is characteristic – both significant and challenging – of a study of this kind: young people who wish to interview young people, in such a way that both questioner and questioned can live with an enquiry through which they can approach their own individuality and articulate what lives within the generation at an individual level and possibly also collectively (as only the evaluation itself can show).

The subject and object of the research are, therefore, no longer kept at a distance from one another, a traditional principle of academic research. This is a situation which Hans Jonas has called a “novelty in the history of knowledge”: that the researcher themselves during the act of study become agents and participants. It is no longer, as he notes, a question of models which offer a simulation of reality but rather about “the real beings themselves in the fullness of their faculties, which they will prove through their practice”. Here the “experiment” does not have an imitative role, but is rather related to the original convictions of the object of the research. “The progress of knowledge becomes **a generative act of creation**”.<sup>4</sup>

If this can happen, then the study itself becomes a process, a becoming: it offers a perspective which can inhabit the perception of what is said in order to place what is articulated in dialogue with one’s own experience. Questioning becomes encountering: an encounter with the person questioned, with oneself, and with that which speaks out of both of them. Questioner and questioned may change in the process of engaging with the question.

It is the explicit aim and method of this study, developed by young people themselves, to make space for this type of dialogue and reciprocal change.

## Surveying and Analysis:

Participatory Soul Attitudes [*Seelenverfassung*] and the expression of the individual

A central aim throughout all levels of the investigation and evaluation carried out to date was to create a space for listening: in this way the themes, questions, expectations, and spheres of action addressed by the interviewees could gradually emerge from the interviews themselves. The team shaped the entire process in such a way that attention was focused on the process of thinking and feeling: the subjective was not viewed as a static element which lay outside the scope of the research, but rather as something which was involved in the act of research itself. Taking perceptions seriously was thus a part of the evaluative process – in this case, the perception of what the interviewees had said. This was achieved through long conversations between members of the research team, group reading, and subsequent discussion of the recordings of the interviews. In this way the common and individual dispositions manifested themselves in the 40 interviews and, as later chapters will show, became comprehensible and communicable.

Rudolf Steiner broached the “renewal of the state of the soul” in various ways when expressing himself on the changing paradigms of science, in particular in addressing himself to young listeners.<sup>5</sup> He encouraged a process of mutual listening, to allow us to comprehend subtle concerns, biographical intentions, and academic questions. Can a young person, through the process of empathetically listening to another, place themselves in a state of soul that makes it possible for something to express itself, something which wishes to be tentatively and cautiously understood and which gives a voice to an individual? Something which itself is difficult to express and possibly carries in itself something both novel and prospective?

In another respect, too, the search for and reflection of a methodology which corresponds to the object of investigation was of central importance throughout the entire process. Also essential was another of Rudolf Steiner’s methodological demand of the spiritual sciences – and this study at the crossroads of research into youth and society, the social sciences, and anthropology certainly belongs in the category of *Geisteswissenschaften* (humanities) – namely, that for the humanities what is particular should be determining;<sup>6</sup> within the natural sciences, however, the particular only has a transitory value.<sup>7</sup> By contrast, within the humanities the particular and the individual is precisely what is of interest. Throughout the interviews the procedure was that each participant should be listened to and subsequently their discourse read and evaluated in such a way that the uniqueness of the concerns, questions, challenges, and perspectives on the future could be appreciated.



From the responses which came back from these interviews, the team systematically studied every part of the semi-structured dialogue and asked whether – and if so, which – common themes could be identified. This too continually changed in the course of re-evaluation, re-reading and collective re-discussion. Speaking, listening, and engaging in dialogue were thus throughout the basis of this research, and so it remained, in the best of senses, something in the process of becoming, in which everybody can perceive themselves in becoming. Such becoming, in so far as it can be expressed, can also be understood as movement and transition: it need not be a product which results in fixed or closed definitions.

## Searching for Context and Relationship

Every age is characterized by the relationships existing between generations that encounter one another in – and thereby give shape to – a shared epoch.<sup>8</sup> This relationship is culturally moulded and differs worldwide, yet it always retains a natural contrast between the experienced perspective and the fresh and unprejudiced perspective that it meets. To this we can add the fact that entire realms of life – for example digital media or the flexible lifestyle currently much in demand – are today often much more familiar to children and young adults than to older people; expertise thus does not necessarily grow with age, so that it can be passed on, in turn, to the young. In a society where transition itself becomes permanent, being young presents a double challenge.<sup>9</sup> Professions, working environments, and relationships are increasingly becoming provisional projects which last for longer or shorter periods of time; meaning and orientation themselves become the task. Where does one register one's own actions and where do they leave a trace? The question of the relevance of the individual in relationship with others often emerges in an existential form, already among the young.

The methodology developed for this project by the members of the Youth Section can be seen against this background as an expression of the contemporary situation: the search for a form of life which can discover itself in the very process of becoming.

The central question in the interviews reflects the scope of this search: “what would the world look like in 2030 if what lives within me becomes a reality and what will I do to make it happen?” How does each person come to the point that their contribution to the world's becoming will be inscribed and what is done so that this can take place?

If young people engage in reciprocal questioning – themselves both doing the asking and being



asked by others – something can articulate itself, something which points towards the relevance of the contribution of the individual to the world. If we listen attentively and appreciatively fashion this into a coherent portrait, a picture can emerge of what lives within young people today. This is what this study aims to achieve.

That this investigation took place at all is owed to the young people, living and exploring the state of being young, for their interests, openness, competence, and readiness to help. We thank those – namely Andrea De La Cruz Barral and Ioana Viscrianu – who are able to ask questions in such a way that questioning itself can shape reality.

*Constanza Kaliks*

Goetheanum, December 2018

<sup>2</sup> Some examples: 17th Shell Youth Study [https://www.shell.de/ueber-uns/die-shell-jugendstudie/multimediale-inhalte/\\_jcr\\_content/par/expandablelist\\_643445253/expandablesection.stream/1456210163885/fdd3bb5b4e9746d-62c0e3e1f-](https://www.shell.de/ueber-uns/die-shell-jugendstudie/multimediale-inhalte/_jcr_content/par/expandablelist_643445253/expandablesection.stream/1456210163885/fdd3bb5b4e9746d-62c0e3e1f-762722a96aa13a89363985b-19306358f0e4453b8/flyer-zur-shell-jugendstudie-2015-auf-englisch.pdf)

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Research Studies from UNESCO in Brazil <http://www.unesco.org/new/pt/brasil/about-this-office/unesco-resources-in-brazil/studies-and-evaluations/youth/>, [www.tandfonline.com/toc/cjys20/current](http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/cjys20/current), [www.youthventure.org/en/channel/young-person](http://www.youthventure.org/en/channel/young-person), <http://omv.mca.int/>

<sup>3</sup> On the purpose of the Youth Section see Haid, C., Kaliks; C.; Zimmermann, S. (2017) Goetheanum – Freie Hochschule für Geisteswissenschaft. Geschichte und Forschung der Sektionen. Dornach: Verlag am Goetheanum, pp. 118, 119.

<sup>4</sup> “Damit verwandelt sich der theoretische Forscher zum praktischen Schöpfer im Akt des Forschens selbst. Keine simulierenden Modelle können hier dienen, nur die wirklichen Wesen selbst in der Fülle ihrer Fähigkeit, die sie in der Ausübung erweisen werden. So fällt hier das “Experiment”, im Unterschied zu seiner nachbildenden Rolle in bisheriger Forschung, mit der

ursprünglichen Erzeugung des Forschungsobjektes zusammen. Der Erkenntnisvorgang wird zum originativen Machen. Dies ist selber ein Novum in der Geschichte des Wissens.” Jonas, H. (2004) *Leben, Wissenschaft, Verantwortung*. Stuttgart: Reclam, p. 198.

<sup>5</sup> Steiner, R. (2006) *Drei Ansprachen an die Jugend*. Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, pp. 24, 25, 34, 35.

<sup>6</sup> Steiner, R. (1960) *Grundlinien einer Erkenntnistheorie der Goetheschen Weltanschauung*. Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, p. 118.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>8</sup> Ortega y Gasset, J. (2006) *Meditación de nuestro tiempo*. México, d. F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, pp. 253, 254, 258.

<sup>9</sup> Boutinet, J. (1990) *Antropologia do projecto*. Lisboa: Instituto Piaget.



# An invitation from the young researchers

Andrea de la Cruz Barral & Ioana Viscrianu

*Could it be that the act of questioning  
is what makes us truly human?*

Participant at the 2018 Youth Section Summer Conference

*The Spiritual Striving of Youth: Shaping our Reality* is an invitation to enter a journey of inquiry and discovery about the nature of being young, the quality of the times we live in and the impact that young adults have in the shaping of experience today. The research begun with an exploration on youth through the works of Rudolf Steiner<sup>10</sup> and his addresses to the younger generation of his time, in which he described ideas about the quality of youth and the driving forces active in individuals at this particular biographical moment. The team also looked into the development of the Youth Section as a member faculty of the School of Spiritual Science,<sup>11</sup> which since its founding in 1924, has been the receptor of young people's ideas, projects and initiatives in various forms, such as conferences and study groups developed by young people for young people. The work of this section or faculty focuses on providing a space for shaping and exploring the questions arising in young people today, allowing anybody to get a glimpse into the key inquiries that youth carries within.

Against this background, we formulated a qualitative social study that invited young adults to participate in fully; from the project's inception and design, to its development and authorship. We as young people became the designers, implementers and authors of the entire project, as well as the subjects of investigation, thus defying some ideas and rules about the subject-object relationship in scientific settings.<sup>12</sup> The project's team, composed by junior researchers as well as experts in relevant fields, approached a sample of 40 young women and men from a variety of backgrounds to be interviewed. The Youth Section used its existing network of thousands of international members linked to the anthroposophical movement to invite volunteer interviewees. In addition to this, we contacted individuals not yet connected to the anthroposophical movement to increase diversity and enrich the study's sample.

The result of the data collection process is approximately 75 hours of recorded conversations with 18 to 35 year olds from 23 different nationalities. The conversations were analysed individually and comparatively to give rise to some initial observations which are shared in this publication.

The study offers an insight into the experiences of those people representative of the Youth Section movement and of those who have a near connection to it. This includes people who had never heard about Anthroposophy, the School of Spiritual Science or the Youth Section before. These people were invited by someone connected to the Youth Section's network or to



the study directly and so, they participated out of trust and interest in the project itself. We think that the findings, although extracted from interactions with a small sample of young people, can be of great interest to those who are currently working with youth across settings and disciplines. This is because the entire study being youth-led, offers a kaleidoscope-like perspective of the subject at heart: “the spiritual striving of youth”; or in other words, **the endeavour that young people find themselves in to find meaning and explore their own questions about human existence.**

Ever since the inception of the project, the formulation of the research questions, the choice of methodologies used to attain data and analytic process, all the way down to the authorship of the study, it has been young people who have led the way. This study is therefore a testimony of young will in action; a window that allows the reader to look through at how we interact with the world, our peers and our own selves, and how we engage in questioning about the experience and meaning of reality.

To make the most of this publication, we invite readers to both follow our process of investigation and to enter into an inquiring journey themselves, so that they will gain their own insights about youth today, the impact we have in society and what the future may look like if we continue striving forward. We hope that this opens a dialogue between us and look very much forward to hearing about your own discoveries.

*Andrea de la Cruz and Ioana Viscrianu*  
Goetheanum, February 2019

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<sup>10</sup> Steiner, R., (1981) *Youth and The Etheric Heart: Rudolf Steiner Speaks to the Younger Generation.* Massachusetts: Steiner Books Anthroposophic Press

Also Haid., C. et al (2017) *Goetheanum – Freie Hochschule für Gesisteswissenschaft. Geschichte und Forschung der Sektionen.* Dornach: Verlag am Goetheanum

<sup>11</sup> Kühl, J. et al. (2008) *The School of Spiritual Science: An Orientation and Introduction.* Forest Row: Temple Lodge.

<sup>12</sup> See previous introductory remarks by Constanza Kaliks.

# Part 1

# **(RE)Search**

Inception of the project,  
process of investigation  
and methodologies



## 1.1 The project in numbers

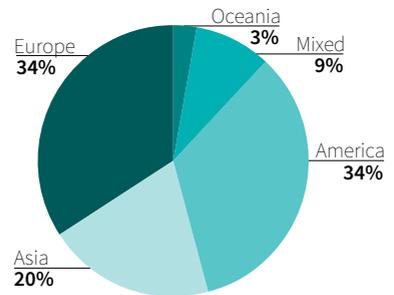
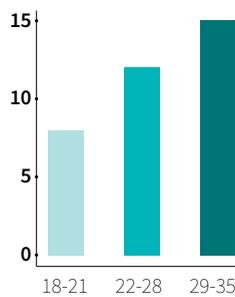
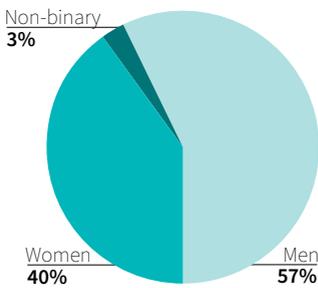
“(Re)Search: The Spiritual Striving of Youth -Shaping our Reality” brought together young people from all over the world to ask the question: *what would the world look like in 2030 if what lives within you became a reality, and what are you going to do to make it happen?* The project aims to study the spiritual impulses present in today’s youth; in other words, the values, principles and motivations that guide young people’s actions in their every-day lives and the questions that they carry within them.

The study was conducted by a team of young researchers supported by experts in the fields of Sociology, Pedagogy, Philosophy and Anthroposophy. As a project belonging to the Goetheanum - School of Spiritual Science, it explored traditional methods<sup>13</sup> of qualitative

research which were widened with elements of scientific-spiritual approaches.<sup>14</sup> The results are based on the information contained in 40 interviews with people between the ages of 18 and 35 from 23 different nationalities and cultural backgrounds,<sup>15</sup> all of whom volunteered to participate in the study.

In addition to the discourses obtained through semi-structured interviews, the study counts on the data generated through journals created by young participants during a period of five months, in which they answered guiding questions established by a researcher specialised in aesthetic methods applied to social research.<sup>16</sup> The contents of the journals were analysed in collaboration with the research workshop of Alanus University’s Sociology Department, composed of students focused on the development and implementation of new research methods.<sup>17</sup>

### 40 interviews with men and women aged 18-35 from 23 nationalities



### Academic background

15%

currently completing high school

12%

have completed or are undertaking vocational training

73%

have either studied or are currently studying in University at bachelor, masters and postgraduate levels

No Anthroposophical Background

31%

Anthroposophical Background

20%

New to Anthroposophy

49%



## 1.2 Finding a question

Andrea de la Cruz Barral

The Goetheanum's Youth Section offers space and possibilities for young people to generate, develop and implement their own initiatives in connection with their spiritual striving. Examples of these are the study groups and annual conferences organised by young people with the aim of deepening and informing on issues of interest to youth. The team is usually made up of young adults between the ages of 16 and 35, all of whom come from a variety of professional and personal backgrounds. During 2017 and 2018 alone, the team consisted of individuals from 4 different nationalities, with experience in the fields of sociology, educational sciences, psychology and economic sciences, philosophy, anthropology and art.

The work of the Youth Section is based on a basic principle, which is to always develop activities that arise from the questions that emerge within the young person during adolescence and adult life. The questions may well be linked to specific fields such as those of the other sections of the School of Spiritual Science – pedagogy, natural sciences, or Anthroposophy, to name a few –, but the way in which the questions and themes are explored can only be defined by the young people who propose the topic. The Youth Section is “devoted to questions about youth that can be further developed as life questions and research questions by the professional sections”<sup>18</sup> and through this project, it has added a new

impulse by developing its own research activities.

The section's wish to carry out a research project had been in the works for some time but it was not until 2016 that a question and a working team began to take shape. At its inception, the research team gathered with an international group of young members of the faculty in The Hague to propose their initial motivations for the research and to begin working on a common question. Although the overall concept of a study of this sort was received keenly by the international group, the central question posed by the team at the time *where do I experience reality?* felt somehow distant and abstract to potential participants.

Shortly after this meeting, the Argentinian members of the Youth Section gathered around the study of various addresses by Rudolf Steiner to the youth<sup>19</sup>. In his speeches, Steiner encourages the young people of his time to come and remain together and to develop initiatives for a future full of hope.<sup>20</sup> He also reminded the youth of 1924 to consider a question he had previously asked in a poll distributed in the Anthroposophical Society's printed news, which should help them formulate more clearly the identity of the Youth Movement and consequently the work of the soon to be founded Youth Section. He asked them: *how do you imagine the human world would look in 1935 if it incorporated your youthful desires?*<sup>21</sup> The young people connected to the present research project began working with this question and were able to reach such depth



in conversation that the team took it as a starting point for this study. *What would the world look like in 2030, if that which lives within you becomes a reality, and what will you do to make it happen?* was the question resulting from this process. Inspired by the formulation Steiner gave in 1924, we developed the new question to explore:

1. Present longings, hopes and expectations of a future reality, both for oneself and the community (*what would be the world look like in 2030...*)
2. The inner life of the individual including ideas, impulses, values, questions, emotions gathered through life experiences (*if what lives within me became reality...*)
3. The commitment and will with which individuals engage in the realization of their longings, hopes and expectations, and the challenges that may arise in realising them (*and what will I do to make it happen?*)

This question, which is so open and connected to one's deepest longings and cannot be answered with immediacy, is something which can be carried within whether one takes part in the research activities or not. This was important, to create a question that could accompany participants into daily life for continuous reflection. The question was then shared at colloquiums, meetings and presentations not only with young people but also colleagues, teachers, co-workers and members of the older generations, resonating too with many others. Thus, a question that could be universally explored and connected with had been formulated, a key aspect of a successful qualitative methodology that requires of open ground questions as a basis

for a good process of analysis.

