

**Coenraad van Houten**

## **A SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF AUTHOR'S RESEARCH PROCESS**

### **How do adults learn and develop?**

The journey began with a research question:

**How do adults learn and develop?**

**How to make adult learning a living growing process?**

The question began already as a youngster at a Waldorf School where he experienced teachers who had a new way of thinking. 'I want to do this', he said to himself. Further education experience took him through academia and 'dead' scientific thinking, through war time and its hard disciplines, through business experience, then in university training in social pedagogy. The research question began a new life in management consulting with NPI in Holland and global travelling. This led on to an adult education centre in England called 'The Centre for Social Development' where the learning research was further tried and deepened through practise with colleagues and students. Out of his continuing spiritual study of sources behind this field came a new course, called the 'Anthroposophical Schooling Course'.

In this schooling course, held at the Centre for Social Development beginning in 1989, the learning process was researched and deepened further through practise, always by observing processes and results. The original research question burned on in him through all the years, with variations and specific aspects to be developed. Typical for research processes is that because you have the question, you are alert for what speaks to it or for new insights or helpers. This was a very rich gathering process over years, from many sources. His whole biography can be seen as contributing to the basic research question that has been his life mission. Now at 88 years the author wanted to write down the research result as far as it is now. It is however never finished, each result leading to another step or another question.

One such insight on the way was finding in the book of Rudolf Steiner 'The Riddle of Humanity' an indication about the 12 senses and the 7 life processes of the human constitution. Steiner simply indicated them with little explanation. The 7 life or 'etheric' processes maintain our bodily existence but also are forces we can use in adult life for learning and spiritual enlightenment. This was an AHA moment of his research - 'here is an important indication; it is OBVIOUS this is the material to work with'. After the AHA intuition moment came the difficult process of working it out in practise. The result of this process you can read in the author's first book, 'Awakening the Will' - written for educators to present a 'living learning for adults'. (published 1993)

Then came another 'helper' – a friend who read this and said but could this not also apply to learning from life or destiny? 'Maybe it would look like this...' Reading the letter Coenraad had the immediate intuition 'yes, but this is not correct'. So began the next phase of research, for learning from destiny. He used his own instrument, his own learning from destiny, as part of the material for the research. He used observation of human phenomena, what happens to people and how they deal with it. His spiritual background was an essential source in how to look and how to question the phenomena. The result of this research process you can read in the author's second book, 'Practising Destiny' (published 1998). Further development of this learning led to a third book, 'The Threefold Nature of Destiny Learning' (published 2003) where exercises discovered through practise are offered to complete the application of the seven life processes to this learning path.

But another question remained... there must be a third learning path. It is inherent in the human being that we develop in a threefold way. He pondered long – it must have something to do with the inner spiritual path of the individual. Out of the background of the esoteric school of Rudolf Steiner it became clear: it is the path of spiritual research and human creativity. Research of this was quite another process, since it involves thresholds of consciousness and the inner schooling of the individual. The creative insights come from spiritual sources, prepared in our earthly awareness, and understood and carried out in earthly application - three steps up, the AHA, and three steps down. This path of research touched every level of his own inner path, meeting crises, difficulties, new faculties to be prepared, encounters, thresholds, and what Steiner called 'the guardian of the threshold'. Experience proved that the three steps down, to incarnate the new discovery, are the most difficult. Exploring this learning path began in the schooling course in 1994 and continues by practising with and through colleagues who share this research process.

These three learning paths, based on the seven life processes as medium, are the basic work of the NALM – New Adult Learning Movement, which is the final initiative of C. van Houten to bring his research into the adult learning field.

- The research that brought about this book is in itself an example of the creative spiritual research learning path:
1. The question that destiny awakened, and which led his life and inner journey
  2. The ever continuing presence of the question, motivating his search, using himself as instrument
  3. Own life experiences and destiny as research material, with miraculous help from many sources, exploring both outward and inward
  4. Moments of insight, the exceptional state or breakthrough of something new
  5. Condensing the insight into an understandable interpretation for others. What does it really mean

6. Testing the discovery in practise, for contemporary needs
7. Presenting it in courses and seminars. Then writing it down in a book - and giving it away for others to take further

Many people, in different parts of the world who worked with the material have proved to be a strong support for this final part on the spiritual research path of learning. Especially the final three processes (5-6-7) were only possible with the involvement of many colleagues.

*Biographical notes written down by Shirley van Houten*

Shirley van Houten, who has been a colleague in this work since 1989, assisted with writing down the results of Coenraad's research, for this book.