Waldorf Journal Project #2

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AWSNA

Child Development and Pedagogical Issues

Compiled and edited by

David Mitchell

Where is that book to be found in which the teacher can read what teaching is? The children themselves are this book! We should not learn to teach out of any book other than the one standing before us and this is the children themselves. But in order to read in this book, we need to develop the widest possible interest in each individual child!

—Rudolf Steiner

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Introduction

Rudolf Steiner gave a detailed description of the human being's physical, psychological, and spiritual development from pre-natal existence through old age, death, and beyond. This view of the evolving human being provides a cornerstone for the unfolding of the curriculum in Waldorf schools around the world.

In her book *Passages* Gail Sheehy writes about the phases of life and underlines the perspective that an understanding of life's developmental framework is necessary to answer life's questions. The analytical psychologist Carl G. Jung was a strong supporter of the developmental model in education, and Bernard Lievegoed in his book *Phases* amplifies both Steiner's and Jung's thoughts. Interest in the developmental view of the human being has also been furthered through the works of Jean Piaget, Erik Erikson, and the Gesell Institute. All of this work is evidence of the evolution of a more conscious, scientific form of understanding social and emotional growth based on the wholeness of the human being.

The concept of stages, phases, or developmental periods is rooted deep in history. Christopher Schaefer mentions that the Chinese talked about three phases: receiving from the world (0-21), fighting in the world (21-42), and the age of peace and wisdom (42-death). The Greeks looked at 10 periods of life comprised of seven year periods: (0-7) was the time of fantasy, (7-14) was middle childhood where learning began, (14-21) was the time of discipline and military service, (21-28) was when one established a basis for one's life, and so forth. The Romans had a simpler form with five stages.

By understanding the stages of life, we educators gain empathy for the young people we guide. It lifts us above base personality to the suprapersonal. We can recognize a greater tapestry through which life is weaving.

This collection of translations and supportive articles from German, Swedish, Norwegian, British and American journals focuses on child development and pedagogical issues from the Waldorf perspective. It is hoped that the reader will find them valuable to study and useful as resources in striving to truly serve the young people we are helping navigate to their individual ego consciousness.

— David Mitchell

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På väg
Tidskrift för Rudolf Steinerpedagogik
Box 78, 161 26 Bromma
Sweden

Erziehungskunst
Monatsschrift zur Pädagogik Rudolf Steiner
Heidenhofstrasse 32
D-70184 Stuttgart
Germany

Steinerskolen
Kvartalstidsskrift for skole og samfunn
Steinerskolene i Norge
Postboks 25 Hovseter
0750 Oslo
Norway

Libra
Anthroposophik Tidsskrift for Kultur og Samfunn
Postboks 7067 Homansbyen
0306 Oslo 3
Norway

Die Menschnschule
Monatsshrift für Erziehungskunst im Sinne Rudolf Steiner
CH-8032 Zürich
Switzerland

Lehrer Rundbrief
Bund der freien Waldorfschulen
Hausmannstrasse 44
70188 Stuttgart
Germany

Padaeia
A Journal for Teachers in Waldorf Schools
Steiner/Waldorf Schools Fellowship
Kidbrooke Park
Forest Row
Sussex RH18 5JB
Great Britain

Child and Man (now *Steiner Education*)
Steiner/Waldorf Schools Fellowship
Kidbrooke Park
Forest Row
Sussex RH18 5JB
Great Britain

The Cresset
Journal of the Camphill Movement
Camphill Association of North America
20 Triform Road
Hudson, NY 12534-4542
USA

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The Making of a Teacher

by

Henry Barnes

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Who is a Waldorf teacher? What distinguishes this education? How often have we asked ourselves these questions! Is it teaching in blocks? Organizing the day around a main lesson? Continuing as a class teacher from year to year with the same group of children? Teaching in pictures? Knowing about reincarnation and karma? Teaching woodwork, painting, bookbinding, recorder, eurythmy?

Rudolf Steiner says, "What is of most importance for the teacher is his conception of life and of the world. . . . The inspiration that flows to the teacher from a world conception inwardly and ever newly experienced is carried over into the soul constitution of the children entrusted to him."[1] In other words, this means that we should learn to "read" the world and the riddle of man's being in quite new ways. "There must arise in the whole human nature of the teacher an intensive impression of the child, again as one whole being, and what is perceived in the child must awaken joy and vitality. This same spirit-awakening joy and vitality in the teacher must be able to grow and develop, till it becomes immediate inspiration, answering the question, 'What am I to do with this child or with that?' . . . We must pass from the reading of human nature in general to the reading of the individual human-being!"[2]

This conception of what constitutes the central life force in education should pervade the training of teachers from beginning to end—or, better said, from the beginning on, for there is actually no end. The older a teacher gets, the more he knows that he is only at the beginning!

In the extraordinary little book from which we have quoted above, known in English translation as *The Essentials of Education*[3] (five lectures, Stuttgart, April, 1924), Rudolf Steiner. devotes a brief passage in the central lecture to the possibilities inherent in a whole new approach to the education of teachers. His few remarks open up perspectives for a lifetime of endeavor. He points to a fourfold penetration into man's full human being. Describing this, as he does again and again, he points to the fact that we are not only the human being whom we observe with our ordinary senses. In addition, this physical organism is imbued with life, and it is further permeated by consciousness, and the physical body, life body, and consciousness are all in their turn penetrated and organized by the individuality itself, working spiritually into the members of its total being. To the trained investigator of the spirit, each of these four realms of forces is perceptible to the appropriate organ. Just as our physical senses observe the physical, so other senses, not dependent on the physical organism, can be developed to perceive the realms of living processes, of consciousness, and of the activity of the ego. Our effectiveness as teachers depends on the ability to experience these four realms in man and in the worlds to which he belongs and on our ability to learn to see how they unfold from one stage to the next in the development of each child. Learning to "read" the nature of these forces, how they reveal themselves in the bodily organism, and how they develop throughout the first twenty-one years of life is basic education for the teacher. The burning question for the teacher is: How can I school these faculties of perception and learn to read, in a new way, the language of a child's development?

In the third lecture of *Essentials in Education*, Rudolf Steiner hints how this might be done. Fundamental is a thorough knowledge of the child's physical being and of the physiological changes that are the outer milestones of his inner development. Beyond this, the teacher should learn to experience those forces of growth and vitality, which mold and differentiate and organize the physical, working like an invisible sculptor during the earliest years of life to shape the child's organism in the image of his or her own individual blueprint of development. To this field of vital, sculptural, image-forming powers, Rudolf Steiner gives the term "etheric-formative forces." We come to know this realm, he says, "when we live into the formative-molding process, when we come to know how a curve or an angle grows through the shaping power of inner forces." We cannot understand the etheric body through the ordinary laws of nature, but with what we experience in the hand, the spirit-permeated hand. Hence, there ought to be no training of teachers without activity in the sphere of plastic art, of sculpture, an activity proceeding from the inner being of man. It is not at all necessary to know masses of modern examination matter. Though there is no harm in referring to an encyclopedia, no encyclopedia can give us that mobility, conferred by *able knowledge* and *knowing ableness*, necessary for an understanding of the etheric body, because the etheric body does not proceed according laws of nature; it permeates the human being in formative, sculptural activity.

If, with the help of the "spirit-permeated hand," we gain a feeling for the quality of the etheric-formative forces, even though we may yet be a long way from experiencing them in full awareness, we find that we can teach the elementary school child in quite a new way. These forces worked invisibly as image-making powers within a child's physical organism during the imitative years and are now partially liberated, after the change of teeth, as the powers of imagination. For these are the forces

with which the child learns to divine the hidden meanings within and behind the pictures in which the world presents itself to his awakening consciousness. We must also be well aware that the spirit-permeated hand has itself been intensively trained and educated. It is no longer the hand that is limited to the shaping of the merely useful or practical, important as these are, nor the skillful hand which can reproduce outer likenesses, nor the talented hand which creates interesting abstract three-dimensional forms. Rudolf Steiner refers to the hand that can penetrate the shaping, mobile powers which have created the crystal and the plant, the animal bodies, and the dynamic symmetries of man. To reveal these powers is the goal toward which the great sculptors of our time are striving, and the teacher must awaken kindred powers in herself if she wishes to know "how a curve or an angle grows through the shaping power of inner forces." She will not be satisfied merely to know about these sculptural forces, which have built the collarbone and shaped the pelvis and the skull, but she is willing to experience them in the disciplined work of her own hands. Therefore, she will seek out teachers who have themselves gone a certain distance along the path toward a new sculptor's art, such as practiced in the Goetheanum School of Sculpture, part of the School of Spiritual Science arising out of Anthroposophy.