Months after dealing with the first stages of research (interview phase, transcription and initial analysis), a young researcher reflected on the process of dealing with the question personally before posing it to participants during interviews. In their thoughts, it is possible to observe the importance of the interviewees also being absorbed in a process of self-reflection and living with the question to appropriately guide participants through the interviews experience:

"It's almost like a syntax exercise: "what" "the world" "inside me" "1935" – because Steiner was asking the youth of 1924. So it requires effort and activity on your part to understand it or to begin to answer it. And I think that when the question was put as an option, I felt something like "this makes sense, but why?" Later we realised that we couldn't ask this question directly because it's too complex to provoke spontaneity and generate dialogue straight away, but we tried to understand what was inside this question, that which it is trying to inspire, so that we could create a way of tackling it. That's where our interview questions came from. I think it is really interesting how in the interviews our questions are able to awaken such a strong inner activity from the ones answering them, and I think that's because that happened to us as well when we were working with the main question. So the process of the team is always being mirrored, somehow this is always happening in this project."<sup>22</sup>



From the participants' perspective there is also a recognition of the question's potential to be a companion to the life developments and changes that they go through as young people. This allows for the question to be revisited at different times, engaging diverse answers each time it is posed and thus, turning the person who asks it into an immediate researcher of their own reality:

"I think it would be very interesting to keep this question going, because this time next year [my answer] might be different. Because this question is to temporally reliant, I guess, it would be really interesting to follow people with this question, the exact same question."<sup>23</sup>

The purpose of the framework question was of course never to attempt to find an answer for what the future reality may turn out to be according to the wishes of young people; something practically impossible given the changing and surprising nature of life. Instead it sought to provide a space for the interviewees to go through a narrative journey of their life experiences until the present day, and a projection of what they wish to experience in the future so that we as researchers, may gain glimpses into what constitutes the reality of youth today and their spiritual striving.

## 1.3 Approaching and clarifying concepts:

### youth, reality and spirituality

*Andrea de la Cruz Barral*

Why did we choose the title "The Spiritual Striving of Youth – Shaping Our Reality? There are three basic enquiries contemplated in this study:

- Who are the young people we work with and for? (Youth)
- How do these young people live, what is their reality? (Reality)
- What are their questions, values and motivations? (Spirituality)

Before exploring answers to these questions, let us take a closer look at the three key concepts found in our study and what we mean by them.

### Youth

One of the challenges in the study was to define the concept of youth. What is meant by young people? Is youth a made up concept? When does youth start and when does it end? Can a period-frame of youth be established that does not become conflictive when we look at different cultural backgrounds?

For the purpose of this research, which sought to investigate and understand how young people today experience their life by understanding where they come from and what they wish to create for the future, it was vital to consider when an individual becomes



capable of talking with some certainty about past experiences and future longings. Only with young adults it is possible to begin a process of shaping the future and remembering the past in detail, for the beginning of adulthood is a period in which “after the doubts and transience of adolescence, the individual begins to be able to see something of the future”<sup>24</sup>. Because of this, and although the Youth Section often works with young people from around the age of 15<sup>25</sup>, the researchers chose the basic age of participation in the study to be 18 years old and onwards.

The age of departure was simpler to determine but the great challenge lied in specifying when youth ends, and this is often something that depends on culture, historical period and how we define “being young”. Is youth a biological disposition? Is it culturally determined? If so, is its cutting point defined according to civil and professional status or to a particular age?<sup>26</sup>. During the conduct of the study, and in particular its design phase, the team considered all these questions but took as its starting point Rudolf Steiner’s indications about the phases of human development; phases composed of intervals of approximately seven years in which the individual develops new physical, as well as spiritual and psychological qualities.

In Rudolf Steiner’s septennial development approach, which often informs practice in fields such as pedagogy and developmental psychology, the young person embodies their individuality – the “I”, “ego” or “self” – at about 21 years of age. Authors such as Bernard Lievegoed (1979), Gudrun Burkhard

(2000) or Crottogini (2004) describe adolescence as a phase during which the self has been shaping an inner home where it can then be fully present and express itself; a place from which the soul can unfold its qualities and give itself to the world through will impulses and action. At around 21 years of age, the young person begins a journey of embodiment and empowerment to eventually lead an independent and self-responsible life. From this moment onwards, their development will depend solely on them and no longer on their family or the educational environment that parents or guardians chose for them. This period starting around the beginning of the twenties, marks a turning point in the life of the individual and is usually accompanied by great moments of questioning: *What do I bring to the world? What areas do I want to specialise in and develop in? How can I take responsibility for myself and my contribution to the world?* It is the moment when society asks young adults to position themselves in larger contexts, transforming inner questions into actions, undertaking individual choices about their occupation, field of study, political participation and more. It is a moment of great creative potential where the forces linked to processes of “becoming” or “development” are at the forefront.

The process of exploration, strengthening and contribution to the world is often at its most intense phase during the end of the fifth period of seven years, around the age of 35. This is when the individual may have already accumulated a greater diversity of experiences related to the external world, for example in connection to work, studies,



relationships, as well as to the internal world (thoughts, impulses and emotions to name a few). After 30 the person may feel more prepared to actively contribute with skills and knowledge acquired along the way. They may begin to settle after a period of intense exploration and specialise in certain areas, knowing that some aspects no longer contribute to the building of their chosen path which by now has become clearer.

In addition to the strength and momentum characterizing this period of activity as described by these outsources, there is another unique element of this age period that readers are invited to take into account: the young adult may become around the age of 30-35 from this biographical point of view, a bridge between generations; a group that can connect what is to come with what once was. The young person at this stage may thus have the ability to connect with and explore traditional and new ideas simultaneously, with the possibility of taking up the role of a messenger between generations.<sup>27</sup>

In societies where there is a tendency to compartmentalise into age groups, where we go to school with those of our own year of birth and wrap our life experiences up in homes for the elderly, what role can an individual play when they are able to understand older generations but also resonate with the vital moment of adolescence out of their own present experience? It may be said that this is the last phase of youth, an exceptional moment to generate multi-generational relationships, as well as to transform established ideas and structures from the past by listening

to the impulses coming from the future.

To summarise, the term youth in the context of this study refers to “young adulthood”, a period framed in a biographical moment between 18 to 35 years of age, an essential moment to contribute to society through work, vocation, relationship formation and creation of family. A vital period in which the human being experiences the following:

1. Becomes responsible for their own education (self-education)
2. Becomes independent from the family or guardians to become an active participant in social life (socially and politically responsible for oneself and community life)
3. Becomes an inter-generational bridge towards the mid-30s, and thus is capable of connecting and integrating the “already established” and the “new”

In connection with the previously mentioned inter-generational aspect, most participants in the study were comprehended within the so called millennial generation<sup>28</sup> (80% of interviewees were aged 22-37 at the time of the interview 2017/18) whilst some belong to the yet unnamed “post-millennial” generation (20% of interviewees were aged 18-21 at the time of the interview 2017/18) These two are possibly the most scrutinized age groups since the Baby Boomers. The millennials are known as the last generation to remember the change from analogue to digital technology, as well as experiencing the economic crises of 2008 in their early adulthood or late adolescence and thus being directly impacted by this in terms of economic, professional and educational



opportunities<sup>29</sup>. Society's concerns about these generations' characteristics, challenges and choices are extensive, occupying all sorts of media, press and studies<sup>30</sup>, which look at their experiences of entering the job market, the psychological impact that endless possibility of choices has in them, their need of migrating from their own countries in search for jobs and how these awaken capacities for adaptation, mobility and flexibility.

In popular western culture, millennials and post-millennials are often described as being individualistic, egocentric, self-entitled and having low self-esteem, but also as entrepreneurial and hard working<sup>31</sup>. Depending on the critic, they are viewed as a bright generation capable of confronting all sort of social challenges against all odds, or a truly spoilt one unable to overcome impatience and their desire for instant gratification. This could be seen as relevant for this study even if some participants do not directly come from Western countries, as all if not all of them have grown up or are currently living in environments influenced by Western culture. However, the team of researchers decided to leave aside all preconceived notions about these two generations for the purpose of this study. Instead, they sought to form new ideas by embracing each individual participant case by case, independently from the perspective that older generations have formed about the generations that they belong to. The youth-led nature of the study, allowed young people to become observers and critics of *their own peer group*, instead of adding yet another study from an older generation's perspective

into the already growing pile.

## Reality

At the heart of our study there lies an interest in understanding what are the actual experiences that constitute young people's lives today directly from their testimonies. Thus, researchers did not meet participants with a particular interest or focus; instead, they sought to generate a blank canvas where young people could choose the topics to be explored based on their interests and their present focus. This is what is meant by *reality*: what are the young people experiencing inwardly and in their surroundings? What do they occupy their time with? What are they thinking about and what are they feeling? Where can they be found investing their time and self-directed action in? The present moment in all their different manifestations and expressions.

Developmental psychologist Bernard Lievegoed proposed that "the present is, after all, determined equally by past causal factors and by future directions"<sup>32</sup>. Reality or the present, can thus only be understood when we look at it not as a daily schedule describing the everyday whereabouts and actions of an individual, but as an agglomeration of situations that spring from past experiences, as well as objectives, wishes and desires that are directed towards the future. In other words, what one lives today is a result from past choices, happenings and experiences – whether known and made conscious by the subject or not – and the happenings one wishes to experience for oneself, others and the



world as a whole. The frame question thus created a fruitful space where the participant could expose past experiences and future expectations in addition to inner and outer elements of reality: what they see happening around them (*the world*) and what they experience inwardly (*inside me*).

## Spirituality

*“To truly study the universe on a deep level, we must acknowledge the fundamental role of consciousness in painting reality.”*

Eben Alexander, M.D. <sup>33</sup>

Because of the wealth of information linked to this particular concept, it is important to take a moment now to define how the term spirituality is used in this study. On the one hand, the term spirituality is used here to refer to a human being's own relationship with their spirit or consciousness. Thus, when investigating young people's questions, reflections, thoughts, beliefs and ideas about themselves and the world and how they as individuals unfold in relation to these, researchers are seeking for an understanding of their spiritual life, their life of consciousness.

Spirit is also referred to when one investigates what young people identify as the source from which they give meaning to their experiences. In this sense, spirituality can be understood as the participant's action of finding or giving meaning to their observations and experiences in the world: how they perceive, understand and draw conclusions about life and the role that they as young people play in it.

How is it attempted to discern the quality or shape of this spirit that lives in the young person? During the analysis of interviews, the researchers start from the premise that a human being is a conscious being in a state of becoming through self-determination, whose reality is perceived and understood according to the gaze that they place upon the world. That gaze which is directed towards the world shows the spirit or consciousness of the individual through the expression of what they experience in their lives. In other words, that the young person chooses to place attention in certain elements of their experience instead of others, and the way in which these elements are narrated, can indicate aspects about their spirituality.

The way in which they experience life and the way in which they are conscious of those experiences is informed by values and ideas that have been adopted and assumed by the individuality throughout their life. Values and beliefs are also expressions of the spirit, which are transformed from something of a spiritual nature into a physical reality when, by informing actions, they become imprint a seal on the world through acts of will.

In searching for current understandings of spirituality in connection to youth, a very interesting source is the publication *Positive Youth Development and Spirituality* (2008). In this, numerous scientists from different fields investigate the connection between spirituality and attributes such as generosity, well-being and social responsibility in youth. Many passages in this publication resonated deeply, such as the words by Peter L.



Benson<sup>34</sup>, who in his definition of spirit comes close to describing a central aspect to this research project; namely that when becoming a participant of (RE)Search, one goes through a process of spiritual development as the young researchers seek to create “harmony” between the discoveries made through listening to generational peers and how they connect to their own experiences of life as young people. Thus, investigating the connection of another to their spirituality, inevitably raises questions about how one is conscious of their own. These two insights then inform each other to build a more complete understanding of being a young person in our present times.

Spirituality as a concept and area of study and of popular interest enjoys a great deal of attention today. There are numerous publications and resources available through academia as well as popular literature that make clear that our society’s interest in the occult, the transcendent, the religious and the mystical in life is by no means out.<sup>35</sup> With this, it is possible to refer to the second manner in which the term is used in this study.

As a project carried out by the Goetheanum - School of Spiritual Science, it implied that the young researchers and most of their mentors were connected to a spiritual path. The fact that the context of the investigation was imbued by an understanding and study of Anthroposophy as a spiritual path, might play a key role in the explanation of why during the interviews, participants could encounter an open space where

themes related to Spirituality could be spontaneously discussed; themes which included questions about reincarnation, practices of meditation and religious views.

Why is there a need to clarify a difference between the first form of spirituality one’s own relationship to the spirit or consciousness – and the second, which is based on an interest of certain practices and topics connected to spiritual paths and religious ideas? The central question of the study was to understand the impulses, values, questions and motivations guiding young people’s decisions and actions in the world – first form of spirituality – and in this process of investigation, it was observed that ideas linked to the second form of spirituality strongly influenced such decisions and actions. This is because the team encountered a group of young people very interested in, and engaged with, the current understanding of the concept of spirituality as it lives in western societies today – spirituality as a search for one’s own inner path or self through different practices and experiences –, sometimes even choosing this as their main interest or vocation in life.

Thus, spirituality is key to this study, firstly because it is proposed as the main aspect to be observed by the researchers in order to begin understanding the impulses and motivations present in young people today and secondly, because of the extent in which spiritual realities, experiences or practices play a part in the young interviewees’ lives. Later in Part 2, readers will be able to see how we observed this theme as it appeared in interviews.



## 1.4 Methodologies

*Ioana Viscrianu*

### 1.4.1

#### **A dialogue on the theory of research and methods**

Throughout the project, the team were able to explore ideas related to the nature of the social sciences, such as the relationship between observer-observed subject-object, and what new methodologies can bring to more traditional approaches to research. Key questions included: how does one look at the human being standing in front of us? How can the individuality reveal itself, without prejudices becoming a barrier to a new understanding? How can the best possible environment for the participant to express openly, honestly and freely be created, and how does this improve the quality of data?

In order to achieve the aims of the study, namely an understanding and description of reality as experienced by young people and their motives and motivations shaping their actions and perspectives for the future, it was clear at the outset that the methods of qualitative research would be most suitable. A hallmark of qualitative research is that it is a science of discovery, which does not “specify the method, but rather provides a methodological spectrum of varied approaches that can be selected according to the manner in which the questions are formulated and their research tradition.” The methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation were therefore chosen and developed according to the aim of the study and its context. “For this reason, the theories,

conceptualisation and classification in qualitative research, themselves result from a retrospective reconstruction of the social construction of reality”<sup>37</sup>.

The semi-structured interview, the method chosen by the research team to collect its data, was constructed in accordance with its biographical approach – those questioned brought their own timeline individually into the conversation and the experiences and motives they felt to be most relevant were addressed. What is here described are the theoretical foundations of data collection and analysis on which this study is based.

### 1.4.2

#### **Phenomenological analysis of the living environment**

Within a perpetually changing reality, in which outer structures and constructs no longer provide orientation nor support, the processes by which the Self and the World are created increasingly shift into the foreground. The processes of pluralisation, new forms of life that are constantly in the process of becoming and dissolving, require scientific methods of research that make visible the perspective of the individuals affected and their way of experiencing reality. On the one hand these processes are determined by an internal dialogue and a process of sense-making; on the other by the environment in its broadest sense. Both together are constantly constructing the social reality. “Each life has its own meaning. It lies in a context of meaning in which, on one hand, each of the memorable instances of the present has its own value; on the

other hand, and at the same time, it is integrally connected to an overall significance. The significance of this individual existence is completely singular, insoluble for knowledge and yet it represents, in its own way, as if it were a monad of Leibnitz, the story of the universe.”<sup>38</sup>

By the same token, within scientific research, the focus is increasingly being put on the issue of describing and understanding the connections that take place in the forming of social reality; these are determined by the meaning and significance which human beings give to their many and varied biographical experiences. Social reality can thus be understood as the result of the meaning and connections that come about through the dialogue and interaction between an individual and other people and the world<sup>39</sup>. The way in which behaviours appear is based on these mutually created significances. Thereby, we can speak of an organic ongoing process, as well as a reflexivity and a recursive-ness of social reality. The theoretical foundations of such a study in qualitative research were outlined by Schütz in 1928 through his work *Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt*<sup>40</sup>.

In the qualitative biographical research, but also in ethnological and other types of qualitative research,<sup>41</sup> the “Phenomenological Lifeworld Analysis” or mundane phenomenology developed by Alfred Schütz, following on Edmund Husserl, is one of the central background theories of qualitative research. The “Lifeworld” as described by Husserl, is the original sphere, the self-evident, unquestioned foundation

of both everyday action and thought, as well as all scientific theorising and philosophising. In its concrete manifestations it exists in billions of possible “unfoldings” that are truthful realities for each single person, though these variations are built on general, unchanging basic structures: the “world of primordial evidences”.<sup>42</sup>

The research of a “lifeworld” which is synthesised, contextualised and described meaningfully by those interviewed, gives the following study the possibility firstly to acknowledge and describe the diversity of lifestyles and circumstances, and also to describe the connection of the possibilities of action that they see and their connection to the future. In this way, it is possible for the researchers to accompany them, through a process of reflection, during the shaping of their social reality.