And if the teacher wishes to know something of the reality of those powers set free for the use of the soul at puberty, he must strive to discover what lives in the whole dynamic world of musical experience. He must learn to hear, in the acoustics, the inner movement, the intervals, and move from tone to tone in the scale. This body of forces is the bearer of consciousness, of sentience, of feeling in the animal and in man, what Rudolf Steiner designates as the astral member of man's being. It is, he says, "not natural history, natural science, or physics; it is music. . . . A man who studies the outer human organization insofar as it is dependent on the astral body must concern himself with physiology not as a

physicist, but as a musician. He must know the inner, formative music within the human organism."[4] And again, the teacher who wishes to gain access to this realm will turn to those who have preceded him along the road toward mastership in the art that Bruno Walter spoke of as "intrinsic musicianship." This art opens to us "that vast, transcendental realm of the soul that harbors the springs from which music flows."[5] And in this effort, he will soon discover that he has an invaluable guide in the study of musical eurythmy wherein the intervals, tones, rhythms, and beat come to visible expression in movement.

But the teacher who intends to work in the spirit of Waldorf education knows that he cannot stop with an understanding of the physical, etheric, and astral realms. Without the individuality there is no capacity for memory, conscience, thought, motive, or speech. The single animal is the expression of his species. Man transcends his species and becomes the bearer of that indivisible entity that alone can take responsibility for what he thinks, for what and how he feels, and for what he does. It is this fourth member of man's being that Steiner refers to when he speaks of the human ego. To arrive at experienced knowledge of the ego, Steiner says that we must learn to understand the inner structure of speech. Not speech merely as conveyor of meaning, but the formative power of the sounds and rhythms of language as creative activity of the spirit in man. In this sphere, eurythmy is of invaluable assistance as it unites in the language of visible speech the vowels and consonants, the grammatical structure, as well as the elements of rhythm, picture, and meaning.

In these brief indications of Steiner's lies the seed for a radical re-orientation of all teacher training, not only for those studying to become teachers, but also, and perhaps even more importantly, for those who are already teachers and wish to grow and to deepen their capacities. As one works with the ideas Steiner sketched out for us seventy-five years

ago, one comes to realize that behind them stands a conception of the world that places man as a being of body, soul, and spirit in living relation with the spiritual background of the cosmos and of world evolution. One comes to realize that it is indeed this world conception, "inwardly and ever newly experienced,"[6] that becomes the source of inspiration for the teacher and gradually, over many years, awakens in him the creative capacity to know what he has to do in a given moment with a given child.

Footnotes:

1. Steiner, Rudolf. *The Essentials of Education*, London, 1968.
2. Walter, Bruno. *Of Music and Music-Making*, New York: W. W. Norton, 1961.
3. Steiner, Rudolf. *The Essentials of Education*, London, 1968.
4. Steiner, Rudolf. *Human Values in Education,* Ten lectures given at Arnheim, Holland, 1924, London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1991.
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Child Development—Conception to Birth

Embryology from an Anthroposophical Perspective

by

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Waldorf Journal Project #2

Translated from the German by

Nina Kuettel

Embryology is a modern science. It was in the Renaissance that isolated researchers such as Leonardo da Vinci first showed a quickened interest in the subject. Two to three hundred years later, the evolution of thinking and fundamentally important research by Goethe, Olken, Carus, and others created the basis for the study of embryology and the idea of metamorphosis associated with it. Systematic research in embryology was only well established after 1940.

This new scientific possibility offered the public the ability to actively engage their thoughts on the interval where invisible transformation takes place between two visible phenomena, since only isolated phenomena can be found during pregnancy examinations or after miscarriages. Continuous development as it is described in textbooks cannot be directly observed. All that we see are microscopic "snap-shots." This is the result of an activity—an invisible transformation, or metamorphosis—in the interval

between two visible forms. Films that show this continuous development are attempts to make the transformation graphically clear. However, it always remains invisible and can only be comprehended through the activity of thought. It is just this activity of thought that is new. It has only been possible for about one hundred years, since the end of the nineteenth century. It assumes the modern ability to transcend with consciousness the threshold between that which can be perceived by the senses and that which is extrasensory.

Reproduction is a process of biological life, like breathing, blood circulation, digestion, and so forth. Maturation of sperm cells and egg cells is a particular specialization of the reproduction process. Reproduction is constant. For instance, the skin constantly renews itself, intestinal mucous membrane, blood, and hair are always growing. Reproduction penetrates the entire organism at varying tempos: The intestinal mucous membrane renews itself every four days, the skin every four weeks, the blood every hundred days. The slowest substances are the nerves. They need about seven years in order to fully regenerate themselves.

Within this intensive renewal activity, there is one that is specific—the formation of gametes (mature male and female reproductive cells). This is the only place where an organism biologically divides itself into male and female. The gametes are formed within the genitals, in the gonads of ovaries or testicles. This intensive cellular fluid regeneration is the matter, indeed, the **content** of an organism.

The preservation of **form**, however, can be found in the invisible archetypes. They come out of the astral body and are active in the life body, lead by the individuality, the "I." The appearance of form is forever maintained through constitutive archetypes that hide themselves from sensual perception.

The cells of a human body are not isolated but rather found in tissue, enmeshed in fluid, strands, and filaments. The human body is 75–95% liquid,

depending upon age and organ. Human tissue is tender and weak in its structure since it has comparatively little firm material contained within a lot of fluid. In tissue, substances are constantly transforming themselves. Confined by the skin, every cell is an organized collection of matter within liquid. It is like a living drop that breathes, extends, and then concentrates itself. There is a moment of maximum extension (with the thinning of the fluid) and a moment of maximum concentration (with the thickening of the fluid). A cell pulses between the thinned, extended state and the thick, viscous, concentrated state. Chromosomes can only be observed as protein strands in the thicker phase, and at that time take on a characteristic form. As cells, they continue to pulsate, extending, thickening, and then the chromosomes dissolve. This dissolution is equal to the cell becoming chaos. It opens itself to the potency of formative forces in that it loses its earlier form in order to create itself anew. That is how the form is kept alive and the re-forming of cells and tissue is ensured, depending upon the situation and need.

Chromosomes, like other cellular structures, are the results of condensation of formative archetypes in matter and not causes of form characteristics. The word *chromosome* means "a colored strand"—they are the structures that lend themselves the most to coloration when preparing cells for examination under a microscope. Genes are the conceptual parts of chromosomes that are arbitrarily apportioned along the length of these strands. The name comes from the word *genesis* and means "divine creation." The Creator wants to be found in the smallest biological structure.

Cell division (mitosis) is an important process of reproduction. Cells divide themselves through mitosis at differing rates. Meiosis is the special form of cell division in the gonads, a specialized exception found nowhere else.

In the process of mitosis, the cell doubles itself and divides in such a way that two new cells come about that quantitatively resemble each other.

In the process of meiosis there are two phases: The first is a mitosis and the second is a division without a previous doubling. The end result is that from one starting cell, four are created which, however, contain each only half the genetic material. This process pertains to the formation of sperm cells in the testicles. With the formation and maturation of egg cells in the ovaries, only one egg cell is produced from every ancestral cell, and not four, because the others dissolve themselves as polar bodies during the process. After maturation, the gametes are excreted by means of sperm ejaculation or menstrual bleeding, and they die. Only when impregnation takes place can an egg cell and a sperm cell, as a fertilized egg cell, live on in a new way and in a new form. Gametes themselves are not fertile. They expire after their long and complicated maturation if impregnation has not taken place. However, simultaneous with fertilization they reach a new qualitative level of life, without dying. They serve as a development basis for the formation of a new organism that is biologically and materially different from the mother-organism, wherein the egg cell was formed, and from the father-organism, where the sperm cell was formed.

Differentiation that occurs in the genetic stream and the gametes (reproductive cells):

Just as gametes after their long maturation leave the organism and perish as infertile and biologically unfit cells other differentiating qualities can be determined. What are their differentiating qualities and role in the reproductive process?

Let us begin with the egg cell. Already in the fourth week of pregnancy, within the embryo, there begins the organic construction of what will later become the new child's reproductive organs and the first cells that will develop further into sex cells. This construction is, at first, common to both sexes and is still undifferentiated. After the fourth week of pregnancy, if the embryo develops further into a female organism, this biological

composition develops one-sidedly towards the inside, back, and upward and loses the other spatial directions. However, the right-to-left symmetry remains. Then the ovaries develop as well as the uterus, the fallopian tubes, and the vagina. The long maturation of the egg cells is already initiated in the ovaries in the fourth week of pregnancy but they will rest between the first and second phase of meiosis until puberty.

The rhythmic ovulation process begins at puberty when month to month one "egg cell" is released from an ovary: one time from the right, one time from the left. During the hours of ovulation, a localized rise in temperature occurs around the ovary. A mature egg cell is one of the largest cells in the human body; measuring approximately 0.1 millimeters, it is within the realm of visibility. This cell is still not a mature egg cell because the second phase of meiosis is completed only during an eventual impregnation. If no impregnation takes place, this immature cell dies and is expelled from a woman's body during menstruation, along with the spent uterine lining.

The egg cell is a turbid cell without its own power of movement. It rests within the surrounding follicle and is moved into the uterus by the peristaltic action of the fallopian tube. This follows after two weeks of building up in the time between the last menstruation and ovulation. Then there is another two weeks of building up between ovulation and the next menstruation. The egg cell becomes chaotic through its differentiation and its comprehensive range of chemical potential. In this state of chaos, it is especially sensitive and open to cosmic archetypes.

From the fourth week of pregnancy, the male development also begins in the common organic construction during which phase the male gametes, the sperm or spermatozoa, are developed. The male organs develop towards the outside, the front, and downward. The right-to-left symmetry remains.

Maturation of the sperm is also at rest until puberty. However, after puberty, sperm formation is not rhythmic or regular, and with every ejaculation—which can occur many times a day and is influenced by sensual stimulation—thousands of mature sperm are ejected and perish. The reduced temperature of the testicles, which are outside the body, is critical to male fertility. Sperm cells are one of the smallest cells in the human organism.

Sperm is highly differentiated and thoroughly formed. It has a crystalline structure and, because of its high degree of crystallization, almost no chemical potential. Sperm are transparent cells with their own power of movement (disorganized, directionless, and fast). These are earthly qualities.

So, it is clear that with the separation of the sexes, a kind of one-sidedness appears, an extreme polarization between the male and female reproductive cells. At the end of the process, every gamete is biologically unviable and perishes. The following table shows a comparison of the polarization:

Female	**Male**
One	Thousands
Slow to mature	Quick to mature
Large	Tiny
Regularity	Irregularity
Rhythmic	Arrhythmic
Chaos	Form
Inside	Outside
Back	Front
Up	Down
Warm	Cold
Clouded	Transparent
Unmoving, inert	Power of movement
Chemical potential	Crystallized

The fertilization process is first initiated by a localized rise in temperature during ovulation. Once a month, between the last and next menstruation, in the middle of the menstrual cycle, a rhythmic temperature rise occurs in the mother-organism. Within this warmth of ovulation, an egg cell is released along with its surrounding follicle. The last phase of egg cell maturation begins outside of the ovary. The released egg cell is received by one of the fallopian tubes and is moved further along towards the uterus by its peristaltic action.

The egg cell is cooled somewhat in this process. Spermatozoa in the semen come toward the egg cell. Their path goes from the vagina in the direction of the uterus. Sperm come from the outside, from a cooler temperature, and warm themselves along the way. That is the first step of fertilization and takes place before the two cells come into contact with each other. The undifferentiated, warm, chaotic state of the egg cell is differentiated and cooled by the sperm. Within the meeting of these two genetic streams, a warmth organism is formed. The polarities of one-sided and extreme cold and warmth are overcome. The individuality, the ("I") form the warmth organism from the balance that has occurred.

The next step is the meeting of the gametes or reproductive cells. The egg cell is surrounded by thousands of sperm and in this moment a rhythmic rotation begins that lasts approximately thirty-six hours. A bio-chemical glow begins. There is still no penetration by a spermatozoon, but a light-organism has formed accompanied by ordered and harmonious movement. This is the second step of fertilization. Now, the individuality of the child has overcome the cloudy and inert state of the egg cell and the transparent, self-powered disordered-movement state of the spermatozoa and has again developed a light/movement organism out of the balance.

The third step is what is traditionally known as actual fertilization, but is, in fact, the third process. A spermatozoon penetrates the egg cell, and its outer membrane chemically isolates itself from the mother-organism:

The first immunity processes begin. The other sperms die and dissolve. The egg cell goes through its last maturing by a process of further undifferentiating and chaos and by secretion of the so-called polar body, a concentrate of hardened cell material that is incapable of life. A rejuvenation of the egg cell occurs in this moment of intense activity between the egg cell and the differentiating determinations of the spermatozoon. The spermatozoon loses its crystalline structure, swells up, expands, and then dissolves in the plasma of the impregnated cell. An egg has now been formed—a biological and genetically complete cell. This cell then divides for the first time (mitosis), and other divisions rhythmically follow. There is not yet any growth, merely cell divisions in geometric progression—one becomes two, then four, eight, sixteen, thirty-two, and so on. The morula is formed while still inside the fallopian tube (like a little mulberry or raspberry). This organism does not glow and has no power of movement itself. The entire activity is now chemical-biological and has relocated to the inner, light organism. The organism has overcome the polarities of potential chaos. A crystal forms and builds a chemical organism out of the balance, a new deed of the individuality.

The fourth step of fertilization is implantation into the mucous membrane of the uterus that has built up in the two weeks after menstruation and reached a high point in its development around the time of ovulation. Without fertilization (and the beginning of pregnancy), the mucous membrane would again deteriorate, and the dead tissue would be expelled with the next menstruation. With the implantation, which is an activity of the child, the built-up state of the mucous membrane and the hormone situation maintains itself until birth. The morula is still inside the fallopian tube (right or left) and then goes out so that it can fall into the uterus between the fifth and seventh days after conception. During this first experience with "falling" (weight, heaviness), the morula reshapes itself into a blastula or blastocyst. Here we have an organism that on one pole

has formed a bladder filled with intercellular fluid, while on the other pole the cells of the no-longer-existing morula are thickened. During the process of falling, a polarization appears between cell thickness and fluid lightness. This changes the form of the organism. If the blastocyst was not an individualized, living totality, but rather an inorganic sphere, it would either burst in the mucous membrane or spring back into uterine space. However, it is embedded in the wall of the uterus—rather like an act of acceptance or receiving. The organism is now going through a new metamorphosis, and there is a recoil as the inner activity of the organism stays within itself, and there is a falling into heaviness but with a balancing buoyancy.

A new fluid has formed at the pole where the cells were bunched. It is transparent, rich in silica, and poor in organic material, the amniotic fluid. The fluid that formed during the descent of the blastocyst is thicker, chemically active, and rich in material, the yolk sack fluid. In between is found the embryonic disk from which the body of the embryo will be formed. These two fluids are the first two enveloping organs of the embryo. In this fourth deed of the individuality, the separation of space that is typical for the female as well as the male sexual organs was overcome. With implantation a geographic location is chosen. A physical organism is formed that takes part in the laws of weight and lightness and the dimensions of space.

Fertilization, accompanied by the four deeds of the individuality that create balance, has overcome the extremely one-sided tendency to dissimilarity and separation of the sexes, and within one week and four steps has formed an individual organism that carries immunity, an organism that is four-fold in that it has the qualities of warmth, light, movement, and is biologically/chemically and physically/geographically localized. Implantation, the last step of fertilization, is simultaneously the first phase of formation of the amnion. Fertilization and the organic forms that follow it, are already the visible results of contention between the genetic material and

the individual constitution of the incarnating child.The localized rise in temperature during ovulation of the mother-organism is the first accommodating, genetic, organic activity that is encountered by the individual, the child who wishes to incarnate. It builds a bridge out of the earthly genetic stream to the individuality and its constitution, which was already prepared before conception.

The individual constitution prepares itself in a world that is inaccessible to sense observation, the world that is in the interval between visible forms. A kernel of enthusiasm from the sea of will is what inflames the individual motive to incarnate and begin a new life. This "midnight world" before conception is the highest experience of spiritual development until after death. It is an awareness of the goals of human development in the present time and a growing enthusiastic absorption for the task of realizing those goals within their karmic webs on earth. This enthusiasm for the realization of the human acts like a magnet and draws the will toward the solicitous interest of all the spiritual hierarchies. A body of differentiated starlight—a star-body or astral body—envelops this kernel of spiritual enthusiasm. The will of the hierarchies to take part, with their presence, in the human creation of individuals is so great that the universe is threatened with becoming empty. But thanks to the cosmic reproduction force of healing and regeneration, the effects of the stars remain as envelopment around the kernel of individuality and the beings themselves remain sustained in the universe. A new body, a new covering, whether cosmic or etheric, now also belongs to the individual constitution. Each individual "I" forms itself out of certain characteristics of its own, and this composition differentiates it from others that are likewise formed out of the same components and properties but in different configurations. This is the spiritual physical body—one's own physical body within its spiritual being. It cannot yet be perceived by the senses because it is not yet penetrated by matter.