### 1.4.3

#### **Interaction as the basis for the research project**

By comparison with a quantitative study, in which one attempts to explain the phenomena based on a distance between subject and object, the sought for understanding of the reality described by those interviewed is achieved, above all, through the interaction between questioner and questioned. “For qualitative social research, the human being is not just an object of study but also a knowing subject. No objectivistic social research is adequate in understanding this dual role. Likewise, the researcher has certain expectations. The aim of such a process of research cannot be



the creation of objectivity in the scientific sense, as this would require the researcher to take up a position outside of all culture, society and history.”<sup>43</sup> Thus “objectivity” is not what is pursued but rather, the study is founded upon the so-called “good criteria”: transparency, intersubjectivity and relevance, as these are recognised and accepted in the sphere of qualitative research.<sup>44</sup>

Besides documenting the research project from the phase of development of the research question, the process of the interviews was documented by means of diaries kept by the interviewers. “The reflection of the researcher on his actions and perceptions in the field is understood as a significant part of the resulting conclusions and not as a source of disruption that needs to be controlled or excluded.”<sup>45</sup> Besides this, the research team was invited to discuss openly their experiences within a colloquium of the Youth Section organised for the research project, which presupposes a further process of reflection. Their statements were documented by means of video recordings.<sup>46</sup>

#### 1.4.4

##### **Grounded theory and abduction as creative methods in research analysis**

An important objective of the following study was to allow the statements made by young people about their striving, ideals and experiences to appear. This was followed by the task to describe them during the process of analysis in such a manner that a systematic description might take place, in which above all, the new and the unexpected within the discourses can be

discovered. Charles Sanders Peirce and similar thinkers, indicated this to be a process of discovery, in which thought processes lead to new observations that could not have been anticipated and therefore, may arise spontaneously in the moment.<sup>47</sup> In order to facilitate this, the seeker (researcher) should “allow his spirit to wander” in the research process:

“Board your small boat of contemplation, thrust yourself out into the sea of your thinking and let the breath of the heavens fill your sails. With open eyes, awake for all that happens around you and within you, in open conversation with yourself. (...) It is, however, not a conversation consisting merely of words, but one that illustrates (...) with descriptive images and experiments.”<sup>48</sup>

To develop theories on the basis of the acquired data, to be open for the new, the unknown, within what is apparently known and not to confirm already prepared hypotheses, was a particular concern of the research team. To allow a multi-dimensional image to arise out of the perspective of those interviewed, letting their statements be expressed as leitmotifs in a discourse of the present generation of young people, was possible with the help of Grounded Theory. The categories delineated in the course of this study arose in the process of the analysis. The research team intends, in the next phase of research, to find laws and patterns from these, which can be tested through the material gathered through the interviews.



## 1.5 Field work

*Andrea de la Cruz Barral*

### 1.5.1

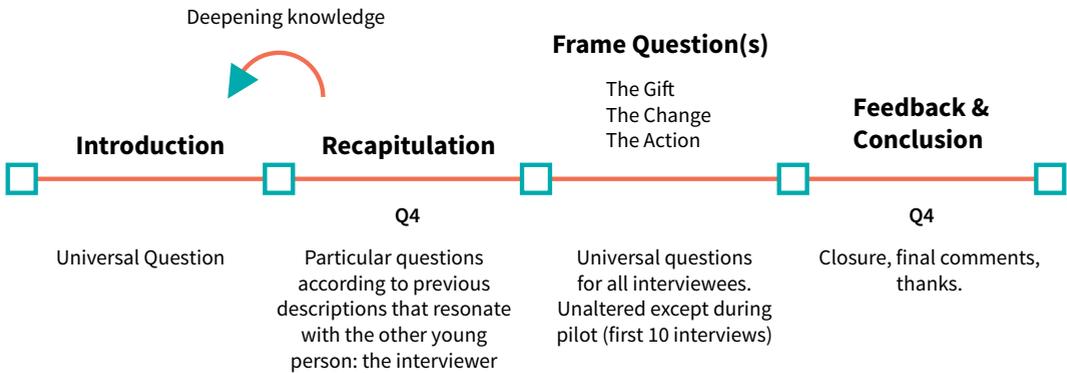
#### **Designing the experiment: semi-structured interviews**

The research began from the moment that the team started designing the way in which young participants would be invited to take part in the interview process. Too often those involved in the inception of the project could recall experiences where they were approached for research purposes and did not feel comfortable expressing in full their views and opinions. This could be due to the superficiality of the questions asked and the lack of interest in background information to put their answers in context. The researchers took this into consideration and chose to build an inner-mood of gratitude, respect and veneration for the testimonies that would be given during the interviews, working on listening capacities and developing an interest in the story of another. Thus, when the young team of interviewers was formed, the key qualities that were searched for were listening and facilitation skills as well as an ongoing attitude of self-observation; for their task was ultimately to guide interviewees through an in-depth process of self-reflection and discovery.

A key objective was to create an atmosphere of trust amongst interviewers and interviewees to enable a spontaneous and honest expression of what the participant

wanted to say, always guiding during the encounter to find in themselves more complexity and wealth of experience.

During the pilot-phase consisting of the first ten interviews, the team was able to notice how the study's frame question was too large or complex to be asked directly and achieve our desired outcome. Instead, participants felt overwhelmed by the question's complexity, blocking spontaneity and perhaps even feeling like they had to answer it in a particular way. Often, they asked for the question to be given to them a number of times, for they felt unsure of whether they had understood it. Because of this, there was a change of approach: during the interviews, the frame question would remain in the backdrop of the experience disguised in an interview format that can be visually represented as seen below. The team devised forms to tackle the question that would make it more accessible, whilst retaining the essence of it. "What would the world look like in 2030 if what lives within you becomes a reality and what will you do to make it happen?" was broken down into three new questions, which were in turn fitted within an interview-experiment carefully designed to create a prosperous situation for the narrative of the interviewee to emerge within a safe, comfortable and open space.



**What would the world look like in 2030 if what lives within you becomes a reality, and what will you do to make it happen?**

Wie würde die Welt im Jahr 2030 aussehen, wenn das, was im mir lebt, Realität werden soll und was werde ich tun, damit dies stattfindet?





## Interview Stage 1:

### *Invitation as the key to spontaneity*

Interviews never lasted less than one hour and a half, and were permeated from the start by the way in which the team looked at the young person as a being capable of self-determination; a subject gifted with the ability to define their values and act in accordance with these. The researchers viewed the human being standing in front of them in dialogue, as a being in a process of development and identity building, constructing themselves day by day in the midst of an interplay between an external and an internal world.

Choice is therefore a key factor to take into consideration when analysing the interviews later on, as we can already discern clear aspects of the individuality from the way in which they handle the challenge of introducing themselves to a peer. Here we can consider questions such as: what is the first context that they use to describe themselves within? Do they open with a statement or with a question? These questions serve the researcher as “threads of Ariadne”, to lead the way in interpreting the data and discovering possible meanings and relationships in the young people’s discourses.

The power of spontaneity therefore lies in the raw material that it provides the researchers with. A very open ended question, better still, an invitation like the one seen on the right, allows to observe the subject in a situation where they are immediately confronting the need to make a choice:

Interviewer (standard question): *The first question is not really a question, but an invitation to introduce yourself, to take me on a journey through your life until this moment. Whenever you are ready.*

Response 1: *Okay, well, I was born 1986... I mean what a big question to be presented with. I guess I'll see what happens. It is funny because it is a kind of press all of this. “No, I'm not going to do that, I'm not going to say that”. Okay. I was born in 1986 to a woman and to a man, my parents. (...) Male, 32, Mixed*

Response 2: *Ok, sure. Wow. No one has ever asked me about this. Ok, so my name is [NAME] and I am the fifth out of 6 kids. I am a pure Filipino. (...) Female, 33, Philippines*

Response 3: *Is it more about me and biography? Or is it also what bothers me or maybe what scares me? For example, politics or something like that, is that interesting too or is it just about myself and my past? And maybe what I want to create in the future? So is it from me? Or is it what's around me? Female, 21, Mixed*

Interviewer (standard prompt): *That's for you to decide as we go along. You can take it as an introduction to yourself, who you are and what has led you to this point in time (...)*

Beginning the interview in the form of an invitation has another advantage, which is that it allows the immediate aspects that appear and dominate in situations of



first encounters to come to the forefront and express itself freely. By giving this immediateness an open space to express, be present and be recognised, it is possible to discern the first appearing elements that the subject identifies with. Thus, although the focus is on the deepest and inner-most longings driving young people forward, it is understood that these can be manifest whether the subject is talking from an immediate responsive space (spontaneous discourse), or from a place of self-reflection.

The discourse given in response to this open invitation can be interpreted later to gain understanding of the subject's background and extract "focus areas" – these are themes and categories that describe where the attention or gaze of the subject is placed upon.<sup>49</sup> It also allows to begin glimpsing what is within them in terms of past experiences and questions.

## Interview Stage 2:

*Deepening understanding of the individuality through recapitulation and interaction in the form of dialogue with a peer*

The second stage, named "Recapitulation" (see interview timeline figure p.28) begins a dialogue where the young interviewee allows themselves to direct particular questions springing from the opening statements given by the interviewer. In this phase it becomes possible to see not only the young person being questioned and their choices when constructing discourse, but also where the gaze of the interviewer falls upon. One can discern how

a relationship begins to form based on a genuine interest on another's experience because it has resonated with one's own. In future analysis, the free and particular questions that the researcher directs towards each different interviewee could be of particular interest as a way to indicate what aspects of another's discourse motivates a young person to deepen and form a relationship; what topics and aspects awaken interest and are asked to deepen information on.

In Recapitulation, the main objective remains to take the "self" of the interviewee to a deeper level of exploration. Questions in this interview phase should not arise from simple curiosity, but from the spirit of investigation. In training, young researchers are taught to carefully search for indications in tone of voice and gestures, for example, that might indicate that the person has more to say about a certain experience brought up spontaneously in their opening statements. Here one is not looking for particular interests that the researcher might bring with them into the experiments from their own lives; instead one searches for the knowledge that the other carries within them but might not have been manifested or expressed consciously yet.

Recapitulation is thus an emptying phase, but also a deepening one that allows to see the person in more detail, in more complexity, understanding better where do they come from, how they perceive reality and what arises within them from their experiences; thus pointing to their spiritual striving with more clarity. This stage often



culminates with a question that invites the person to reflect on how those experiences have shaped the present moment for them:

*Interviewer: And having these experiences that we've talked in the past and this connection to this search for knowledge that you feel makes you grow and so on, how would you describe the present time? Who you are today? Having done this review of all these things that interest you, are important to you that have brought you here (...) and you are here now and, what's happening now in the present time for you in your life?*

The value of guiding the interviewee through a final question into the present moment lies in giving the opportunity to the interviewee to draw their own conclusion from this first stage, thus creating space to turn one's sight inwardly and presently. What do they see as valuable from all their descriptions of life up to this point? What do they choose to keep, to treasure and possibly take forward with them into the future? Something which will be better seen in the next stage, when they are led into an imaginative situation nearly 15 years from the present moment.

### Interview Stage 3:

*Breaking down the main question.*

By this stage, a certain bond is present between the interviewee and interviewer.<sup>50</sup> It is seen as a moment of deep connection in relationship during the experiment. The questions created for this phase are

presented to the young person not earlier than one hour into the interview. This stage allows to compare answers to universal questions posed to all interviewees, something which will be a central focus in upcoming articles related to this research.

**1**  
**The Gift**  
Take a moment to look search in yourself. If you could give a gift yo the world, what would that be?

**2**  
**The Change**  
Let us imagine that we can look into the future, into a future in which this gift has been received by everyone on the planet... How has your gift changed the world and your world?

**3**  
**The Action**  
Now let's go back to the present. What are you going to do from today onwards to bring about this change?

1. The first question helps to indicate longings and wishes alive within young people and what they would like to contribute to the world with. It is also a way to reflect in one's own capacities, abilities and skills, either those which have already been attained or are wished to develop: **THE GIFT**

2. The second points to how the realisation of this gift would change a projected future reality that does not present immediate challenges or limitations, and how one perceives that their contribution to the world would be valuable: **THE CHANGE**



3. Through the third question it is possible to observe the concrete actions that they understand to be a necessary result from their spiritual impulse –longing, wish, idea – and thus, what choices they may be likely to make as young adults who participate in the shaping of their own reality: **THE ACTION**

Why these three questions and why in such an order? To understand the impulses and motivations guiding actions in young people, it was decided to initiate a gesture in the questioning that begins inwardly and culminates outwardly. Observers want to access knowledge about what is carried as an inner impulse, a wish, and what possibilities of action they develop out of this.

To best illustrate the reasons behind the order in which the questions are posed, and for the sake of creating a reflective moment through this publication, let's ask the readers kindly to imagine that they were confronted first with the question *how do you imagine the world in the future?* The risk of asking this question, first, is that their answer may be abstract, not grounded in personal experience and therefore not leading to the expected result of commitment to present activities.

The qualitative difference in the order of questioning is that by asking first *what gift would you give to the world?* followed by *what would the world look like in the future if this gift was present in it?* is that the interviewer keeps the interviewer completely at the centre of the conversation and this is how the breakdown of the frame question into three smaller, yet very pertinent questions,

remains faithful to what was understood to be the original impulse in Steiner's question in 1924<sup>51</sup>: the future will be manifested according to what we will today. The future, thus, is already inscribed in the thoughts, and actions of today and thus, human beings are agents behind the shaping of reality.

Through this questioning process, the hope is that the person experiences a sense of being implicated, involved and connected to the actual realisation of this envisioned future.

.....

### Interview Stage 4:

#### *Feedback and Conclusion*

A space is given at the end of the interview to summarise the experience, to show gratitude to the interviewee for participating in the project and to indicate possible next steps. In the first interviews taking place before December 2017, participants were invited to attend the first research colloquium and become involved in the aesthetic research experiences – diaries collected and supervised by partner researcher Melanie Hoessel who analysed them in collaboration with Alanus University's Social Sciences Department.

In some interviews, the frame question was shared at the end, often in the form of a written card in English or German, so that the participant could take with them a token for continued reflection. In all cases, participants were invited to contact the interviewer at any time should they have further thoughts after the interview that they felt relevant and worth sharing.



## 1.5.2

### Observing the data: preparing the process of analysis

*“To apprehend the process, we have to change our way of being - opting for a way that is, simultaneously, inside and outside, participant and observer, analyst and artist. Every mode of being is beyond the realm of logic, beyond the scope of analysis, beyond the limits of intellect. Such capacity demands the development of thinking and also of new faculties”.*

Alan Kaplan<sup>52</sup>

In the framework of this research, those who become involved live through a participatory process. Young researchers get involved, actively engaging in the reception of the life story of the interviewee during long moments of dialogue. Then, a process is required to empty oneself from one's own experience, to observe the phenomenon that has arisen from the participation between individuals and their shared experience. From this distance, the analyst can exercise their thinking and apply it to the phenomenon of the encounter, in order to understand the processes that the young people involved are going through.

After the interview is finished, the participants are encountered once again but this time only through their spoken words, which have been transcribed and are contemplated as an act of will in which the individual is spiritually present. In this act

of will – the spoken word – analysts now seek to understand who the individuality is, who is at the centre of that source from which the formulated values and beliefs emerge and which inform their actions, their daily creative activity. Additionally, the focus is placed on the researchers themselves and how they are interpreting the discourse of the other now in written form. Here, the following questions may appear for the young researcher: why am I drawn to this aspect and not another in their story? Where do I feel connected or as if I resonate? Where can I see loopholes, that is to say, where am I not focusing my attention in? All of these questions make the findings of this project precious, as the reader can see where the young people both when being asked and when asking.

During the analysis, in detail observation about the words being spoken and the manner in which they are expressed takes place. In the analysis, one looks for what is not obvious in what is being said, in other words, the occult that can be revealed through tones of voice, silences, unwanted and unconscious detours and deviations, or repetitions. The conscious being is present when speaking in the interview, but also an unconscious element of the person in questioning process is discernible too. Faced with the challenge of the interview, which invites them to open-ended questions and to navigate the uncertainty of what to tell another, where nothing has been prepared beforehand, the participants

find themselves in a spontaneous and momentary creation before that other being that guides them through active listening. This is an optimum situation to look meticulously at the associations that take place in the young person, the situations in which one subject-matter leads to another almost accidentally.

This is integrated by the researcher who is analysing, as clues that reveal the spirit of the person who is describing their perception of reality. In this moment, the researcher enters a dialogue with the transcriptions, asking themselves different questions about the interviewee. These questions may reveal what meaning there is in the experiences being presented by the young people. These are often asked by the interviewee's themselves during the interviews, but even if they do not ask them, it is the task of the analyst to formulate them again during

the analytic process as if they were still in dialogue with the interviewee. When asking such questions, possible meanings in their discourse appear, which are interpreted and ordered to generate an image, like a puzzle, of the young person. This is a moment of tremendous creativity, where the researchers' mind is allowed to enquire freely, to wonder and to begin drawing some initial observations and theories that can later be deepened and tested.