This four-fold individual constitution has occasioned the meeting between father and mother out of a line of ancestors, and, from the time of fertilization, it will begin to penetrate the genetic stream, fusing, overcoming, and transforming the organism so that it becomes a tool for its own destiny. Enthusiasm for the development of humankind joins itself to the warmth as an organic agent; indeed, it is the warmth in the organic. The hierarchical will-archetypes work in light and in ordered movement. The chemical activity of the cells and cell divisions is subordinate to these archetypes that imprint them into matter, and, through this organic connection, matter is transformed over time. The individual destiny that wants to fashion itself takes on a form in this way and allows traces of its acts upon the earth into the dimensions of space.

The formation of the embryonic amnion began with the last step of fertilization—the implantation. The embryonic disk, a two-layered cellular disk in the middle of the sphere that embedded itself into the uterine mucous membrane, will rest another two weeks during the formation of the amnion.

The yolk sack is a thick, cloudy, chemically active organ. It is confined through one of the two embryonic disks called the endoderm or inner skin. Its functions are nutrition and metabolism.

The amnion is a transparent, vitreous organ. Equipped with light and formative forces, it is chemically inactive. It is, in turn, confined by the other layer of the embryonic disk, the ectoderm or outer skin.

The allantois (sausage-like) is another amnion organ, out of the yolk sack and differentiated as a protuberance with the functions of elimination and detoxification. The entire outer spherical surface that is in direct contact with the uterine mucous membrane, along with the mother-organism, constitutes the fourth amnion organ.

Later the chorion further develops into the placenta. This organ intermediates between the two organisms, the mother and the fetal child. Within the mother-organism, the heredity—*the past*—resides, for the time

of the pregnancy; this is the four-fold *present* organism of the child. This organism in turn carries or surrounds in its interior a third organism that will become the organism for the *future.* During the pregnancy, it will be elaborated upon by the individuality of the child for the time after birth. The four enveloping organs (embryonic amnions) fashion a complete organism with these four systematic functions:

a) Nutrition, metabolism	Yolk Sack
b) Transparency, form	Amnion
c) Elimination, detoxification	Allantois
d) Exchange with environment, circulation	Placenta (Chorion)

The motor system, the limb system, is still missing from this organism. It is present in the embryo body, but it will first develop and mature after the birth in contention with the earthly forces. In the middle between these four enveloping organs is the embryonic disk that rests until the seventeenth day after conception.

In the first week, fertilization is completed. It is finalized with implantation, the step that includes formation of the enveloping organs. By the end of the third week, the organism has been formed in which the individuality will live until birth (amnions). The embryonic disk is in the middle of this organism. From the seventeenth day until the end of the fourth week, the individuality molds the organism surrounding the embryonic disk until it is efficiently reorganized into an embryonic body. This body contains all the organs that will serve as tools for the individuality after birth. By the end of the first month, the individuality has already built up its own organism in one shot. The individuality exists not only in relationship to space, but also to time—the 36-hour rotation and glow in the second step of fertilization, the day of implantation, and so forth. Every

month of pregnancy has its own underlying characteristic. During pregnancy, the child experiences the course of the year for the first time. Birth comes at the end of the third quarter of this first year. The first three months after birth also belong to pregnancy because the individuality must contend with earthly conditions for the first time and ripens its physiology based upon what is living in its environment.

The development of the embryonic organs from the amnions begins on the seventeenth day after conception. Until then the embryonic disk is resting and the creation activity is in the amnions. The embryonic disk consists initially of two skins, the ectoderm and the endoderm, which confine the yolk sack and the amnion sack.

The first noticeable gesture of the reshaping of the embryonic disk occurs on the ectoderm around the seventeenth day. At the place where the head pole will develop, an impression appears, as if an invisible finger had imprinted it. Out of this the neural cavity develops away from the head pole. This indentation as well as the neural cavity determines the anatomic spatial bearing—right, left, i.e. the lateral symmetry, caudal, dorsal, and ventral. The neural cavity develops further into the neural tube, thereby closing in amnion fluid that, from this point in time, will surround the nerve system as cerebrospinal fluid. The first rudiments of the spinal cord and the vertebrae have appeared. Later on, the back is reminiscent of the ectoderm of the embryonic disk. The sensitive area around the fourth thoracic vertebra is a memory of the area around that first impression. The disk form reshapes itself into an oblong showing the tendency to form like the neural tube. An intermediate skin, the mesoderm, is formed between the ectoderm and the endoderm. Now the rounding formation tendency of the endoderm and the yolk sack becomes spherical and is internalized in the body.

There are two polar formation tendencies clearly displayed. Chronologically, the first is the formation of the skin and the nerve-sense

system from the ectoderm and runs linear, oblong, and towards the outside. The last formation chronologically builds the structure of the digestive and metabolic systems from the endoderm and runs spherical, round, and towards the inside. In the middle chronologically, between the linear and the round tendencies, the rhythmic waves of the mesoderm are acting, mediating between the facing polar tendencies.

Finally, the round tendency will form the typical round, circular shape of the embryonic countenance. Likewise, from the endoderm a tube develops, although internalized—the structure of the digestive tract from the mouth to the anus with all the organs that belong to it. The content of this digestive tube is the yolk fluid, and the embryo is completely surrounded by amniotic fluid. Connective tissue, the muscles and cartilage, is formed from the mesoderm. On one side, this connective tissue fills the space between the nerve-system, the sense-organs, and the skin and, on the other side, that of the metabolic-digestive systems.

The chorion is the outermost sphere of the embryonic amnions and develops into the placenta. Here, outside the embryonic body, blood formation begins. Islands of blood flow into the yolk fluid and penetrate the body. They favor certain stream paths that are enclosed by the mesoderm and formed into blood vessels. Two main vessels, at first outside of the body, are formed at the heart, in front of what will be the ribcage, and the throat directly underneath the developing head. However, before the ribcage completely closes, the heart penetrates and fills it.

The urinary bladder and the sexual organs are formed from the allantois together with the endoderm and the yolk sack. Formation of the kidneys, however, comes out of the nerve system—their beginning structure is located in the back of the brain. This structure develops from the brain immediately under the skin in two rows of little "pearls" along the spinal cord further to the dorsal area. The "pearls" close to the head degenerate and those at the dorsal area wrap themselves, taking on the spherical

without losing their lateral symmetry. Here a neural tendency is brought into the vicinity of the metabolic system.

The lungs are formed from a protuberance of the digestive tract. By dividing in half the lungs are placed in a three-fold symmetry to the branching of the bronchia and the alveolar system inside the ribcage—right to left, cephal and caudal, front to back. Here a metabolic tendency is brought into the vicinity of the nerve system.

Simultaneously with lung formation, hand formation begins immediately followed by the feet, then the lower arms and calves, and finally the upper arms and thighs. The lungs are formed together with the limbs. After the birth, they serve together in the life on earth and in the air.

By the end of the fourth week, all the structures of the embryonic organs are formed. This process was completed in about ten days. In the prior three weeks, fertilization, implantation, and formation of the enveloping organs were completed.

Birth usually happens at the end of the third quarter. The fourth quarter is the first three months of life outside of the mother-organism. Now important maturing processes and restructuring of the organs take place. These processes require contact with gravity and the atmosphere outside the womb, but are still considered processes belonging to pregnancy.

It is important to get to know the characteristic of each of the twelve months.

• The first month brings the summary of all the components of the enveloping organs and the body. Out of the gaze toward the past, it is an all-embracing acceptance of the universe and the first assimilation of wholeness. With the help of Rudolf Steiner's indications for eurythmy, the formative gesture of **Aries** can be recognized.

• The second month shows the assimilation of the mobility of the universe, the first inner movements, the beginning physiology. The "gaze" turns to the present and future, the universe now in this life, the formative gesture of **Taurus.**

• In the third month, the individuality begins to experience the body. The first tactile experiences follow. The hands and feet touch each other, the two sides touch each other, the formative gesture of **Gemini.**

• In the fourth month, the body's immunity and resistance are so far structured and developed that the formative gesture of **Cancer** can be recognized, to close oneself off from the environment. These first four months have, as their priority, formation out of the universe, starting from the head.

• In the fifth month, the inner regions of the organism have been filled, the ribcage developed, the gesture of **Leo.**

• In the sixth month, important maturing processes take place. From this month onward, the body exhibits more and more organic resistance in order to survive a possible premature birth, the gesture of **Virgo.**

• The seventh month brings new contentions with weight and heaviness for the pregnant woman. The child practices balance and placement, the gesture of **Libra**.

• The eighth month can bring with it the danger of reciprocal poisoning, the first contention with earthly matter, the nearness of death around the time of birth, the gesture of **Scorpio.** These middle four months address themselves to inner-formation—the torso.

• The nearness of the birth also brings with it the contention with the earth, with the will that is served by the limbs, with breathing, with the gradual introduction of nutrition and with digestion, with learning of sleep and changing states of consciousness, with the maturing of the warmth organism. These processes ripen after birth with the formative gestures of **Sagittarius**, **Capricorn**, **Aquarius,** and **Pisces**.

The last months of pregnancy and likewise the first months of life address themselves to the first calisthenics of the limbs and the metabolism in conjunction with earth forces. These characteristics of the twelve months of the year can serve as an orientation and help us get to know the psychological mood of the mother and child during pregnancy.

The organic contributions of the mother to the birth are the rhythmic muscle contractions, the intensity and characteristics of which change around the time of the birth.

Normally the *first phase* of the birth appears with the placement of the child's head at the opening to the birth canal from the cervix going in the direction of the vagina. It is the expression of the child's will to set his/herself in contention with the earth. Again, the head pole, the nerve system, is the first. The individuality of the child, which is still living in the enveloping organs, begins to leave them in order to move into the organs of the body. The first step is the death of the amnion fluid when the amniotic sack breaks. The nerve-sense activity now begins to move into the head. The head searches for the way outside and, as a result, the child's forehead comes in contact with the mother's pelvic bone.

At this moment, the child is in complete solitude and cannot be helped from the outside. The child must find the so-called hypomochlion, that is a search for balance between life in the womb, its past, and turning to the earth, its goal and future. Hypomochlion is also the name of the balancing point on a scale. At the moment of birth, the gesture of the child's

head is an exaggerated downward position of the chin in order to free the forehead so that the head can go upward: This is the first gesture of erectness and verticality. The light of the world will be seen.

After this first obstacle is overcome, the body is born, usually head first. Later, it will always be the limbs that carry out the will and lead movement. After birth, the head attains a state of rest, places itself at the top, in lightness. The child is taken into the mother's arms.

In the *second phase*, the child begins to breathe and experiences a string of changes and maturations in the cardiovascular system. It begins to draw upon the middle system of the new body. The umbilical cord now stops pulsing, the placenta dies and is expelled.

Hours after birth when the child has been diapered, has maybe already slept, the excretion of the meconium occurs. This is not yet a stool, but rather the demise of the yolk fluid contained in the intestine. In the *third phase* of birth, the child has now begun to draw upon the digestive and metabolic system.

With the first urination, one has the outer sign that the child, in a *fourth phase,* has stirred the organs of excretion and detoxification. The allantois now dies. The dead allantois remains as a holdover in the organism as a fatty strand, the *ligamentum paraumbilicale*.

Birth has four phases just like fertilization. The individuality gradually grasps the four functional main systems. And birth is accompanied by the deaths of the four enveloping organs that will be left behind. Birth has a *past* (excretion of the amnion fluid, head movement, and maturation of the nerve system), a *present* (the first breath, changes in the heart and circulation, and the death of the placenta), and a *future* (excretion of the meconium and the metabolic system beginning to mature—which will not be finished in a lifetime). And, as a remembrance of mortality, a "poisonous sting," the *ligamentum paraumbilicale* remains in the organism after birth.

The individuality no longer has a spherical organism in its surroundings. It now begins to have its own organism as its center that step by step is grasped and penetrated for at the least the next eighteen to twenty-one years. It is the task of adults to form and act as the new enveloping organs, to support the individuality within the surroundings of its own body, and to help with the efforts to individualize the newborn organism. There will still be many different births of the individuality and many deaths of what was inherited in the further course of development that should, from now on, be educationally and pedagogically accompanied.

Early Childhood Today: Wish and Reality

by

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Translated from the German by

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"It seems essential to get a generalized picture of 'children'. . . but at the same time every generalization is far removed from that which children really 'are.' All generalizations about childhood manipulate education, but without them one cannot educate." This quote is from education scientist Jürgen Oelkers.

In contrast, Rudolf Steiner said, "There is only one educator and that is the child-man and child-woman facing their own selves. Education is the art of creating an opportunity for child-beings to educate themselves." With the first quote one experiences that the image adults make of the child is the basis, the foundation, of education. The arbitrariness of the quality of that image is noticeable. The main point is that one has an image; however, in contrast, Steiner's comment is based on the idea that no image at all should be made of a child, rather the concept of what childhood actually is lives within this conflict.

Perception of Childhood in Research

The modern outlook towards the child has been essentially defined by the principle research done by Philipp Aries and Lloyd de Mause. In his fundamental work, Aries pointed out already in 1960 that the concept of "childhood" is a fabrication of the modern era. As a result, education as we know it has been working its mischief more or less by robbing children of their freedom. It used to be that in traditional society a child was happy "because he or she had the freedom to interact with many grades and age groups." Therefore, "at the beginning of our modern era a special condition was *discovered;* namely that of childhood. That led to a tyrannical concept of family that resulted in the destruction of friendship and sociability." [1] Lloyd de Mause describes the history of childhood as "a nightmare from which we are just now awaking. The further back we go in history, the more inadequate is the care of and provision for children and therefore the larger was the probability that they would be killed, abandoned, beaten, tormented, and sexually abused."[2]

Today, it seems, instead of waking up, society has sworn an oath of apocalypse against childhood. A sociological purvue of the situation of children today (in Germany) with such known factors as the one-child family, one-parent family, and so forth, determines to a large degree the thinking about children. Some of the clichés used to describe and evaluate the current situation include destabilization (basic environment becomes fragile), equalization (social etiquette between adults and children is equalized), isolation (only-children), cloistered, institutional-ization, products of education, and media-influenced. The view that childhood is disappearing is further supported by additional descriptive phrases such as medicated, politicization, commercialization, and mechanization.

Isolated voices have been raised in opposition including German educator Klaus Mollenhauer who noted,

> My anthropological imagination is not sufficient for me to envision a "disappearance of childhood"; that is, in the sense that there would be no marked differences in the educational process between children and adults and also no tasks specific to each to be mastered. I can only understand diffusions in this regard as social pathology.

However, today one is again, or perhaps newly, eagerly prepared to conceive of childhood as a fabrication with the consequence that now children are to be treated as little adults, "Since our children have been compelled by conditions to become 'little adults,' we must now also treat them as adults" with the consequence that "education…is not to promote childhood, but to destroy it." [3] One can get away from the endless circle of scientific theories if one leaves behind the abstract idea of childhood and concentrates on images of childhood or if one does empirical research.

Images of the Child – the Example of Pippi Longstocking

Since the time of Rousseau, age-appropriate education has become a leading concept in pedagogy. This requires a detailed, conclusively provable concept of development as a foundation. The necessary research for such a concept was done, especially in the first half of the twentieth century, through exact and detailed observation and analysis by such people as Sigmund Freud, W. Stern and Jean Piaget. Developmental psychology researched the thinking, feeling, and willing of children and produced a vast amount of material on individual findings in which the individual child was lost. A way out remains—in the dire need for an explanation.

One could cling to Rousseau's image of the original-natural state of the child possessing moral integrity. In our day, one likes to overlook the fact that, for instance, the "Wild Child" from Aveyron in his "found state" had none of the moral qualities, which he really should have possessed, according to this theory. Nowadays, people enthusiastically console

themselves with a romanticized image of the child such as was portrayed by Astrid Lindgren in her story *Pippi Longstocking*. In *Pippi Longstocking*, the reflex against social conventions is clear. Customs are thrown overboard, paradoxes become real (a horse standing on the veranda), most secret dreams, such as throwing raw eggs, come true, and education is not left out—self-education, admittedly, within a reward-punishment scheme. Send her to bed? "I'll do that myself," says Pippi. "First I'll say it very friendly, and when I don't mind, I'll say it again more sternly and when I still don't mind then I get a spanking."