What is shown in the following pages is the result of what has been the main objective during the analytical stage of this study until now: finding the universalities shared in the individual discourses of the interviewees. Researchers have sought to reveal those aspects that are unifying among the young people who have participated and to explore commonalities in this representative sample of the youth.

<sup>13</sup> In particular, semi-structured and in-depth interview techniques of data collection and grounded theory and hermeneutics for analysis. Cf. Russell Bernard, H. (2013) *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. London: Sage, pp. 525-527 and Saldana, J. (2009) *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. London: Sage.

<sup>14</sup> For reference see: Heusser, P., (2016) *Anthroposophy and Science. An Introduction*. Frankfurt am Main:

Peter Lang and Steiner, R., (1981) *Spiritual Research: Methods and Results*. New York: Steiner Books

<sup>15</sup> 20% of interviewees come from Anthroposophical backgrounds (attended Waldorf School, born to Anthroposophical families), 31% are new to Anthroposophy (found it in the last 10 years or less) and 49% do not know Anthroposophy. Percentages based on analysed interviews. All participants have or have had access to higher or further education, with 15% of participants

currently completing high school; 12% having attended or currently attending vocational training; and 73% have either studied, or are currently studying in University at bachelor, masters and postgraduate levels.

<sup>16</sup> Kämpf-Jansen, H., (2002) *Ästhetische Forschung. Wege durch Alltag, Kunst und Wissenschaft*. Köln: Salon Verlag

<sup>17</sup> It is expected that the observations resulting from the application of aesthetic

methods of research will inform next steps of research and upcoming publications. <sup>18</sup> Wirsching, E., (2008) "The Youth Section". In: J. Kühl, et al., *The School of Spiritual Science: An Orientation and Introduction*. Forest Row: Temple Lodge p.73-78

<sup>19</sup> Steiner, R. (2007) *Youth and the Etheric Heart. Rudolf Steiner Speaks to the Younger Generations. Addresses, Essays, Discussions and Reports 1920 – 1924*. Massachusetts: Steiner-Books Anthroposophic Press.



- <sup>20</sup> Ibid, pp. 101-119
- <sup>21</sup> “Wie stellst Du Dir vor, dass die Welt der Menschheit um 1935 sein soll, wenn dasjenige komme, was du in deiner Jugend ersehnt, darin Platz haben soll?” Steiner, R, (2006) Drei Ansprachen an die Jugend. Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, p.78.
- <sup>22</sup> Extract from interview with researcher. See Appendix.
- <sup>23</sup> Extract from interview with a project participant, Female, 22, New Zealand.
- <sup>24</sup> Lievegoed, B. (1997) Phases. The Spiritual Rhythms in Adult Life. London: Rudolf Steiner Press, pp. 52-53
- <sup>25</sup> International student conferences are aimed at people aged 15-18 years old, while international youth conferences, study groups and other activities tend to be taken up by young adults aged 18 – 35 on average.
- <sup>26</sup> Mitterauer, M. (1992) A History of Youth. Oxford: Blackwell pp. 6-22
- <sup>27</sup> Crottogini, R. (2004) La Tierra Como Escuela. Buenos Aires: Editorial Antroposófica, pp.129-133
- <sup>28</sup> For latest Millennial and Post-Millennial definitions see <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins/>
- <sup>29</sup> Serafino, J. (2018) New Guidelines Redefine Birth Years for Millennials, Gen-X and “Post-Millennials” Online Access: <http://mentalfloss.com/article/533632/new-guidelines-redefine-birth-years-millennials-gen-x-and-post-millennials>
- <sup>30</sup> The Pew Research Centre treats Millennials as a research category altogether and publishes reports regularly (see <http://www.pewresearch.org/topics/millennials/>). Popular newspapers such as The Guardian, has often paid close attention to the younger generations’ struggles (for example, see article “Tired, poor, huddled millennials of New York earn 20% less than prior generation” <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/apr/25/new-york-millennials-great-depression-economic-crisis>)
- <sup>31</sup> Sinek, S. (2016) Inside Quest Interview. Online Access: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hER0Qp6Q-JNU>
- <sup>32</sup> Lievegoed, B. (1979) Phases. The Spiritual Rhythms in Adult Life. 4th ed. London: Rudolf Steiner Press. p.1
- <sup>33</sup> Alexander, E. 2012, Proof of Heaven. New York: Simon & Schuster p.154
- <sup>34</sup> “Spirit is an intrinsic, animating force that gives energy and momentum to human life. It also propels us to look inward to create and re-create a link between “my life” and “all life”. Spiritual development, then, is a constant, active, and ongoing process to create and re-create harmony between the discoveries about the self and the “discoveries” about the nature of life-writ-large. The two journeys (inner and outer) constantly inform each other and are always brought back into balance.” Lerner, Richard M., et al. (2008) Positive Youth Development and Spirituality: From Theory to Research. West Conshohocken: Templeton Press. p. viii
- <sup>35</sup> See Sheldrake, P, (2007) A Brief History of Spirituality. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, p. xi
- <sup>36</sup> Flick, U.; Kardoff, E.; Steinke, I. (2012): Qualitative Forschung. Ein Handbuch, p. 22 Free transl.
- <sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 21. Free transl.
- <sup>38</sup> Dilthey, W. (1868c): Der Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften, Band VII, p. 199. Free transl.
- <sup>39</sup> Schütz, A (1971): Gesammelte Aufsätze. Bd. 1. – Das Problem der sozialen Wirklichkeit.
- <sup>40</sup> Flick, U.; Kardoff, E.; Steinke, I. (Hrsg.) (2012): Qualitative Forschung. Ein Handbuch, p. 182
- <sup>41</sup> Bude, H. (2000a): Qualitative Generationsforschung: In: Flick, U.; Kardoff, E.; Steinke, I. (Hrsg.) (2012): Qualitative Forschung. Ein Handbuch, S. 187-194. / Corsten, M. (2001): Biographie, Lebenslauf und das “Problem der Generation”
- <sup>42</sup> Flick, U.; Kardoff, E.; Steinke, I. (Hrsg.) (2012): Qualitative Forschung. Ein Handbuch, p. 110 Free transl.
- <sup>43</sup> Lamnek, Krell (2016), Qualitative Sozialforschung, S. 44
- <sup>44</sup> Flick, Uwe (2010). Gütekriterien qualitativer Forschung. In Günter Mey & Katja Mruck (Hrsg.) 2010, Handbuch Qualitative Forschung in der Psychologie (pp. 395–407). Wiesbaden: VS
- <sup>45</sup> Flick, U.; Kardoff, E.; Steinke, I. (Hrsg.) (2012): Qualitative Forschung. Ein Handbuch, p. 23. Free transl.
- <sup>46</sup> See research colloquium recorded materials: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpwwSIYwKxvu7RFt0gh-1Vlg>
- <sup>47</sup> Peirce, C.S. (1973) Lectures on Pragmatismus. Herausgegeben mit Anleitung und Anmerkungen von Elizabeth Walther. Hamburg, p. 253. Free transl.
- <sup>48</sup> Ibid., p.283
- <sup>49</sup> See “Chapter 2.2. Spontaneous Discourse, universal themes found across interviews: what is our reality made up of?” pp. 36- 49.
- <sup>50</sup> The following is an excerpt from an interviewer’s diary in which notes were kept during the data collection process: “At first I thought that the answers were really similar – most of them were concerned with knowledge and understanding, that’s what it seemed to me. Then, as I began to observe that this was not always the case (though it is clear that there are similarities across interviewees), I began to get a sense that what remained the same was the quality of the moment created when answering this question. Time stops a little, it’s the moment when I could say we reach the deepest part of the self during the interview and we are really together in this. I feel like I can completely feel where they are in that moment, it’s like reaching a common base”. Female, 29, Spain.
- <sup>51</sup> See Chapter 1.1. Finding a Question. pp.14-16
- <sup>52</sup> Kaplan, A. (2015) Artistas de lo Invisible. Buenos Aires: Antroposófica, p.27. Free transl.

# Part 2

# **(RE)Search**

The spiritual striving  
of youth: shaping our  
reality



## 2.1 Introduction to initial findings and observations

There are three key moments in the process of analysis: seeing, understanding and exposing conclusions. Out of the 75+ hours of recorded material collected, 90% of it is apt for analysis<sup>53</sup> and to this date (February 2019) 60% has been evaluated. The following findings are based on this 60%. They correspond to the moment of “seeing” and thus, they should be read as initial reflections of some of the key aspects one can find initially when listening to the young participants’ discourses.

For the purpose of reflecting and giving a space to young people’s voices, the following content has been designed in a way that the authors are guiding readers through what has been said by the interviewees, facilitating a journey through the key ideas and themes that have appeared in the study. A deeper process of analysis will follow in the upcoming months, with further papers and articles on the specific topics that are below described.

The next section is largely made up of quotes taken from the interviews. All of the interviewees agreed to being quoted anonymously during the interviews. Most extracts have been included in verbatim form, but in some cases they have been edited for length reasons, or purely for the sake of clarity and facilitating the reading. Interviews took place in English, German and Spanish. Those in Spanish and German

have been translated into English. Most of the interviews were in English but they were carried out with non-native speakers and thus, there may also be grammatical errors in those quotes that came directly from interviews held in this language. We hope that the reader can see past possible grammatical impediments to find meaning and understanding in the young people’s words.

### What we have

**75+**

hours of recorded material

**10%**

test interviews

**90%**

apt for analysis

**60%**

evaluated of what is apt for analysis



## 2.2 Universal themes found across interviews: what is reality made up of?

During the early process of evaluation, the team searched for identical aspects in the different discourses, which allowed to

identify commonalities in the pluralities of the interviewees. Certain themes we noted to be present in most of the interviewees' responses to an open invitation to describe their life-journeys until the present moment. These were classified into categories, each containing branches or subcategories.

### What do we talk about when we are asked to describe our life's journey?

#### SPONTANEOUS DISCOURSE

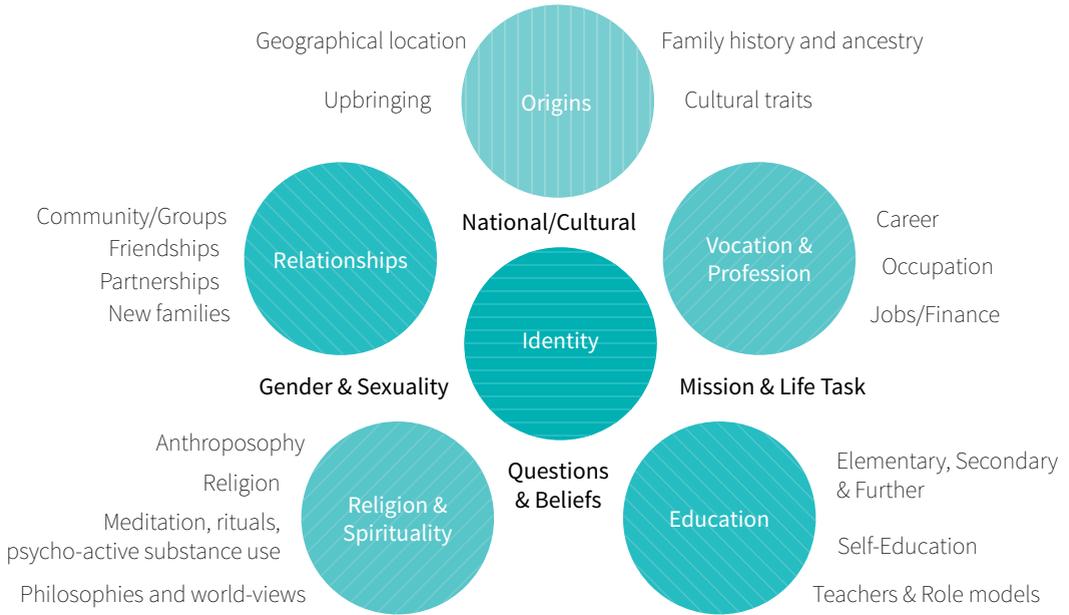
*"The first question is not really a question, it's an invitation to you to take us through your journey so far..."*

When respondents are asked to talk about their biography, in the majority of interviews certain themes appear regardless of cultural background, gender or age. These come as a response to an invitation to describe their life-journey openly to their interviewer without being explicitly asked about certain aspects.



All the above elements dance around each other; they are strung one to another in different forms. For example, one description of our origins may give way to early experiences of education, which in turns makes us describe early social moments, or professional and vocational choices that in

turn lead to new relationships that connect with ideas around meaning, spirituality or new learnings. At the centre of it all is each individual identity, which is in construction, development and changing; always becoming more itself, always shaping and defining itself more clearly.



Identity is noted to take shape most concretely in the interplay between polarities. That is to say, young people identify the key moments contributing to the building of their identity mostly to happen in situations for example of success and failure, joy and pain, which are experienced in relation to social and historical happenings in their lifetime, close relationships, educational experiences, or career development.

“I think I had a happy early childhood but a very difficult adolescence. I went through a

lot of things and many painful things. Yes, I certainly experienced it like this. Trying to create an identity in a difficult society, sexist society, in which you have to be hard, take drugs, sexuality, all of this. A world with a lot of movement that constitutes you, how you deal with that constitutes your first steps into adulthood and for me that was disturbing.”  
Male, 30, Mixed Nationality.

The first category appearing has been named ORIGINS and is permeated by the question “*where do I come from?*”

## CATEGORY 1: ORIGINS

### *Where do I come from?*

Geographical location; socio-cultural context; family and ancestral history

Interviewees spend a considerable amount of time describing how they relate to the geographical location where they are born and grow up in; their environment, cultural traits

and their family history. In all the following extracts, it is possible to discern how meaningful aspects such as geographical location, culture or family are to interviewees:



**Geography, family, location and their impact:**

“I'm from Peru, I was born in Lima 33 years ago, a little bit more. If we talk about vital coordinates I think we would have to talk about many displacements because my father is from the south, my mother is from the north of Peru, I was born in the centre, but since I was very young I was always on the move because of my father's work. Always a road, always eating in the moor, in the desert, always with my parents. I think that that has conditioned a lot the way in which I live in the world today.” **Male, 33, Peru.**

**Geography vs. culture and their impact:**

“I was born in England and I guess that was really important because every time I go back to England now, I suddenly feel like I'm at home. But not [with] the people. If I met an English person in Berlin, whatever... But if I meet a New Zealand person I'm like “oh my God! you are my people!” So the culture in New Zealand is way more important to me, but the landmass of England, I don't get that when I go back to New Zealand...” **Female, 22, Mixed Nationality.**

**Family & Culture clashing and their impact:**

“I think that was a very strange time for everyone involved. My mom was learning English; she was trying to fit into the UK. I was learning English; I was trying to fit into the UK. And I think for a lot of people I would have been the first Asian kid they had seen. And my mom was the first Asian woman they had seen.” **Male, 31, Mixed Nationality.**

**Relationship to origin**

“I always had something inside me that told me that the place in which I was born wasn't my place, you know?” **Female, 33, Brazil.**

**A deep interest in family history and even ancestry can be observed constantly across interviews. In those discourses where family is not mentioned in great detail, the socio-cultural surrounding often takes its place. The meaningfulness of the origin as experienced in the answers is evident from the careful descriptions given and also, from the strong identification visible in the discourses, which often happens in connection and through differentiation from others:**

**“I always had something inside me that told me that the place in which I was born wasn't my place, you know?”**

“I think that we have some interesting character. Every person in Russia is like a small philosopher. It doesn't matter if you are a small child or an old grandfather, every one of us. We have a tradition, every evening in your family, with your friends, you go home, you drink a lot of tea and talk about everything. But it's not like how other people talk, it's always a little bit like a philosopher, really deep, with a serious mood. What happened in economy, what happened in medicine, education, all the topics; and it's really, really, such serious mood! If you had the opportunity to be a bird and see through the windows of different families in Russia, I think it would be funny because maybe we are a bit too serious. *I recognise this only here when I meet other people from different countries* that maybe we are too serious.” **[Emphasis added] Female, 25, Russia.**



Additionally, it is observable that the question of national, cultural and ancestral identity takes a special dimension in those of mixed nationalities and/or ethnical backgrounds. Young people with mixed nationalities directly express this in either a question form, or a reflective discourse that shows the extent to which the subject matter occupies their mind:

“My father was born in Brazil but actually he is a very German soul, his ancestors being German as well, and somehow *that was also very important for my youth, the contrast between the Brazilian and the German* which are very, very different cultures. And sometimes it clashes as well, also in the way my parents worked on music and how they see life.” Male, 27, Germany/Brazil.

“I also have a kind of ethnic question because I know I was talking Turkish the first years and after learning German I lost my Turkish language. Until last year when I went to a Turkish course and re-learned it, and went for 6 weeks to Istanbul just to meet my family there. And it was interesting how foreign they were and how familiar they were at the same time. I wasn’t present in this family in Turkey, but I kind of was, so they never forgot me. And that’s something really beautiful to experience, that I’m always, or that somebody is always in the mind of somebody.” [Emphasis added] Female, 21, Germany/Turkey.

“Another thing that I’m dealing with now is *the question of nationalities and how they in-*

*fluence* [questions of] “who am I and who are you? I am Peruvian, I am Swiss, now I’m exploring a little the Irish question; all these notions. And I’m looking for who I am, I don’t have a clue, I know how ridiculous it sounds because everybody says this (...)” [Emphasis added] Male, 30, Peru/Switzerland.