It seems to me that this situation was not created from an intimate knowledge of the child's wish to fashion his or her pretend world after reality. Rather, it seems that this situation is presented as a dreamed-up, radical answer to failed strategies of upbringing and education. Daily reality and the child's experience of the world are here lost. This does not help clarify what a child really thinks, feels, and wills.

Motifs of "Happiness Education"

Moving closer to what a child thinks, feels, and wills, which guides the motifs of some educational methods, is easily stymied by what parents wish for their children. A traditional attitude involves many parents' dream that their offspring will have a more fulfilling life than their own. One can observe how, with such an attitude, educational agendas fail and the best of intentions does not lead to the desired outcome. Coerced happiness is a dysfunctional agenda!

All the same, one can be stimulated into thinking that happiness education works when good "feelings" arise as a result of Johann Pestalozzi and his relatively unsuccessful forays into "happiness education." It soon becomes clear that one is dealing here with a transitory feeling and not a permanent state of being. No one can be constantly and limitlessly happy.

Likewise, what actually constitutes "happiness" must be determined by every person according to his or her own position and situation.

This can easily be concluded from a survey of a large group of school children.[4] A boy, ten years old, commented, "I've been happy my whole life (to this point). Above all because I have good parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, brothers, and sisters, neighbors, friends, and a pet." Other children of the same age see their happiness in nice friends, good grades, successful skating, or a new computer.

One can get a more penetrating viewpoint with the question about the biggest possible experience of happiness. A schoolgirl answered, "When I was little I wanted to learn to ride a bicycle. My father put me on the bike and I rode off. He held onto the back of the bike. At a street that went a little downhill, he let go and I rode along without knowing that he did. Suddenly my father yelled: 'You can do it!' Then I realized that I was riding by myself. That was the happiest experience of my life."

This answer begs our inquiry into the common characteristics of those things that can bring on moments of happiness. Aristotle differentiated between luck, which came about by accident (*eutycheia*), and the feeling of happiness that appears by virtue of an activity, voluntarily done, that makes one happy (*eudaimonia*). When we achieve capabilities through learning, then feelings of happiness are especially present.

Current research has empirically corroborated this so-called activity-theoretical approach and has been able to elaborately specify that feelings of happiness come about when "for the mastery of a situation or the carrying out of an action, maximum capabilities are demanded."[5] This means when one can make maximum use of one's possibilities and capabilities in situations that justify the exertion. Substandard efforts such as when a chess player loses interest because he or she always wins easily, lead to loss of motivation just as demands for extraordinary effort, if over-challenging, can lead to frustration.[6]

This kind of happiness allows the forgetting of "time and space, delight and pain" and leads to personality growth. Here one does not experience oneself as a passive observer but as an active co-creator of the world. For children this comes especially into play when they can optimally balance their will and their ability. They experience themselves as creatively active and so change the world and themselves.

The task of education, then, is obvious—creating opportunities for children to design and form their world and providing stimulus for these activities. To be avoided is passive entertainment that omits challenging activity.

From the Child's Point of View: a Paradigm of Early Childhood Research

These considerations live within the central idea that guides modern methods of research on childhood and especially early childhood. Researchers abandon every limitation of perspective regarding a certain research goal. In the style of selfless observers, they unreservedly try to put themselves into the child's world and experience. In this manner, empathizing, from quantifiable, measurable gauging of averages, which can then be translated into patterns, can finally be revived. The phrase "from a child's point of view" acquires meaning when one allows every person to have her or his own blueprint for life by virtue of his or her own strengths and his or her own, personal characteristics—"when one wants to seek out the child, even the very young child, as an actor in its own development."[7] In this way, one may learn to understand developmental phases as an open process leading to new and even surprising individual patterns as children wrestle with outer conditions and propelling inner forces. Also, set aside is the fallacy that the developmental process may be summed up as an exact, naturally pre-programmed succession of phases. Those working in Waldorf education like to habitually, and therefore more or less unconsciously, refer to the seven-year rhythm. In other words,

> One must believe that something is possible which goes beyond what can be directly and immediately noticed or perceived. However, it seldom shows itself on its own. Usually one must be pushed to it. It is the other, unexpected, unknown and also impenetrable part of the subject that "comes into the picture" here, metaphorically speaking, his shady side.[8]

What we are dealing with here is the requirement that the "permanent, individual blueprint of the child" is perceived. Here the child becomes foreign to us, becomes a puzzle. At this point we remember Steiner and his counsel that we should not create an image of the child because a view of the individuality is lost if images become concrete.

Today "from the child's point of view" means learn to understand the child from the beginning as a matchless individual. Learn to understand a child's behavior as questioning the world and the educator. In short, learn to let children express themselves.

Approaches: Biographical Testimonials

To get closer to the areas of perception and reality, children should finally have a word. It may be astonishing to some to try this at the preschool age and even with infants. The American early childhood researcher Daniel N. Stern subtly, sensitively, and poetically ventured to feel himself into the state of soul of infants of various ages during his exemplary research about ten years ago.[9]

Using Stern's work let us turn, first of all, to the time of infancy. Joey, six weeks old, has awakened. He looks randomly at a sunray dancing on the wall next to his crib.

> *A space glows over there,*
> *A gentle magnet pulls to capture.*
> *The space is growing warmer and coming to life.*

Inside it, forces start to turn around one another in a slow dance.
The dance comes closer and closer.
Everything rises to meet it.
It keeps coming. But it never arrives.
The thrill ebbs away.[10]

An image of moving forces, not coagulating into form or becoming solidified, an up and down, back and forth, no fixed point of reference, rising tension, falling tension—the infant is enmeshed in a cohesion of pure force-activities.

A few weeks later this force-activity takes shape. Joey, at age 4.5 months, feels himself to be the cause of these processes but he cannot find the right measure. For that he needs the loving tuning and rhythmic composition of this symphony of forces by his mother. Otherwise there is the danger of becoming overwhelmed.

I immerse myself into the world of her face.
Its lines are like heaven, clouds and water.
Its liveliness and verve are the air and light.
Usually it's a turmoil of light and air.
Today, everything here is still and dim.
Neither the lines in her face nor its round bulges are stirring.
Is she gone? Where did she go? I'm scared.
Her complacency also slowly creeps into me.
I look for something alive in her face in which I can take refuge.
Now I've found it. It's her eyes. Her liveliness is concentrated there.
It is the softest and, at the same time, the hardest place in this world.[11]

The little boy is drawn into the "world of the eyes" where he experiences powerful currents that surge and tear and pull. He is able once again to delve into the world of the face, which is now variably shaped and touches him like a living, fresh breeze. Inside him the living dance begins anew. With mutual delight, a "game of tag" now begins which surrounds him

and flows over him and in his alternating strains is like an experience of wind; if it becomes too pressing, the little boy turns away:

> *I hesitate. Then I veer off. I turn my back to her wind. And I coast into quiet water, all alone.*
> *This quiet place quells the turmoil inside me. It dies down and comes to a rest. I am comforted.*
> *After a while in the stillness, a faint zephyr brushes the side of my head. It refreshes me. I turn and see it gently ripple the water under a softer sky.*[12]

A new quality appears when the infant masters speech more and more. In doing so, the point at which what is spoken is no longer merely "formulated" but also targeted in reference to the self is of fundamental importance. [13]

> *My room is so still I am all alone here. I want to go where Mommy and Daddy are. If I don't go, I will stay alone and still. So I go to their room, and get in between them, into that valley. There, I wrap myself in the heat that rises and falls. I immerse myself in the pools of warm smells, in the sounds of air flowing in and out of them as the valley fills and empties. I bathe in the rich tides of our morning world.*
>
> *Then Daddy sends into my world a familiar sound—just for me. Its music unlocks the warm Daddy-feeling. For the first time, I notice that the sound has a special shape, one that stands apart from its music. This shape is bright and soft and lingers after the music is gone. It has a force and life of its own. It was hiding in the flow of the music but has come out. I can play with this brand-new shape. It has curves with little explosions. I try it and send it to Daddy. He sends it back to me, clean and sharp. I am getting it now. I send it back. He laughs and sends it to me again, this time flowing free and full.*
>
> *This new shape takes me into myself. There the shape unfolds by itself but also emerges from inside me. It grows and spreads. I let it fall over and around me. I press it close against my feelings. Now I'm ready. I rise up wrapped in my new shape.*

That bright, soft cloak changes me. I fling myself out of the valley and declare myself: "Me pumpkin!"

From this simple example out of everyday life, one experiences exactly how the process of giving oneself up to something, in this case to language, with its entire musical-rhythmic melody, calls forth comforting feelings of life energy. In this realm, one can completely lose oneself, and through the lightning-like beaming in of forces related to coming to consciousness, one experiences formation, limitation, and shape. This comes completely from inside the small child. It is certainly stimulated by the father in this case, but should be understood as a genuine achievement of the child. One senses that the child "knows" the word and is able to mold these overwhelming forces.

It is clear from these examples that the world experience of the small child is flexible. The child does not perceive the same reality as adults. The child is interwoven in a process in which the outer appearance of the world is not taken in. Instead, shaping forces enter into conversation with the life energies of the child. This "conversation" proceeds in an unstable manner and is highly sensitive. It can get out of hand and become threatening. But, insofar as it is shaped and formed, it can become uplifting, strengthening, refreshing, and growth-stimulating. The child now requires attentive perception of its sensations and orientations. The child needs support and encouragement from adults. At the same time, the child also requires a caring, protective, and anchoring envelopment that conveys security, safety, and composure. Further, the child needs stimulation to continually encourage a sailing forth to ever new shores.

It is clear from the early childhood memories of Elias Canetti how profoundly early childhood experiences can affect the motifs of later life. The following episode must have happened when Canetti was two years old:

My earliest memory is drenched in red. In the arms of a girl I come out of a door. The floor ahead of me is red and to the left there is a stairway going down which is also red. Opposite us at the same level of height, a door opens and a smiling man steps out and comes up to me in a friendly manner. He comes up very close to me, stands still and says to me: "Show me your tongue." I stick out my tongue; he puts his hand in his pocket and pulls out a pocket knife, opens it and puts the blade very close to my tongue. He says: "Now we're going to cut out his tongue." I can't bring myself to pull in my tongue. He comes ever closer. Soon he will touch my tongue with the blade. At the last moment he pulls the knife away and says: "Not today, tomorrow." He folds up the knife again and puts it in his pocket.

Every morning we go out the door to the red floor, the door opens and the smiling man appears. I know what he is going to say and wait for his order to show my tongue. I know he wants to cut out my tongue and every time I am more fearful. That is how the day begins and it happens many times.[14]

Later, in many conversations with his mother, the association is clarified, and the incident is clearly conceivable, but Canetti cannot let it go. It accompanies him during his entire life as a determining motive. Canetti saves his tongue: In spite of everything, he becomes an author. It is also clear that for a child, reality is not the world of facts but rather what is hidden behind the facts and revealed in the soul. This reality is, first of all, bound up in the forces that form the feeling of mental/physical well-being. Then, they gradually work themselves up to the sphere of soul activity, thereby forming a basis of soul, a co-author of biographical motifs. The responsibility that educators have is paramount. It is especially evident that actions, facts, and writings about these matters are deeply and morally perceived.

From others' memories about childhood episodes it becomes more clear what the reality of the world is for the small child. It is molded out of

moral substance. Truth is the educational resource. That is exactly the opposite of what Alice Miller decried: "Education is, above all, the exercise of power of the stronger adults over the weaker children. It is a compilation of deceitful maneuvers." However, this can only be an attitude of education that mistakes outer appearance for reality; that believes the wrapping to be the actual core-being of the child—in inheritance and environment, in genes and the ability to manipulate them. The essential being of the child is not to be found there. It hides itself from a constant, measuring gaze. This gaze is fixed and certain and does not have the openness to avoid preconceived notions, even of the unexpected. With that kind of an attitude, how can an atmosphere be created where the small child has room to develop its individuality? The attitude of the older generation regarding the younger generation should be one of acceptance and pleasant surprise, as formulated by Erik Erikson, and not one of critical observation.

Therefore, for the task of education, qualities are needed in which the individuality does not see itself as being hindered by its so-called wrappings. Steiner impressively summed up these considerations: "The essence of the child . . . we cannot even get to know with our normal understanding. We can't even comprehend it. But, we can support it through attention, discretion, and devotion."

Footnotes:

[1] "The society of the Middle Ages, which we have chosen here as a starting point, had no relationship to childhood.… An understanding of childhood is not to be confused with a fondness for the child; it corresponds much more to a conscious perception of distinctions between children and adults, even categorically differentiating youth from adults. Such a conscious relationship to childhood did not previously exist." Philipp Aries, 1975.

[2] de Mause, Lloyd. *Hoert ihr die Kinder weinen. Psychogenetische Geschichte der Kindheit*, (*Listen to the Children Crying: The Psychogenetic History of Childhood*), 1977.

[3] Already in 1985 the educator, H. Giesecke, in an essay titled "Vom Ende der Erziehung" ("The End of Education") wrote about taking leave of the "Idea of Childhood": "One would do well to treat children as small but steadily growing adults."

[4] Bucher, A. A. *Kindheitsglueck: Romantischer Anachronismus oder uebersehene Realitaet? (Childhood Happiness: Romantic Anachronism or Overlooked Reality?*). A study of 1,300 school children about the psychology of happiness and education, 1999. On pp 399–418 Bucher tells how Pestalozzi failed with his upbringing and education desires for his own son.

[5]Ibid., p 403.

[6]Bucher describes results of research done by Csikszentmihaly who empirically specifies and enriches the basic concept of Aristotle in that he names conditions under which feelings of happiness appear or not.

[7] Cf. C.E. Schaefer. *Aus der Perspektive des Kindes? Von der Kindheits-forschung zur ethnographischen Kindheitsforschung* (*From the Perspective of the Child? From Childhood Research to Ethnographic Childhood Research*), 1997.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Stern, Daniel. *Diary of a Baby*, Basic Books (Harper-Collins), p 17, 1990.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid., p 58.

[12] Ibid., p 59.

[13] Canetti, Elias. *Die Gerettete Zunge. Geschichte einer Jugend* (*The Saved Tongue: Story of an Adolescent*), 1979.

About the author:

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The Kindergarten Child

by

Peter Lang

Waldorf Journal Project #2

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Translated from the German by

Nina Kuettel

The kindergarten has come into the public arena. In the political debate about the consequences of the conclusions of the PISA study, the kindergarten is, in many cases, not understood as a place of development in which children acquire essential, vital, basic skills needed in order to have a foundation on which to build future school learning. Time spent in kindergarten is often characterized as "cuddly education" and "wasted time." According to a series of articles about the new education catastrophe in Germany in Der Spiegel (a German weekly news magazine), the dogma remains that kindergarten can only be playing and no learning and, as a result, there is cultural malnutrition. Logically, the call for beginning school earlier is becoming louder. However, logical does not always mean appropriate or just.

As a result, it is more urgent than ever that, in the immediate future, the developmental needs of young children are highlighted and examined to see what requisites for kindergarten education emerge. As the same time

it can be shown that in Waldorf education, kindergarten is a time of thorough preparation for future learning in school and in life.

Children are individuals who develop and, with their talents, inclinations, interests, and also handicaps, want to go their own ways. In order to facilitate this process in the best possible way, they need competent, adult role models, loving and secure relationships, and their own schedule of development. Children don't fit into the timetables of the adult world nor do they fit into purposeful political or economic agendas.

Children are capable of learning, joyful at learning, and ready to learn. Their developmental windows are wide open, especially in the preschool and first school years. That is where the responsibility arises to shape the child's world in such a way that at least these three main components permeate their upbringing:

1. **Comprehension**: Children should and want to know and learn to understand the world in its interconnectedness; therefore, the methodology here should consist of simple and easily grasped associations that lead into the ever more complex.

2. **Application:** Children gain trust in their own growing powers and abilities primarily when they get many opportunities to do things themselves and master tasks themselves. When help is needed, it should, of course, be forthcoming.

3. **Meaningfulness:** Children should develop a sense of meaning in their own actions, feelings, and thoughts step by step. That requires qualified role models in childhood and youth as an orientation and accompaniment on their path.

Until school-readiness (determined by the physical and mental development of the child and not necessarily in step with legal regulations or economic considerations) it is not specific, testable knowledge that the child needs. Quite the opposite is true! The time before school, free from formal learning, allows for the development of basic skills on which later formal education and training can build. These skills provide for the future youth and adult to arrive into a position where he can master the demands of daily life in the best possible way. They are the requisite foundations for further specialization. Before school readiness, children neither need nor do they tolerate any one-sided intellectualization. The same goes for "cuddly education." Children need mindful attendance of parents and well-trained educators to give them orientation. Only in this way can they find their own paths.