The openness and detail with which this theme is constantly spoken about, and the way in which the interviewees indicate the impact that it has had on their identity – whilst growing up but also in the present time – unveils the importance of our origins when it comes to understanding young people’s present reality. It is clearly an area of “research” and “self-investigation” for them, an aspect of themselves worth looking at and speaking about, in order to understand further their identities.

An urge to transcend original patterns (i.e. those found in upbringing, culture, familial relationships) can be detected in some of the subjects’ search for generating new ideas and impulses that are inspired by the understanding of one’s own background. In the following testimony one can see a young woman truly interested in her roots and ancestry and who actively questions where she comes from:

“Bolivia has a very, very rich culture, also in terms of spirituality, which has got a little lost with the years but which interests me a lot, regaining this ancestral aspect. Because to me it doesn’t seem aleatory that I was born



in Bolivia, I feel I have very strong roots there. And I also have Colombian roots, which is another culture, also very rich, also very interesting..." Female, 18, Bolivia.

The same young woman, later in the interview, speaks of an experience of emancipation and freedom in terms of cultural and national identity, stating that she is not attached to a specific location or place of origin. It seemed important to highlight that in these interviews some young people describe an openness and adherence to a global-belonging, to multi-culturalism, or to "world citizenship" status, this does not spring from a denial of one's own prece-  
dence, but actually as a result of becoming truly interested in one's origins, as seen above, and transcending these to position one's origins in the wider context that it belongs to.

"I don't define myself as if I was from a specific part of the world because I feel from the whole world. And this is something that I still haven't come to understand, perhaps because of the innocence of my age, but I haven't come to understand why the world thinks that we are all so different when we are all part of the same." Female, 18, Bolivia.

Personal origins are in most interviews ex-

plored and described with lightness, acceptance and a sense of willingness for integration, even in those cases where challenging origins are manifested- where traumatic, painful, fearful or violent situations have been experienced in early life, particularly. Interviewees relating such experiences speak about them sensibly, with seriousness, dignity and care. Again, the discourse appears to be permeated by an

**"I don't define myself as if I was from a specific part of the world because I feel from the whole world. And this is something that I still haven't come to understand, perhaps because of the innocence of my age, but I haven't come to understand why the world thinks that we are all so different when we are all part of the same."**

impulse to transcend the given, to understand it and make it one's own for free acts that bring something new in present and future circumstances:

"There are lots of families that don't have this kind of violence in it, right? But there are families like mine that have it and [it] continues, which is why at a similar age as my sister I stopped seeing my father. I haven't seen him since because I knew that if

I carried on [one] repeat[s] the structure, because it's the only thing you know how to. You have to unlearn it." Non-binary, 29, UK.

These young people perceive their roots can be springboards for development, or pose challenges to be overcome in order to generate something new. Either way, this is an area to busy oneself with and pay close attention to. *Where do I come from?* seems to be a necessary question for most participants in this study.



## CATEGORY 2: EDUCATION

### How do we learn?

Elementary, secondary and further education; self-education; teachers and role models

From descriptions of elementary and further education, to present choices about self-education, this particular theme of discussion is experienced diversely. Observations range from critical, to nostalgic, to dismissive, depending on the interviewee. Sometimes, descriptions of educational experiences happen in order to make a statement about something else, i.e. relationships or own identity, and in some interviews it is not considered to be a theme, though it of course springs up in most descriptions of the biographical journey. It is as if education was a realm through which the young person can gain experiences, ask questions and make discoveries that serve them to build identity in other spheres of life.

#### Further Education / University

##### Discovery: Asking questions about myself

“That period of time was very confusing for me because up until university I never really thought about what is my task in this life and what I was going to do. I just had a very vague feeling that the life that I had was not really my life, it was a social agreement or social requirements (...) and I've been well behaved in that I follow all of that (...) University was a bit difficult because I was not interested in studying anymore, so I quit classes, not doing really productive work myself, basically wasting time. And so, graduating and finding a job was a really lost period for me. But interestingly, doing that lost period, I began

to have this question that I've consequently asked myself. So what is my task, what am I doing, what should I do? Not a specific job, but deeper than that.” [Emphasis added] Female, 28, China.

#### Further Education / University.

##### Discovery: Finding one's vocational direction

“And after 18, I go to Moscow to study law because I had a dream to be a lawyer, to help people. But when I started my education I understood that it's not what I want because it's only paper and documents and I don't see really “people”. I want to help by hand, I want to feel, I want to touch people by heart to understand what happened in their life.” [Emphasis added] Female, Russia, 25.

#### Elementary / High School

##### Discovery: Importance of relationships, learning can happen outside institutions

“I'm very irresponsible with education, with that education. Because there was always a part in me that felt that that wasn't the education that I needed. Despite going to a school that has a strong artistic side, it was still very conventional in everything else. And it was as if every day I was going there to forget the beautiful things I could do and instead I had to go into a math book. *But I also enjoyed it a lot for all the relationships that one could make there.* I think that education can change and that it can be really wonderful. But I always wanted to finish it quickly. Education seems



to me very beautiful, but *I also think that life itself is education. Sometimes life teaches you much more than everything you learnt at school.* (...) I am not sure if I would send my children to school.” [Emphasis added] Female 18, Bolivia.

We can see two types of discourse in the field of education, as it is possible to discern in the quote above. The first refers to one’s own experiences of school. The second, to one’s view of education. “Education” as an area of life, as something young people have experienced and continue to observe, not necessarily directly anymore – especially in the case of older participants – but which is still a concern. In most cases, the second type of discourse, the one describing present views of education, tend to point out how this is an area that falls short on expectations, being heavily criticised by most interviewees:

“Our educational system right now is *burning down to the rubble just because it’s not about education*, it’s making sure that kids get through with the right numbers and then, it doesn’t matter how they did it, as long as they are going and progressing; well, “progressing”. And so it was really nice to start learning about early childhood development within Waldorf education because I was like “this is amazing!” because it is not about where you *should* be at, or where everyone else is at and you are not. It’s all about the individual development!” [Emphasis added] Female, 26, US.

“We body shame each other, we shame each other’s emotions, reactions, we police each other, and it starts happening when we are really small at school, this weird structure that we’ve built. There’s apparently this school where you have to be quiet and sit down and you have to put your hand up and say please and thank you. And *everyone must behave in the same way*. Shame comes from trying to make everybody the same, when actually we are not the same, we are all different. It is a bit like fascism, is a tool of fascism. We police each other, we police ourselves, we turn each other over, we turn each other in. That’s what it is to me.” Non-binary, 29, UK.

**“Shame comes from trying to make everybody the same, when actually we are not the same, we are all different.”**

It is possible to observe that extraordinary descriptions connected to education appear when they are linked to particular teachers who have made a special impact in the person who reminisces about their school years. In the case below, we can observe that the participant does not identify the positive aspect of her educational experience to be its curriculum or methodology; instead, it is the teacher that she had and the quality of the relationship built between them based on “being seen or understood”, that makes the experience important for her:

“I’m really glad that I went to the Steiner school and again I was really lucky with my teacher. Both my sisters either they didn’t have a good teacher at all or they didn’t consistently have good teachers (...) He was called Mario and he was just amazing. (...) *So many of the things he told me became such*



*strong moral things.* But also much later in life when I was over here, a lot of times he was in my dreams, we just sat down and had a really, really big talk and then I woke up and felt way better. So that was really important for me, to have him as a teacher. *I feel like he was the first person outside my family who actually got me.* And got me as a person. He was like, my idol. And a really big reason of why I want to be a teacher as well(...) he is very influential in that area.” [Emphasis added] Female, 22, NZ.

Another exceptional description of education worth highlighting here very briefly, comes from those in this sample who come from cultural backgrounds where the family’s expectations over their professional future is experienced as pressure when making decisions. This was possible to discern mainly in the discourse of interviewees coming from some Asian countries<sup>54</sup>, who were quite descriptive of the difference between *what they wished* to study and learn, and *what was expected* of them by family members. This tension however, is not necessarily exclusive to those coming from Asian countries, as it was also expressed by other young people from other parts of the world in a different form. This could be also a question to deepen in further stages of research.

Regardless of the educational system that interviewees have taken part in, it is possible to observe how idiosyncratically educational environments impact each individual. The team had the opportunity to compare testimonies of two young people (Female and Male, both 30 years old and European) who shared an almost identical educational background (both attended first Waldorf and

then non-Waldorf schools changing from one system to the other roughly at the same time in their biographies). Despite the similarities in their education, each interviewee has very contrasting experiences. The young woman states that she “loved [her] school” and that “her schooling for [her] was something really special”<sup>55</sup>. By contrast, the man refers to his school as a place where he “had struggles” due to a lack of freedom and lack of attention to his questions by the educators. As they both move on to the next stages of education, which take place in mainstream schools, the evaluation of their educational experiences continues in the same direction, with the woman showing positivity and enjoyment of the experience and the man struggling to match his expectations of education with the reality he encounters.

Another striking similarity between these two individuals is how both remember as significant their awakening to an interest for understanding the fundamental aspects underlying their education whilst attending high school. It is possible to begin discerning the extent to which young people may take an interest in their education, wanting to understand how they learn about themselves and the world and the sources that inform their learning environments.

What makes the two individuals’ experience differ again, is the response they find from educators about shedding light on the subject matter of interest to them. In the first case when the young woman requests information from teachers at her school, her questions are taken into consideration,



which then leads to a change in lesson plan by teachers. The result is that the subject matter that has shaped out of an initiative from a student, becomes a source of learning for her and the rest of peers in her class, according to her recollections. In the second case, the young man's question – identical to the young woman's – is not met by the adults surrounding him. Not only is the question disregarded, but also accompanied by a sense of dogmatism which is then criticised by the young man.

A final question arises from this particular contrast of experiences, which share so many similarities and yet give rise to almost complete different evaluations of education: could it be that the extent to which a young person's questions are listened to by the adults in responsibility, and the extent to which these are taken into account to base lessons and educational activities upon, directly contribute to positive experiences and memories of education?

## CATEGORY 3: PROFESSION/VOCATION

### *What do I do?*

Career, occupation, life mission, jobs and economic situation

"If I had, for any reasons, to dedicate myself to an activity with which I didn't identify with, I wouldn't be able to continue living happily. I have the fortune that I have been able to choose. But this factor of identifying oneself with what one does, this comes first. If I didn't have this, my life would be a good-for-nothing." Male, 33, Peru.

Occupation, career, mission, hobbies, professional projection. These all make the theme of profession and vocation. Here, the central questions become *"what do I want to do in life?"*, *"what is my mission?"* and *"where am I investing my time in?"*. This is an area of challenge by excellence, where integrating becomes most difficult: profession does not always match their vocation and where financial stability is not always a direct result from one's job situation. Young expectations

**and longings are often shattered in this area, requiring the awakening of an inner strength if the young person wants to continue pursuing tasks and activities that truly interests them within the field of professional activity:**

"And my girlfriend is (...) working at [brand apparel omitted]. She doesn't love her job. It's [brand apparel omitted] at Oxford Street, so it is very busy. She gets home, she's very tired. And I'm getting really depressed and I'm like waking up really late, and I'm living on potatoes, one baked potato a day kind of thing with a bit of butter. I had all of these ambitions, I had all these expectations, I guess. I don't know if they were expectations, but just dreams. I would daydream that I would be doing better, that I would write things, that I would make music, that I would put on plays and that if I do something that's



good, it makes sense that someone would come along, see it and be like “this is good, I would give you money!” And that’s how I thought that these things worked.”  
Male, 32, MN.

“I think what is new is that now people are saying, “well, I don’t want to go to a job that is rubbish and I’m going to hate for my whole life”. And yes, maybe that means that I can’t have a family at 25

**“If I had, for any reasons, to dedicate myself to an activity with which I didn’t identify with, I wouldn’t be able to continue living happily. I have the fortune that I have been able to choose. But this factor of identifying oneself with what one does, this comes first. If I didn’t have this, my life would be a good-for-nothing.”**

and I will have less money and everything is going to be more difficult but I don’t want to go and do this job, I want to be happy. Everyone criticises the millennials because they are the generation that wants to be happy. Well, yes, go us! I think it’s awesome that we want that”. Female, 22, New Zealand.

The discourses in this area, permeated by a certain sense of challenge and struggle in most cases, show three aspects to highlight. First of all, participants showed an attitude of “**notolerance**” for a professional setting where there is a **lack of ethics**, or where **meaningful relationships cannot be formed**; where **learning and self-development are not fostered** or where their **impact is not valued**. Of course, some are more privileged than others in their choice, with many of them often having no choice about the environment in which they work. Although we did not observe many young people who abandoned their jobs when such professional situations occurred, we observed a sense of disengagement and willingness to sacrifice other elements of life (see quote on the right) when they find themselves in institutions and work places where those challenges are present and threaten one’s own sense of happiness:

**“Everyone criticises the millennials because they are the generation that wants to be happy. Well, yes, go us! I think it’s awesome that we want that.”**

**Lack of ethics:**  
“I made certain agreements about how to act in an organisation, and those agreements were no longer in line with what I wanted. It’s like this, I had to tell people lies so that they would do things that I did not agree with. Then I was fired from place, but why? Because I was saying things to my bosses that they did not want to hear. But somebody needed to talk about those things, and if that person had to be me, so be it. Anyway, I was fired and it was the best thing that happened to me because then I took that year to travel and do what I really had already thought about five years ago but I had had no courage to do.”  
[Emphasis added] Female, 33, Brazil.



Meaningful relationships, learning and development:

“I used to always feel like I was kind of walking on egg shells a little bit and I feel like the work environment should not be like that, it should be very free flowing and I should be able to ask any questions, because I’m an intern and that’s the whole point. So yes, that’s why I was like, “I go in, I do my work, I already know, everyone seems nice”. But I wasn’t making these heart to heart connections with people. And I just don’t want to waste my energy doing that.” [Emphasis added] Female, 26, US.

The second aspect to highlight is the importance that young people place in combining one’s own interests and vocations, which are often inter-disciplinary, in the area of professional life. Their longings are often placed in being able to sustain themselves financially through a job position that is not tied to only one particular field, but to many:

“I see myself giving something to humanity, of course I do, from whichever place I can. It could be through art, or education or spirituality, if it was through all of them at once that would be incredible. (...) I see myself focusing in all those things.”

[Emphasis added] Female, 18, Bolivia.

“The problem is that I don’t specifically know what I want to do, because that’s always been the case. It’s not like I know that I want to be a doctor, or an accountant or a dentist, so it’s not like, “oh, these are the steps you follow to do that” or, “hey, go shadow a dentist see if that’s what you like”. It’s always been like,

“I enjoy this, I want this in a work place”, and then somehow putting all of that together.”

Female, 26, US

“...Other things of a more personal nature arose, which is photography, literature and freelance journalism like I do now, which is perhaps more adequate for people who work better alone, like in my case. *From a very young age I had many interests and for me the challenge was always in seeing how to interconnect them*, and the fig tree was a good symbol of that interconnection because, to start with, it is linked to my personal story, because the fig trees belong to my great grandparents. (...) And that is the other dimension that led me to become interested in the fig tree because *working the earth I also felt that I could maintain activities in other branches that I have affinity with.*”

[Emphasis added] Male, 33, Peru.

A third observation is that **when one’s vocation has been identified and understood, profession becomes secondary**. That is to say, when young people have found that which motivates them to become active in the world – often an impulse of solidarity, helping or learning – the way in which they do so can vary. An example of this can be seen in the following participant, who in his interview described his vocation to be that of being helpful and interested in others (learning about himself through encounters with other human beings he helps), and could see himself following such vocation through different professional fields: as a nurse intern, or as a trained musician equally:



“The strongest experience was helping people, just helping, doing beautiful touching, giving them attention, going for a walk with them, give your all to them, *just give*. And it was the heart of the core of that thing. And I've seen the nurses, those who are

nursing there, there you're doing this. And I had the time and the space for these encounters. And, you know *this is something you can do in any kind of activity*. You can do it with music, so I'm trying to keep to that.”  
[Emphasis added] Male, 27, Germany.

## CATEGORY 4: SPIRITUALITY

### *What do I believe in?*

Religion, spiritual practices, philosophies and world-views

The diversity of themes, ideas and comments that appeared during the interviews and can be contained within the category of spirituality is immense. Young people spoke of religious views, past and present experiences of transcendence, and spiritual practices that they engage with or that are currently being explored, such as Anthroposophy. All these aspects are explored once again with openness and genuine interest, yet it is possible to perceive different moods depending on the aspect that the interviewees speak about.

When expressing views on religious practices, the great majority of interviewees who mention them were critical of these, quickly stating that they did not subscribe to any particular religion. The perception of religion according to these young people is often linked to ideas of oppression, where one goes seeking answers to questions but instead often finds a source of morality imposed by an institution. Thus, one could safely state that for the sample of this study, religion is not perceived to be of key importance in their lives, though an interest in it is shown. Even when they have grown

up in very religious cultures – individuals coming from Afghanistan, Philippines and Italy in particular describe the importance that religion plays in the culture of their origins -, specific religious practices are not taken up or considered to be vital for them. Nevertheless, young people speak often of a relationship to God, or a Divinity as something that has meaning for them and additionally, they show interest in religious figures such as Jesus Christ, Buddha and Krishna, their deeds and how they are perceived by present culture:

“I never believed in the church, but also, until four or five years ago I didn't believe in anything, not even Christ. But lately, reading and studying by myself, I actually started to believe in the figure of the Christ and Buddha, in this kind of Messiah person. I always thought, even when I was younger, that there was real knowledge out there that was not accessible to normal people but that they always wanted to have.” Male, 33, Italy.

Many describe early childhood memories where they recognise an interest for religious matters or questions of an esoteric nature in



their younger selves. This tends to dissipate as adolescence sets in, when questions begin to centre around morality, what is good and bad, often causing disappointment with previously accepted religious beliefs. In a few exceptions, this leads to an impulse to connect with religion out of one's own activity, as seen in the following case. In this man's discourse it is possible to distinguish the main impulses for his religious activity being perhaps out of a rebellion against authority (father figure) and a search for ultimate meaning out of one's own comprehension in early adolescence (the reason for everything is God). This later informs the individual's biography, who at the time of the interview appears to be constantly searching for ultimate reasons in the activities that he engages in.

"Religion was a big topic for me because my father did not want me to get baptised, so one day I discovered that I was not baptised and decided to do it myself. I had to do a three year course in a church, so I learnt a lot about religion and I find that this was good, because afterwards I knew more about Christian religion than my brother who had been baptised, because he was a small child so he did not know anything about it. So for me there was more of a connection with Christianity. And for me it was clear that yes, there is a God. There is a reason, a first reason for everything that we see in the world. There should be an origin for everything. And in school I was asking constantly "what is the reason for this? And for that?" and I thought that after doing this for a long time, there must be a first reason and that is God." [Emphasis added] Male, 30, France.

A search for an understanding of ultimate reasons, meaning and knowledge is perhaps the bridge from Religion to spiritual practices for this young people. Interviewees described the reasons for engaging in spiritual activities such as meditations, rituals and even substance use to be the search for a deeper knowledge of oneself:

"Recently I started a lot of crazy things like meditating and trying to take control of what I am thinking, of this storm of thoughts that is there and which prevents me from really being [present]. Then I started fasting now and it's just in order to understand myself." [Emphasis added] Male, 27, Mixed

The search that leads the young person to spirituality is not limited to one's striving for self-knowledge, as it might also lead them to rekindle an interest in other areas of experience. In the discourse of some interviews, spiritual practices and in particular Anthroposophy are the catalysts for a newly-awoken interest in other disciplines for the young person striving for meaning and knowledge:

"...I found Anthroposophy and I guess that one of the things that was interesting for me is that once I meet Anthroposophy I re-encountered philosophy too, but an absolute reencounter and not partial. So whereas before I was interested in moral or spiritual or metaphysical questions now I was interested in everything. I didn't just want to study philosophy, I wanted to study physics, biology, mathematics, politics, history, economy. Everything, everything was interesting, everything shone where



before was opaque. Suddenly everything was shining and everything was interesting in itself and as a part of the all.” **Male, 30, Mixed Nationality.**

Some interviewees describe openly their relationship to drugs, in particular psychedelic substances, as either a “door opening” to questions of spirituality and consciousness, or as a result of their searching of answers to questions already present in them. Substance use is hardly ever mentioned as a recreational activity, rather within the context of experiences which served a purpose and had meaning in the lives, particularly for awakening questions of this nature.

The concept of the divine or God appeared also amongst young people with no connection to particular spiritual paths and who were in their discourse very critical of religion in culture. These young people who could be at first perceived as not being interested in spirituality directly, bring up in their discourse ideas about God to illustrate moments of deep reflection about themselves, the nature of life, humanity and relationships. The following quote is from someone who spoke often of being in pain, hurt, or in need of healing. This was their response in answer to the question “what heals you?” during the recapitulation stage of the interview:

“I don’t know what heals me. The fact that I’m alive, that I’m committed to surviving or

something. I don’t think there’s anything that heals you specifically. For me, I really need the edge, trees, the sea.... *If you are looking for a miracle or you are looking for God or whatever, you don’t need to look very far, it’s everywhere.* To look at the things living and being, moving and not really being understood and managing to survive again and again and again. However difficult life manages to survive. That’s very helpful to me because I’m like, “you can give yourself some credit because you are still here” and then, “what are you going to do with it?”” [Emphasis added] **Non-binary, 29, UK**

**“... If you are looking for a miracle or you are looking for God or whatever, you don't need to look very far, it's everywhere.”**

The above shows how a reflective experience of this sort linked to an experience of transcending self, can lead to a sense of responsibility and authorship with respect to one’s life. This is seen in their question, “*what are you going to do with it?*”. This connects directly to another experience contemplated within the theme of Spirituality, which is the awakening to questions about oneself and the world that are seeking for answers beyond what is sense-perceptible for the young person. These are questions that need to be answered if one wants to be truly autonomous and free in their action, and include the question “who am I and what does it mean to be human”:

“I had an experience that I called *awakening*. My consciousness changed. I felt that I was awake in the world. It was the moment when maybe for the first time I see people, walls, cars, streets not as if they were like pictures,



it was so full of life! And I had such a lot of questions in this moment like, *who am I? what does it mean to be human? why does this happen to me?* I had a simple, normal life, with simple normal dreams of having a good career, car, husband, I don't know, just to live my life. And something happened with me. I was awake and I had a lot of questions without answers and I started to look for my spiritual way, because I felt alone. I was really nervous because I didn't understand what happened to me, why I have these questions and why people around me don't ask these questions. How is that possible?" [Emphasis added] Female, 25, Russia

The same person later in the interview describes that without answers to these questions, she cannot fully make free choices in her life, thus, making the search for these answers a priority. A spiritual experience of this sort impacts the young person's shaping of reality, who begins choosing a career path, establishing certain relationships with others and making choices of self-education, based on

**"I was awake and I had a lot of questions without answers and I started to look for my spiritual way, because I felt alone. [...] Why I have these questions and why people around me don't ask these questions. How is that possible?"**

**"Some spiritual experience can be like my whole being saying yes to something, a feeling that something is good and going in the right direction. It's like a puzzle starts coming together, things start to make sense and it's like "oh yes! nothing is completely random! These mysteries that are spoken about are real."**

how these experiences can contribute to the finding of answers. Other interviewees also described spirituality as something they "could not live without" and defined it as "the search for the essential" (Male, 21, Brazil), which in turn influences intentions and actions<sup>56</sup>. Another way in which a spiritual experience is described is as one where a sense of meaning is attained. Here, young people are referring to spirituality as a moment when they can fully experience coherence between elements of reality that at first seemed to be disconnected. This experience is described by a

woman who, continuously during her interview identifies and reflects upon how her conscious engagement in Anthroposophy had played a key part in making life decisions – professional and educational choices as well as moving from location to location and forming relationships. The continuous draw to Anthroposophy and spirituality during her interview, inevitably led to the question "how do you define a spiritual experience":



“Some spiritual experience can be like my whole being saying yes to something, a feeling that something is good and going in the right direction. And it can also be to do with mysteries being revealed, which can come slowly and sometimes in unexpected moments. Sometimes it can be something you’ve heard about, something you’ve read about, something in a lecture, something to do with your biography. And things have started to come together. It can also be to do with numbers and things like that. It’s like a puzzle starts coming together, things start to make sense and it’s like “oh yes! nothing is completely random! These mysteries that are spoken about are real.” [Emphasis added] Female, 30, UK.

Those young people, as the one above, who are actively connected to Anthroposophy were very eager to describe their relationship to it and gave multiple statements about this realm of spirituality. They tend to describe their experience in encountering Anthroposophy in particular with words denoting relief, as if after a long while of searching for meaning, knowledge and coherence, they finally find it in Anthroposophy.

“...these people say to you: if you want to know the different bodies of the human being, we tell you, but about Christ? No. It’s not

true, forget it. You go to Orthodox Christian where they tell you about Christ, but Buddha? Forget it, please. And inside my heart I felt that it’s all true. I needed to find something that could help me solve this problem.

**“I tell you about this because it's the most important thing in my life, it's like a red thread. In this path I met a lot of different knowledge and when I found Anthroposophy it was like "yes, I found my home". Now I can understand who is Christ, who is Buddha, who is Krishna. And I felt in my soul "it's really true! Thank you!"”**

How can I get a connection with different parts of the truth? An all-common worldview. And then I met a person who helped me meet Anthroposophy as my way. I tell you about this because it’s the most important thing in my life, it’s like a red thread. In this path I met a lot of different knowledge and when I found *Anthroposophy* it was like “yes, I found my home”. Now I can understand who is Christ, who is Buddha, who is Krishna. And I felt in my soul “it’s really true! Thank you!” [Emphasis added] Female, 26, Russia

In future publications, it will be possible to continue exploring the role that Anthroposophy plays in the shaping of young people’s decisions and current activities by undertaking a deeper study of those connected to this spiritual path and their experiences in it. The fact that young people so quick and readily spoke about their questions in search of meaning, beliefs, spiritual practices and transcending-self matters, means that the Youth Section at the Goetheanum is now inspired to deepen enquiry in this area as a possible key-factor impacting young people’s actions today.



## CATEGORY 5: RELATIONSHIPS

### Who am I with?

Subcategory: communities, groups, relationships, partnerships

“So, a bit of reflection for myself: I think I’m talking about family, I’m talking about academic achievements, I’m talking about art, I’m talking about passions in my life. *I haven’t really gone into relationships, and I think that actually relationships are the biggest things. That’s actually how I might hold my life to myself.*” [Emphasis added]

Male, 32, Mixed

This was possibly the most talked about subject during the interviews, or at least one of the most in-depth explored themes. In the words of some of the interviewees, one can really sense the emphasis with which these young people treat relationships as one of the most important things in their lives, as if the meaningfulness of relating to one another was a natural conclusion to arrive to. It is something perhaps worth considering to be an important aspect of these current younger generations, as they are often perceived as unable to socialise in a healthy manner due to the moment in time they belong in and the surge of digital technology and social media in their lifetimes. However, from the interviews, it is clear that these young people are conscious that some of the most profound and meaningful experiences of their lives happen in connection

with others. Furthermore, that this is something wished for in the future, that this is a way in which to continue striving.

“So for me, my experience of the world is people who I get to meet.” Non-binary, 29, UK

**“It’s all about the connections and relationships that you are building with people.”**

“I have come to find out that that’s all life is! Like, who the heck cares about what you are doing, where you are living or whatever. *It’s all about the connections and relationships that you are building with people.*” [Emphasis added] Female, 26, US

“So, I summarise this for you so you don’t have to do it yourself: *it’s the people in my life who have been the most important.* I think for some people are the events, or some people are the accidents; some people is terrible events and some people it’s moving, but for me it was the people.

**“I am only in as much as I am with another. If I am not with the other, I don’t know who I am.”**

Because if I go through [my life] when you delete one person from my history, it could have changed the way I am here.” [Emphasis added] Female, 22

“I am my social relationships, the people with whom I am. That is to say that *I am only in as much as I am with another. If I am not with the other, I don’t know who I am.* I am an abstraction or a sum of qualities that could be different, maybe I would be



that.” [Emphasis added] Male, 30, MN

For the sample in the study, one of the most valuable attributes of experiencing relationships with others is that through them it is possible to apprehend themselves and this leads to perhaps the most fundamental of relationships expressed by participants: the one they have with themselves.

“I love to be around people and being that happy girl which always interacts with different people and is always communicative. But I also love to be alone, and that’s something I’ve learnt, to be in a conversation with myself and not being afraid of being lonely. So the difference between being left or being alone. That’s something I experienced the last year really intensively, and it was really good for myself so I felt, when I am with myself I’m not alone. I’m with myself and that’s some-thing which is fulfilling me.” [Emphasis added] Female, 21, Germany

Some participants described an awareness that the stronger the connection with oneself is, and that the quality of one’s connection to themselves, heavily influences the way in which later they connect with others. Thus, a healthy relationship to oneself can be seen as a key priority for these young people who strongly value relating to others in a meaningful way:

“If I trust myself and I’m listening to my own body and not overstepping boundaries that I have, then *trusting people becomes easier, because I trust myself.*” [Emphasis added] Non-binary, 29, UK

Relationships are one of the most valued experiences of reality and clearly something worth maintaining, expanding and continue forming. However, it is not just about any type of relationship. Participants mentioned often the need to base healthy relationships out of consent, honesty, transparency and trust. Those are the relationships that support their striving in life. These relationships take effort, they are not given and received passively, but rather they are constructed based on an inner activity that manages to integrate pluralities and differences, which require understanding and acceptance of the otherness just as they are, without a longing to change them. The challenge then becomes to generate situations in which the differences can be experienced and let be in a common, plural space.

“I have been privileged to meet lots of people who are extremely, radically open, and access to people who had different kind of ethical and religious ideas about the world, and lots of political activists. And I have knowledge of people who have completely blown my mind and people who have called me out.

**“If I trust myself and I'm listening to my own body and not overstepping boundaries that I have, then trusting people becomes easier, because I trust myself.”**



And I hope to meet more of those people in my life. But I'm reticent to say what people as a mass are because as a person, politically, spiritually, I don't believe in that. *The only thing I believe is that we are all different and actually, hopefully as someone existing in an era when we are more aware of, and fighting for more tolerance of difference – and that doesn't mean that you are different and then we have to find the way that we can be the same –, we can just be different in the same space.* [Emphasis added] Non-binary, 29, UK

So much value is placed on this area of life, that it often means that individuals interviewed show great expectations regarding the quality of their relationships. If they see themselves in relationships that do not contribute to their striving, the young interviewees sometimes prefer to leave them behind. Thus we observe above all a commitment to one's own path, which wants to be shared with others who engage in a similar manner with their own striving.

A strong sense of togetherness arises when relationships are able to be based on the sharing of ideas, questions and aspects relating to all of human nature. According to them, it is not in the particular that they find each other but through the universal that it is possible to truly come together.

“For me, it's a question about spiritual community, because this is where we can really meet each other. Because if we speak to each other about feelings, we are always different in our feelings, we are individual persons. But for example, how do we understand each other now, when we are

from a different country, different mentality, education, all our backgrounds are so different but we understand each other. How did this happen? Where do we meet each other? For me, it's in a spiritual level.”

**Female, 26, Russia.**

*“I am interested in building my relationships based on common human things. I always try to find - and it is not too hard - something that everybody has the same. Everybody is the same in some way (...) the nature is the same. If people are in conflict, it means they are not in harmony with themselves. So I try to always build relationships based on common things and if someone wants to hurt me, or make conflict with me, I speak specifically with this higher "I", or I try to, even if he doesn't do the same thing.”* [Emphasis added] Male, 24, Russia.



## 2.3 Transversal themes found across interviews: “how do we experience our reality?”

When talking about transversal themes, the researchers refer to common experiences and ideas that are expressed throughout the interview when talking about different topics or themes. The following aspects, which we have titled *Conscious Becoming* and *Old Young Questions* can appear equally when talking about experiences related to education, family or one’s spiritual development. These are concepts or ideas which permeate the young people’s discourses that allow the observer to get a glimpse into the quality or the mood in which these young people experience their present reality.

### 2.3.1 Conscious Becoming: experiencing oneself and the world in change, movement and development

Interviewees speak of a process of evolution, of becoming. The interview format, which creates a process of reflection on one’s own existential journey, feeds that capacity to awaken awareness of the processes that each one goes through as human beings,

offering the researchers the possibility of observing how these young individuals are conscious about their own evolution and how much they are subject to it.

Participants described a clear experience of being in constant change, movement and development. This has been named as “conscious becoming”; interviewees define themselves as beings who are in a process, a transition, on their way to building an identity consciously, little by little and out of experience. This can be seen in their discourse through seemingly trivial comments as well as profound moments of reflection:

“I think I’m really conscious that a human being, as a whole, is developing; and always developing. When somebody does a mistake or something, is not because he wants to do it, maybe he doesn’t know better, maybe he is on the way to experience something.”

“I think I’m really conscious that a human being, as a whole, is developing; and always developing. When somebody does a mistake or something, is not because he wants to do it, maybe he doesn’t know better, maybe he is on the way to experience something.” Female, 21, Mixed Nationality.

“Well everything is constant. You see what I mean? It’s all moving, it’s also all constant. It’s all constantly moving, that’s the constant, it’s doing it. But it’s not constant as in still. And then I look at the world and nothing is nothing. There’s nothing that does that, we as humans want to do that to the world and that also feels like kind of an oppression to the existence of the universe, because we are trying to make it



all stop all the time, like documenting it and capturing it and making reports about it, we are trying to do that because, I don't know why. Because to be in flux is scary, although it doesn't scare me that much, but it's scary. We want to fix it all down. (...) But yes, the only thing that's constant is that it is moving." Non-binary, 29, UK.

**the activity of navigation, of adaptability and mobility to such situations:**

"I mean the life, how life is. The life of people, when you don't know what is going to happen in the next second, and the chaos... I mean, this energy of life as it is, as an unstoppable flow of movement." Male, 25, Russia.

Early on, from the start of the interviews, participants expressed surprise at how one could possibly understand much about them at all, for they are so changeable and adaptable at this time, that whatever said in that interview could change as immediately as of next day.

**"Well everything is constant. You see what I mean? It's all moving, it's also all constant. It's all constantly moving, that's the constant, it's doing it. But it's not constant as in still. And then I look at the world and nothing is nothing."**

As individuals who perceive themselves to be malleable and changing, they demand honesty and responsibility of themselves when they are confronted with situations or others that try to fix or hold reality to one static instant, who try to generate moments of stability that do not match their own experience of reality. If the environment does not recognise that which is true for them, this should not become an impediment to their own needs as beings in becoming:

"It's funny because throughout these years I had this impression that how I see my life and how I interpret things, changes every time..." Male, 27, Brazil.

environment does not recognise that which is true for them, this should not become an impediment to their own needs as beings in becoming:

"It's lucky that you're interviewing me after I've got into university because it's way more interesting that if you'd interviewed me before." Female, 22, New Zealand.

**"Life as it is, as an unstoppable flow of movement."**

"If everything is moving and that is OK, then *I have to understand what I need* in order to navigate through that, and that's about being honest, which means I can do less things in a day, which means things move slower; and everybody hates that. They want them to move really fast, but they don't. It's all moving really slowly and to accept that is the ongoing thing for me, and you can't miss any of the steps. *And I have to look after myself every day, it's not optional.* You have to make the

It is not only the participants own being which is experienced by them as being "in becoming". In fact, all of experience is moving and changing so rapidly, chaotically, unpredictably, that it demands from them



time. Make time." **Non-binary, 29, United Kingdom.**

**By contrast, when the environment offers opportunities that align with the experience of "becoming", i.e. experiences that are still shaping, or that are open to re-definition by those participating in it, young people respond positively and enthusiastically:**

"I was in this course, it was a bunch of people like directors, actors, film makers, producers, playwrights, poets... and we were just kind of chucked into a bag; no, we were chucked into a swimming pool and just asked to swim against the current. And that was really fun. It was a course that was somewhat in its infancy. I think we were the third or the fourth year, so they were still figuring it out. And that caused a lot of problems, but I also think that that was a wonderful time to be in a course where it doesn't quite know what it is and there's still leeway for you to jump through loopholes, or mould it to be what you need it to be." **Male, 32, Mixed Nationality.**

**Not only is this experience received with enthusiasm, but it is also the "rightful" experience according to their perspective, even when at times there is challenge and struggle – both of which are seen not as negative aspects but as an aspect of reality to be confronted and integrated in experience:**

"Definitely there were times that were aggravating and frustrating. And I'm really glad that they happened because I think that's exactly what should happen. I am now a lecturer in playwriting at University and looking at it from the other side of the desk,

sometimes the pupils seemed to want a lack of challenges, or a lack of struggle, or a lack of frustration. I find that kind of sad, or annoying." **Male, 32, Mixed Nationality.**

**The importance of self-actualisation and auto-education thus becomes vital. There is an understand that one cannot ever consider themselves as fully ready, only in every instant of action, when one is present in the experience and in full dialogue with it.**

**As said above, the only constant is that everything is moving. Even truth, which is eternal and infinite, is not fully determined, it can change. The truth is that everything changes. The constant is that all is change:**

"I think truth has something which is timeless, so even if human beings are changing, during their lives, or during humanity, maybe 400 years ago, even that change, truth for me is something which stays as it is. (...) So the view of human beings on something changes but the true being of something just is.(...) But truth is also something not stagnant. So, of course there can be bond between people which is really true and from the bottom of their hearts, but it can change over time..." **Female, 21, Mixed Nationality.**

**This world in movement means a reality of multiple possibilities at any given time that require choice, which in turn, asks to face uncertainty. Young people are aware of this and thus, consider themselves as capable of acting freely:**

"I think that we are aware of how changeable we can be and of how many possibilities

there are. We can really decide who we are, we can create ourselves. (...) In every day we can have so much doubting, actually, it doesn't have to be doubting in that kind of a way, but I think that we are just healthily questioning everything." Female, 30, United Kingdom.

Patience, observation, waiting for the right amount of knowledge to act, are some of the other characteristics to develop in a reality that keeps developing. Emphasis is often placed on the importance of taking time to know a situation in order to act according to the present situation as accurately as possible, and not to one's own previous assumptions, which may come from past experiences, prejudices, fears or disconnection to the current situation:

"Now I understand and recognise that it is all a process. It is not like you have some question, you solve it and you have an answer. It's a process, it's like a plant, growing. And now I can wait. It's not like I meet people now and I know "you are this, you are that", no. (...) Now I'm on the way to see all of what I need [to be] in process; that

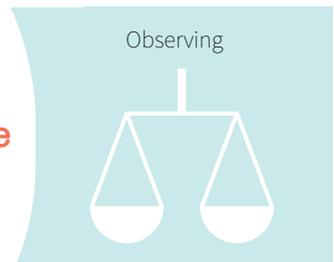
things are not like this for life, it's one process of metamorphoses and of course, it will be changed. Maybe faster, maybe slower, but there is not really one answer. I need to wait, make myself more open, more clear to meet something. And this helps me to be human! Human being is a process, it's not like I can say that "oh, I am human!". No. I am on the way to be human." Female, 25, Russia.

**"I think that we are aware of how changeable we can be and of how many possibilities there are. We can really decide who we are, we can create ourselves. (...) In every day we can have so much doubting, actually, it doesn't have to be doubting in that kind of a way, but I think that we are just healthily questioning everything"**

Within this experience of becoming, it is possible to observe differences in the young people's descriptions of the quality that the present time has for them, and how they perceive themselves within. We have identified three types of "present moments":

**"Now I understand and recognise that it is all a process. [...] And this helps me to be human! Human being is a process [...] I am on the way to be human."**

**A • A moment in waiting:**  
*"the observers"*



Some interviewees described their experience of being observant of their surroundings and also their own responses to those surroundings. The present moment for them



is a situation of patience, waiting and observation. Participation is done from a reflective position, where impact is prepared according to what is observed. One could say that when we find ourselves in this situation, our action is contingent to what comes to meet us, as if it were a responsive act:

“I feel like I’m in waiting right now. Unfortunately, I’ve felt like that for a couple of years now. Where I’m just waiting for some sort of evolution, something else to happen in order for me to kind of do what it is I’m here to do. I don’t know if that makes sense (...) I’m here for a reason, everyone is. And sometimes I just think that I’m in this pattern, developing myself, relaxing, enjoying because something is going to happen. Some sort of transformation of humanity, something is going to happen and then that’s finally when I’m going to be like, “this is where I step in.” Female, 26, US.

In a different form to the subject above, the interviewee quoted below shows perhaps more dynamism in his waiting, in relation to his current professional activity and place of work, though still he observes external happenings and prepares himself to act accordingly:

“I see that there are a lot of things happening. First, it is a big surprise that I finally came here, because it wasn’t my plan, after all. I had this plan to make this kind of company, but for

me it’s first a surprise and I am still surprised that I am here and open to what will happen. And I see that as a task, I mean, I had the feeling that I have to do something here.(...) Here there’s a task, there’s something to do and I am looking at what would be the better way to solve those problems here. (...) So for me it’s just a situation of “yes, checking, interesting, they are doing this”. Seeing how it all develops and seeing there’s this project and this project, ok. And I think if everything breaks apart in small pieces then I will think “ok, sorry guys, I did my best but now I have to move on.”

Male, 30, France.

**“I feel like I’m in waiting right now. Unfortunately, I’ve felt like that for a couple of years now. Where I’m just waiting for some sort of evolution, something else to happen in order for me to kind of do what it is I’m here to do.”**

Another interviewee in this mode of experience described the importance of looking and finding meaningful opportunities. To take action in something, to become involved, it needs to make sense. She was not alone in this, another interviewee in the other side of the age spectrum comment-

ed the importance of “things making sense in order to become involved”<sup>57</sup> and a male who at 32 years old also described that “if I don’t understand why I’m supposed to do something, I find it really hard to do it”<sup>58</sup>, in relation to his educational experience:

“It’s important for myself to create something which is meaningful. And I’m always looking for something which is meaningful for myself and for my future and going for it. So maybe I’m a little bit restless, I question everything

(...) I was always in different surroundings and I tried to shape myself in these surroundings. So, how do I see myself and what fits for myself the best? And in these different worlds, I see them as different worlds, seeing the meaning in them (...) Maybe as a human being, as myself, I am looking and I'm diving inside it and seeing “ok, that's not my world I want to swim in” and that's maybe what I mean with restless I want to experience a lot, like finding my way through it.” **Female, 21, Mixed Nationality.**

**B • A moment of shaping:** “*the developers*”



This moment's quality is perhaps best characterised by a test and trial attitude to experiences, or for the amount of

questions that arise about the task one has in the world. It is the moment where decisions are constantly being made, but also changes in direction can happen suddenly and lightness. In this experience, the environment is very influential, but what is at stake is one's own impact and the quest for defining one's identity.

“Before, I wasn't so aware of who I was but now I feel something is building, it is like modelling. Now I am in the process of putting the clay together, but before there was clay, there was an empty table. Now I feel in a position where the clay has started to build, it needs a shape. But it's just a very vague shape, you couldn't feel what is coming yet. Something. Somebody. Maybe it is also part of the higher me. It still keeps adding to the clay. So the shape is forming. That's all I can say for my

current state. Something is happening, yes.”

**Female, 28, China.**

**Another experience in this line, came from another interviewee who described himself as an identity project:**

“That is what I am now, a project. But a project that has certain foundations. It is not a project; the project already has a name; it is schematized. Who am I? I am a search for identity. I could do two things now, I could give you a list of characteristics that are contingent with which I identify myself today but tomorrow could be slightly different, and every certain years it could change substantially. Who I am now is a wish. I am constituted by my projects, by my memories, by what I feel at this moment, by what I think, by what I want to reach, by my difficulties and my struggles for those difficulties.” **Male, 30, Mixed Nationality.**

**C • A moment of action:** “*the doers*”



In this situation, it is possible to find young participants who, having been through a process, feel like now they

are able to act in the world out of a conscious and perhaps more clear inner impulse. Interestingly, it is a moment not defined by age or gender (there were young people aged from 22 all the way to 33 who fitted in this category, both male and female). The only apparent similarity that arose amongst the individuals who fitted in this category from the sample of the study, was



that most of those who described their present reality in this manner, often tended to be trained and working in an artistic field:

“These three years I have built my inner world in some kind of way and now I’m trying to get out in life and built my outer life.” **Male, 25, Russia (Actor).**

(...) On the run up to thirty I start feeling quite low, and all of this expectation was kind of coming out of nowhere, like “you haven’t done all of these things you wanted to

do” (...) and I was trying to

do that, and then it was

just like “I think I’m just

going to take my own

time”. And then about

half a year into turning

thirty, I realized I don’t

think I have many

expectations left in my

life, in my entire life.

I’ve got a few things I

would like to happen,

a few things. But I just

suddenly realised—, I

feel really free. I think thirty

was the last marker, subconscious,

psychological, whatever, that I had in my

head. And now that I’ve gotten past that, I feel

always, for the first time in my life, like I have

absolute freedom or ownership, or agency.

Like I’m not waiting for things to happen, I’m

not expecting things to happen. I don’t. It’s

like a completely open book now. And I don’t

quite know how that happened but it’s, it’s

wonderful.

And now, I’m thirty-one and a half. I, sometimes

actually worry that I’m becoming docile or comfortable. So at the moment I’ve got this job teaching and I have just about enough left to keep me afloat. I’m writing the best that I’ve ever written, we just won an award, which is the most prestigious thing I’ve ever won. And it’s like, working on that show, I didn’t feel the anxiety or fear or nerves that I felt with every single thing I’ve ever done before. I just felt this kind of sense of, “I just have to do what I do, and it will take care of itself. It will just be whatever it is”. **Male, 31, UK (Playwright)**

**“For the first time in my life, like I have absolute freedom or ownership, or agency. Like I’m not waiting for things to happen, I’m not expecting things to happen. I don’t. It’s like a completely open book now. And I don’t quite know how that happened but it’s, it’s wonderful.”**

It is perhaps a moment in

experience where self-

confidence arises, or

security in one’s own

capacity to be. A

certain calmness, or

serenity can be heard

in the discourses of

these participants,

though of course

this never means

staying still. That this

moment also belongs

to the overall experience

of “conscious becoming”

is what makes the researchers

think that these three moments “observing,

developing and doing” are each part of an

organic and changing cycle.

Beyond the mode in which they are

experiencing their present time, all young

people are shaping reality. That those

denominated as “doers” might seem the

most active outwardly does not mean that

those characterised as “developers” and

“observers” are not giving form to their own



realities. Here the question becomes: to what extent are young participants aware or conscious of how their actions shape reality and what informs those actions?

For example, it was possible to observe some young people who could easily be placed in the space of the “doers” and yet their activities clearly showed replication of old models or patterns that could be found in earlier experiences of their biographies, such as the replication of behaviours that, even though they do not wish for themselves, are ingrained in their system and so continue to inform their present activities<sup>59</sup>. Thus, it is important to understand that being in a moment of “doing” does not always mean one is shaping according to an inner longing or wish, something which on the other hand might be happening in the moment of “observing”, when one might be preparing consciously to notice exactly the right opportunity to jump into the right action:

“I feel like people my age should start to think about their life more rather than still following the footsteps of those who are older than them, what they've said and what they've built in the world. That has happened already. The world we are experiencing right now is already the past, because it's built around the past and if you don't think about the future, if you don't live in the present while thinking for the future, any creation is impossible, because you are going to be very influenced by [the past]. And this influence from the past is very strong, so if you don't create a space, yes, if young people don't create a space for questioning, for the inner spirituality, for the inner life, then the future is not going to

be evolving healthily.” Male, 27, Germany.

Regardless of the moment that they describe the quality of their present time as during interviews, it could be stated that the interviewees are active, observant, reflective of their experiences, meeting challenges (both inwardly and outwardly) that keep them in movement, and in questioning.

### 2.3.2

#### Living Questions

Questions allow a base for common work amongst people. The questions that were expressed during interviews were profound and complex, relating most if not all of them, to human nature and relationships. The questions of the youth were one of the central interest at the heart of this investigation as an indication of their spiritual striving. These questions can be seen as indicators of the motivations out of which young people inform their actions. So, what are they asking?

There are four main realms that contain the different questions expressed across interviews.

1. Human nature
2. Self-purpose
3. Social concerns
4. Freedom and ethics

Questions can be directed towards oneself (first column on the next page) or outwards, in a more general manner, towards the world (second column on the next page):



<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Who am I?</li><li>• Where do I come from?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What does it mean to be human?</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What do I want and what is important to me?</li><li>• What is my task in this life?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is the meaning of life?</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How do people perceive me?</li><li>• Can I be truly interested?</li><li>• What can I do for others who have not had the same opportunities as me?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What does friendship mean?</li><li>• What does love mean?</li><li>• What is good and bad?</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Am I going to meet others expectations and why should I?</li><li>• Where are my boundaries?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is freedom?</li></ul>

One particular interviewee quoted below expressed many, if not all of the above, in response to an invitation to describe what she had previously denominated as a “spiritual experience” in their late teenage years. The participant defined this as a moment of “awakening”, where she began to perceive the world in a different manner, more vividly or clear than before. For her, this marked a turning point in experience, positioning her in a seekers’ quest to find meaning through a choice in lifestyle that is formed out of the pursue of the answers to these questions:

“Who am I? And the most important, what does it mean to be *human*? I recognised that I didn’t understand this. Everyone says that I’m human, but what difference is there between me and a cat, for example, or a dog or plant?

(...) How can I choose some goal in my life if I don’t understand who I am? How can I want to do something, to have a husband, a career or something, if I don’t know who I am? Why do I live now? Is it only one life and I need to be really strong doing something because maybe some paradise awaits me, or not? What do I need? Do I have many lives? (...) What does death mean? Can I die? Why do you choose something? Maybe I prefer something more than another in my feeling, but who said that my feeling tells the truth? How can I be sure that I can trust in my feeling, if it changes every day? (...) How can I find reality and me in this world, my meaning? Because I saw around me so many different ways, some people live only for families, for career, for money... I don’t know if this is bad or good! Because I don’t know who I am. And I can’t just leave and forget



about it because I can't sleep, I can't read... Maybe I don't need life if I don't have the essence of why I live! Really, it's some question. Maybe I can kill myself, for example, why not? But what happens to me, and my soul, can I kill spirit or thought or only body? I have so many different questions. But the most important one is what does it mean to be human. Because if I ask you who you are, you say your name, but you could have another name and yet, you are human. I really wanted to find some spiritual law, spiritual rules to understand the world and me.”

Female, 25, Russia

During this initial analysis phase, approximately 50% of the answers given to the question “*what gift would you give to the world?*” were analysed. The answers varied in length, use of wording and form of expression and yet, something essential showed to be common in most, if not all of them: **a wish for a new form of understanding, knowledge and consciousness.**

Understanding, knowledge and consciousness; but, what of? Perhaps they are seeking the answers to those truly human questions.

“I was reflecting about it after the presentation we did in December and I was like, “wow, it's really amazing that what a lot of young people are asking for, what they wish for the world and the future is “understanding”. All the time this is what they are asking for, real understanding with “capital U”, knowledge, comprehension, that's what they wish for. And then I was thinking all the time that it is funny, because that's exactly the quality of how we are looking at them. We are really trying to understand

them, we are really trying to comprehend them, so, what is it? Do they really want that, or is it because we really want that with them that they are somehow in that process of talking, being understood, and that's why they are wishing more of this for the world during the moment of the interview? Is it possible that how we observe another has that much influence in what they express? I don't know, it seems to be a little bit of a mystery that too often things that happen to us as a team then I see it in the interviewee, and I think that's the whole changing of the relationship of the object and the observer. We are somehow always in relationship.” **Researcher, Female, 29, Spain<sup>60</sup>.**

There is much more to be said still about the gifts that these young people would like to give to the world and how these unveil elements of the future that they envision and hope to experience. This will be one of the main fields of exploration in the upcoming stages, but it is already possible to mention other gifts for the future, such as were love, hope and acceptance of others and ourselves, better communication and out of all of this, **togetherness.**

If one takes these wishes and longings for the world as an indication of young people's striving towards a common future, it may be possible to expect many individual researchers who connect with each other in the exploration of commonly human questions to create meaningful relationships in a world that, just like them, is in conscious becoming.



<sup>53</sup> 10% of the material was lost or has been recorded in a language that has not yet been translated into and thus cannot currently be evaluated by the research team, or the interview format was not correct (interviewers did not follow guidelines close enough).

<sup>54</sup> As seen in interviews with Female, 33, Philippines: Male, 21, India; Female, 27, India.

<sup>55</sup> Female, 30, UK.

<sup>56</sup> Interview with Male, 21, Brazil, Anthroposophical background.

<sup>57</sup> Interview with Female, 33, Brazil.

<sup>58</sup> Interview with Male, 32, Mixed Nationality.

<sup>59</sup> This observation interests

the young researchers greatly. Although it is necessary still to deepen much the study of this aspect, we find some similarities in our own thoughts about how very active young people might be replicating old behaviours to resonate with the Reactive Learning theory proposed by Senge, Scharmer, et al. in *Presence. Human Purpose and the Field of the Future*. (2004) New York: Crown Business. The authors pose that when actions spring from sources of anxiety and fear, one is likely to respond out of “habitual ways of thinking” and “continuing to see the world within the familiar categories we are comfortable with”. They go on to say that “in reactive learning, our actions are

actually re-enacted habits, and we invariably end up reinforcing pre-established mental models.” Ibid, pp. 10-11.

In two interviews in particular, it was possible to observe two different young people who were very present in their will (“doers”) and yet, it was clear that the source from which their activities sprung was qualitatively very different. The first (Male, 33, Italy) showed tendencies towards not including differences. The second interviewee (Non-binary, 29, United Kingdom), who also would fit within the category of the “doers” had undergone a deep process of self-reflection, discovery and questioning in recent years and showed a tendency to valuing inclusion based on accepting of differences and

personal circumstances amongst peoples. This was not always the way of being of the second person, who describes a transformation occurring in their lives that led them to a complete different way of being and seeing the world. On the other hand, the first person saw himself as having always thought in the same direction.

The question becomes, what makes a young person become aware and agent in their own motivations for actions? These question will continue to be explored by the research team in upcoming research activities.

<sup>60</sup> See Appendix A: The Researcher’s Experience: An Interview with the Interviewer.

# Part 3

# **(RE)Search**

Next steps for  
further research



## Next steps for further research

The scope of this project since its inception has widened, inspiring new avenues for furthering research and activities linked to its contents. In order for the project to continue unfolding, the team is currently committed to **habilitating the remaining 30% of the data obtained that is apt for analysis**<sup>62</sup> (interviews which still need to be transcribed or translated from the original language in which they took place); this will enable the possibility of including those remaining discourses to enrichen the observations already obtained and presented here.

After this first round of observations, the team's activity will focus on a next phase of further analysis. For this, the team and its mentors will look at key enquiries that have arisen from this early observations, undertaking a process of refining and sharpening these questions to give way to new insights and ideas.

An aim is to generate two more chapters to this first round of observations centred around two key aspects of the study.

The first added chapter would centre around the responses to the three main questions that break down the frame: *what would the world look like in 2030 if what lives within you becomes a reality and what will you do to make it happen?* This requires an in-depth study of the responses given by all participants in order to map out differences and similarities in the interviewees' re-

sponses to the following questions:

1. The Gift: what would you give to the world
2. The Change: how would this impact and transform reality?
3. The Action: concrete steps to realise that future reality.<sup>63</sup>

Do all the gifts contain a single message transmitted in different forms? If so, what does this unveil about such sample of young people? Will they pursue the realisation of these gifts and if so, how do their actions with their expectations for the future? There has been a lot of interest in this particular aspect of the study from young people themselves, some of whom have expressed an explicit wish to join the project to investigate this particular element. The exploration and creation of this chapter could also be a means to further participation from young researchers and add diversity and scope to the results.

The second additional chapter will be based on the answers of the young participants to the question regarding the **perception of their own generation**. This chapter would account for how young people observe their peers' experiences and how these connect to their individual happenings. In this context the researchers are interested in observing whether there is coherence between the perception of the participants' own experiences as a young person, and the way they



observe others like themselves. This may shed more light on how these young people see their generation's influence in the world today and thus, their reflections about what it means to be young in the present time, with all its challenges and opportunities.

Already throughout the early stages of research, the study enjoyed attention from different publications and media channels. Articles were included in editions of *Die Drei*<sup>64</sup> and *Anthroposophy Worldwide*<sup>65</sup>, for example and a podcast interview on the study was featured on *The Anthroposopher* (available on iTunes). Further requests have been made from different publications (*Erziehungskunst, Lilipoh*) who are interested in communicating to their audiences' specific elements of the insights obtained, the methodologies used and the overall impact of the project in the youth involved. Thus, in addition to the upcoming chapters, the team will generate a series of articles, some on demand, widening the reach of the project.

### **Following up open questions after initial observations**

As showed in previous chapters, a number of new questions or points of interest have already arisen in the process of preparing the initial results presented here. These are seen as possible bases for further investigation. At the moment, these include:

**1.** Further exploration of the role that spirituality, and particular spiritual paths such as Anthroposophy, play in the process of shaping experiences for the people comprehended in this first sample; such as

the connection between spirituality and the shaping of meaningful relationships with self and others. It has been already briefly observed that often, in depth-connections with others result from the sharing of those questions that allow for an exhaustive discussion about the nature of life and what it means to be human. It has also been observed that a mood of awe, wonder and appreciation for the mysterious in every-day life, has a direct impact in the way young people enter and engage in dialogue. Here the question for the researchers could be, to what extent does one's spiritual striving and the practices that may be explored through it, influence positively the forming of such longed for relationships with self and others?

**2.** Modes of consciousness and awareness regarding one's own impulses and motivations for action. What makes a young person become interested in discovering the source from which their activities come from? It was observed that there are some young people who, through a process of self-investigation and reflection, have become interested in developing consciousness of the motivations that lie at the heart of their activities. Others seem to be active in the world without necessarily engaging in self-reflection to understand where their initiatives come from. So what can be observed about these two different ways of tackling one's own activity in the world, and how do each approach influences the quality of the action performed by the young person?

**3.** Furthering and deepening understanding of young people's experiences of education, in particular 1) questions about how social



expectations embedded in the surrounding environment might impact these young people's career choices, and how this may also influence the challenges of bringing together profession and vocation. 2) How student's initiatives being taken into consideration to shape curricular content and educational activities may impact positively their experience of education.

### **Further collaborations with mentors**

The wealth that the qualitative data obtained contains, requires for adequate forms of analysis that are living and adapting to the new findings obtained day by day. This is why the core research team wishes to learn further methodologies and tools to deepen their understanding of these young people's stories. For this, a new collaboration is to be reborn with the mentors that participated in the earlier stages of the project: Two Much Research Studio and staff of Alanus University. In upcoming meetings, they will collaborate with the team to shape new questions and choose appropriate methods of interpretation that could give way to further insights and conclusions.

The qualitative study will be expanded by developing a questionnaire based on the answers given in these early phases of research to be sent to youth groups worldwide. This initiative enjoys the support and partnership of the Taiwan Waldorf Education Movement Federation's Research and Development Department, with whom discussions have already begun about the way in which Taiwanese youth could take part and be represented in the study.

Additionally, during upcoming phases of analysis the team looks forward to comparing and contrasting observations obtained through the aesthetic research methodologies, namely the content of the diaries that participants created and were interpreted by researchers with the support of Alanus University's social sciences department. Here it will be possible to look at those young people who were interviewed and continued living with the questions of the project day by day through a period of 5 months. This is expected to enrich and shed more light on the answers given by those individuals who participated in this way.

### **Contributions at cultural gatherings, conferences and events**

The project has received attention from international groups and organisations, some of which have already taken up their own initiatives that deal with the questions at the heart of this research project. Previous presentations and contributions took in place in Hardenberger Institut (Germany), Youth Gathering (Moscow), Connect Conference (Slovenia), Youth Conference (Malaysia) and Becoming Human: Questions for Co-Creating the Future Youth Conference (Switzerland). The team has now been invited to participate in upcoming gatherings both to present ideas arising from the study and to share the methodologies with others who are interested in shaping their own research projects.

Below are some examples of how the initiative will be present and alive:



- “Dimensions of the “I” experience” Youth Section Gathering Russia, Moscow: Presentation of initial observations (March 2019)
  - Emerson College, England: Presentation of initial observations and workshop on research methodologies (planned for May 2019)
  - Vrije Hogeschool, Netherlands: currently exploring ways to integrate the question and methodologies in their curriculum through a collaboration with members of the research team.
  - “Questions of Courage” North American Youth Conference, Canada: Programme and content inspired by the research questions. Keynote and workshop by the research team. (August 2019)
  - Annual General Meeting of the North American Anthroposophical Society, United States: Keynote talk and workshop by the research team. (October 2019)
- Many other initiatives and collaborations are currently being shaped.

<sup>62</sup> See page XX for breakdown of habilitated data to this date (March 2019)

<sup>63</sup> See page XX for details on the interview questions.

<sup>64</sup> Die Drei (2018) Book 9: de la Cruz Barral, A. "Re-Search: Das spirituelle Streben der Jugend –

unsere Realität definieren" pp. 6-7 Online Access: [https://diedrei.org/tl\\_files/hefte/2018/Heft9\\_2018/campyrus%201809%20K2.pdf](https://diedrei.org/tl_files/hefte/2018/Heft9_2018/campyrus%201809%20K2.pdf) and Die Drei (2018)

Book 5: Caliskan, S. "Ein Frühling in Dornach – Jugendimpuls für eine Weltgesellschaft" pp. 8-9 Online Access: [https://diedrei.org/tl\\_files/hefte/2018/Heft5\\_2018/campyrus\\_K1.pdf](https://diedrei.org/tl_files/hefte/2018/Heft5_2018/campyrus_K1.pdf)

hefte/2018/Heft5\_2018/campyrus\_K1.pdf

<sup>65</sup> Anthroposophy Worldwide Number 12/18 (2018) de la Cruz Barral, A.

"What shapes reality". p. 4. Online Access: [https://static1.squarespace.com/Dstatic/564b04ebe4b01a652ab61563/t/5c1226511ae6cf13325dce23/1544693352304/AWE2018\\_12.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/Dstatic/564b04ebe4b01a652ab61563/t/5c1226511ae6cf13325dce23/1544693352304/AWE2018_12.pdf)



## Appendix A

### The researcher's experience: an interview with the interviewer

*In January 2019, Robin Schmidt, director of the Research Studio Kulturimpuls carried out an interview with Andrea de la Cruz, one of the researchers involved in (Re)Search. Together they explore the young researcher's experience after working with the data to complete the first research report. They talk about key moments in the process so far and questions for the future of the project.*

**Robin Schmidt:** First, I want to underline the beauty and novelty in the methodology of this project, which tries to actually see and research a transformative process, rather than the actual paradigm that was at work and still is at work very often; one where you try to have a stable object and a stable observer and find a methodology to fix things. Instead you have tried to find a methodology that is suitable for moving objects and moving investigators or observers. I would like to ask first how did this idea come to you?

**Andrea de la Cruz:** I think the methodology already appeared in early team meetings when we were beginning to shape the project. We were trying to define what we wanted to learn from young people, and we were asking ourselves about what is spirituality for young people as well. Then we realised that we didn't even know if spirituality is at all something important to the young person today. And what does spirituality mean anyway? We were also questioning and asking ourselves about how young people perceive reality, but is this something that a young person really asks themselves? But before us putting something on the table and asking them to look at it, we decided to create a methodology based on giving the person a space to bring what is relevant to them. I think that's where the methodology started to come from, from the idea of giving youth an open space. We wanted to offer an empty canvas for them to colour it in whichever way it made sense to them.

► **Was that the moment when that core question appeared? (“What would the world look like in 2030 if what lives within you becomes a reality, and what will you do to make it happen?”) Can you remember the moment when this question came up?**

► When we first read this question, I remember my reaction was something like “what? can you read it again?” That was the feeling. And this is important, I think, the moment of “hold on, again?”. The question is not obvious, it doesn't call for an immediate answer, it needs to be internalised and lived with. I think that when the question was put as an option, I felt something like “this makes sense, but why?” Later in that same meeting we realised that we couldn't ask this question directly because it's too complex to provoke spontaneity and generate dialogue straight away, but we tried to understand what was inside this question, that which it is trying to inspire, so that we could create a way of tackling it. I think in the interviews our questions are able to awaken a strong

inner activity from interviewees because that happened to us as well when we were working with the main question. So the inner process of the team is in a way being mirrored by the participant.

► **Is there mirroring in the method and what you engage with?**

► I was reflecting about it after the presentation we did in December that it's really amazing that what a lot of young people are asking for, what they wish for the world and the future is "understanding". All the time this is what they are asking for, real understanding with "capital U", knowledge, comprehension. And then I was thinking all the time that this is exactly the quality with which we are looking at them. We are really trying to understand them, we are really trying to comprehend them. So, what is it? Do they really want Understanding before they go in the interview, or is it because we really want that in the moment with them and because they are being guided in that process of talking, being understood, that that's why they are wishing more of this for the world during the moment of the interview? Is it possible that how we observe another has that much influence in what they express? I don't know, it seems to be a little bit of a mystery that too often things that happen to us as a team then I see it in the interviewee, and I think that's the whole changing of the relationship of the object and the observer. We are somehow always in relationship.

► **When you listen to what the young people are expressing or trying to express, what do you find encouraging and what do you see that it is missing?**

► I think one of the conclusions I could draw from this is that young people, when they are asked genuinely and are honestly invited to come in and contribute, are willing to be there for others. There's an implicit generosity in the act of them coming to this project like this.

► **And if you form an image of what the world will look like in 2030, if this virtue of being willing to contribute and at the same time expose oneself and being fragile, what would change in the world, or what would the world look like if that's more a reality?**

► I can see the world becoming more and more authentic, and by that I think I mean more and more in movement, more and more responsive to what the moment in time demands of each of us. I think we are already seeing aspects of this today. I can see that we are in a process of becoming vulnerable, it's kind of like taking steps towards authenticity. Authenticity in the sense that what is authentic in most of these young people's discourse is that they eventually come to this space where they speak about life as a changing, moveable experience where we have to be constantly questioning what's happening around us and in us.

► **As a teacher educator I have the question, what do you think young people should learn? If you look at those experiences of young people who might be facing training or an education programme, what is missing for them?**

► I think something that surprised me was to see that there are two ways of going about the learning experience. On the one hand, I observed often a sense of disappointment that some young people



have of the more adult world when they don't find what they are looking for in say, bosses, educators, parents, etc. I would think those young people they need to learn the courage or perhaps gain the confidence to say "if I don't find someone who can teach me this, I will not sit and wait for the right teacher to come about, but try to learn it still by myself. Of course I don't think this needs to result in young people becoming completely detached from educators or study programmes, but that they take more authorship and credit of their own education. I think that it would be important for society to be mindful of this, because it's all in the balance. It's not good enough just leaving the young person saying "you can do it, teach yourself, you can be entrepreneurial and do whatever," but instead to ask ourselves as members of society, On the other hand, I think there's a tendency for some young people to stay in the keep learning, keep doing, keep exploring, keep... Because I can, because I have mastered what interests me, so I can always find a way to take a little bit of this and a little bit of that and this creates dispersion as well, eventually you have to return to this question of what for?

▶ **How do you feel changed about all these expressions of young people and trying to understand what young people look for??**

▶ The important experience for me has been to learn that I can always understand more. There is no reason why one should stop questioning. I think this is especially relevant in an era of ready-made content and information. If I receive news or a testimony from someone, how am I going to understand where the content comes from, truthfully? How can I navigate in the sea of information that comes to meet me? What methods can I use to look to the facts in the most loyal way, or with the most fidelity?

▶ **How would the world look like if this that you have discovered would be a reality?**

▶ Maybe more quiet. Quieter in the sense of, I can imagine paying more attention to things. More contemplation in the sense that I can imagine suddenly stopping and thinking more, or quietening a little bit more. Without being less social, but having more silence in social spaces, in the cities, collective silences perhaps. And maybe then, other things can manifest that can't manifest just now because there's too much noise, space is too occupied by noisy things just now. But I don't know what that silence would leave space for, what would manifest.

▶ **What could you say when other people pick up the project or the same field, what advice would you give?**

▶ If I could give advice I would say, spend as much time as you can in preparing your question. It's important that the question is YOUR question. What I would want to see more research on and I think people are already doing it and I think this is really good, is the question of spirituality for young people. I would love to do a study on how spirituality has evolved in the last 100 years for young people, how the questions of youth have shaped and transformed and with them young people's relationship to spiritual practices.



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