Waldorf Kindergartens as Skills Centers

Waldorf kindergartens have always been understood to be not just safe havens: They are intended to better the developmental conditions of each child and afford him or her a happy and learning-intensive childhood. In Waldorf pedagogy, there are seven skills areas that are highlighted for children up to age six or seven:

Body and Movement

Scientists and teachers have established that more than half of all first-graders have problems with posture, with overweight, or with balance. Many children suffer from lack of movement; their motor and fine motor skills are insufficiently developed. But the human being's mental and spiritual orientation and balance corresponds to his physical flexibility and mobility. Whoever cannot maintain his physical balance usually has problems with his mental balance. Also, the ability to move definitely influences acquiring speech. The ability to comprehend something and then

go towards it permeates perception, widens the horizon of a child's experience, and activates the speech development process. Children who learn active, versatile movement are also preparing the way to more skillful thinking. That is why special attention is paid to make sure children get much varied physical movement. Regular walks, games, or gardening also belong in this spectrum of movement as do finger games and handwork (such as sewing or embroidery).

Tips on method: Perception of the body, development of bodily sense of self, and the motor and fine motor skills come about, for example, by walking, climbing, and jumping rope, gardening and kitchen work, by playing simple musical instruments, and doing simple woodwork such as building a birdhouse.

The Senses and Perception

Virtual worlds are becoming epidemic. They dangle qualities before us that never occur in reality. In order to not fall for these deceptive images, we must depend on our senses more than ever. We need an elevated perception skill. Our children require an alert consciousness for all that happens around them and to them. What develops is the trust in one's own power of perception. That is why dependable, unadulterated impressions are especially important in current times. Even media skills, which are desirable later, here go through a pedagogical foundation building. "Media skill," according to Joseph Weizenbaum, an American computer expert at M.I.T., "means the ability to think critically. One learns critical thinking alone through critically processed reading and that is conditional on a high level of speech competence."

Therefore, in the Waldorf kindergarten, children first discover and explore the real world with their senses and thereby get to know and learn to understand simple, perceptible connections. In this way, paired with their

own joy of discovery, they also gradually experience elementary laws of nature. Such fundamental requisites as these should be present, at the least, before children enter into more complicated connections. Therefore, computers or television in kindergarten can in no way promote media skills needed later.

Tips on method: Nurture the human senses by creating harmonious rooms, among other things, with soothing blends of colors and materials, and by utilizing healthy, organic foods and natural materials.

Speech

Thinking and speaking are closely connected. We can express what we are thinking through speech. With speech we can express our feelings, give names to all things in the world, and enter into discussions with one another. However, this instrument requires early, active, and careful nurturing. Children learn to speak in a speaking environment. This depends, first of all, upon the personal relationship between those speaking and those listening. If a child perceives warmth of soul and language from the adults, then this is how the child can develop good, clear speech. When a child begins to speak varies according to the individual. But all children need good speech role models in order to grow in their language.

Songs, stories, verses, finger games, and rhymes have an important place in a Waldorf kindergarten. The children playfully learn the language and become at home in it. The speech of the educator should therefore be loving, clear, imaginative, and age appropriate. Baby talk does not have a place here nor the use of abstract explanations.

Tips on method: Good speech role models, clear, vocabulary-rich and imaginative speech, songs, verses, finger games, rhymes, correct naming of things such as plants and animals, daily storytelling or reading from

meaningful stories, fairytales, and so forth, allow the children to speak out. Take time to listen and do not correct their speech. From these activities, joy for reading and reading ability will emerge.

Imagination and Creativity

The paradox is omnipresent. All around us, more and more things are being standardized, prefabricated, and defined. On the other hand, human social development is unthinkable without imagination and creativity. Will we soon even still be capable of those two qualities? How do we acquire and maintain these skills? A wealth of ideas, mental/spiritual flexibility, and imagination are required of adults (and rightly so) to enable them to shape their lives and work, and kindergarten is the time to invest in the development of these faculties. Everything imaginative, everything artistic, vitalizes and expands the soul and consciousness of human beings. Development and care of childhood imagination takes on concrete form in the Waldorf kindergarten. There are many non-standardized and barely "finished" toys that stimulate children's creative powers. Stories animate the children to translate what they hear into play. Daily playtime is ample enough for the children to be concentrated and spur each other on to finding joy in activities.

Tips on method: Use toys and play materials that stimulate the imagination, i.e. rocks, boards, pieces of wood, large pieces of cloth and scarves. Have regular playtimes in the forest or garden, with variations in games such as role playing and puppet plays. Use some guided play, such as pretending to be shoemakers, carpenters or tailors (the archetypal trades). The archetypal trade stories should be made known and a relationship developed to them through play; tell inspiring and motivating stories that can then be translated into the children's play.

Social Ability

Social cohesiveness must be learned. Without social competence, the healthy life of an individual person and a society is inconceivable. Children are social beings from birth and will studiously acclimate themselves to social relationships. These learning processes begin in the family and continue in the kindergarten. As more and more children are growing up in one-child families, often with only one parent, and as a result, their social field of practice is limited, then kindergarten must now, more than ever, become the basis for social experience. Social affiliation is always about bringing the interests, desires, and needs of the individual into a relationship with the group or community. On the one hand, individuals must be able to bring their abilities and intentions and, on the other hand, the needs of everyone else should have a place. For this, rules, agreements, and trust are necessary. Children need communities in which they can orient themselves and learn as many of these social rules of life as possible.

A Waldorf kindergarten is such an environment. The children learn that there are rules as well as a structure-creating rhythm to the day and week that lead to single children or groups taking over certain tasks (such as tidying up or setting the table). The children orient themselves by imitating the teacher. Through this process, they also learn to take responsibility and use their own creative space that has resulted and, at the same time, they get practice in useful activities.

Tips on method: Help each other within mixed-age groups; take over tasks such as rinsing the dishes, tidying the room, watering the plants; social orientation through listening to meaningful stories, role playing like father-mother-child, fire-fighting, hospital, store; learn to give, receive, and share; experience parents helping in the kindergarten, for example, by repairing toys, festivals, or renovation work; practice solving conflict, for example, by apologizing.

Motivation and Concentration

Today many children, youth, and adults suffer from nervousness, hyperactivity, and a lack of concentration. Their enthusiasm has been limited as well as their ability to connect themselves with certain activities for a given period of time. In science and education, the causative factors (pathogenesis) have long been sought and researched. At the same time, there has been an effort to get to know and strengthen the healthy and stabilizing factors (salutogenesis).

The Waldorf teachers' tasks are to identify habits and impressions that are harmful to the development of the small child and to keep them away from the child (for example, television at an early age). At the same time, their educational efforts are directed toward health-promoting factors. For instance, they recognize the desire for learning and activity of the young child and stimulate that desire through role modeling and the child's natural tendency to imitate. Interesting and stimulating possibilities for activity have a motivating effect on the children. So regular repetition and rhythmic, creative elements in the daily kindergarten routine, as well as regular attention to seasonal changes highlighted with festivals, all help the child to develop the ability to concentrate.

Tips on method: Self-created play; toys that stimulate initiative and offer manifold possibilities for play; get to know complete tasks from beginning to end and try for themselves (for example, baking, laundry, and gardening); stimulation created by the interest of the teacher; experience appropriate activities having to do with adult daily life instead of unplanned, senseless, or unhealthy activities.

Ethics and Moral Values

In order to shape their own lives, children, like adults, need mental/spiritual orientation, values, and tasks with which they can internally

connect. Children need rules, rituals, clarity, and truthfulness. They want to experience adults who are engaged and involved and can give them moral orientation without preaching. However, today many children find only the standards of a fun-and-recreation-oriented society in their surroundings without any supporting commitment.

Waldorf pedagogy consciously incorporates ethics and morals into its educational concept. It recognizes that children need a coordinated system to absorb the good, beautiful, and true just as they need respect for other people, other cultures, and creation. Children must also learn that the experience of respect, beauty, and truth is linked to personal engagement and involvement.

Tips on method: Orientating stories; preparation and celebration of festivals; loving contact with nature; practiced charity and loving thy neighbor, gratitude (verse before meals), and helpfulness; experience parents' involvement in clubs, politics, the kindergarten; learn respect for multi-cultural distinctions; hear and sing songs and verses from other cultures.

Creating a Meadow for Childhood

Education for a New Millennium
What do Young Children Need Today?

by

Sally Schweizer

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A five year-old on parental knee with opened book: "Wait, I haven't seen the picture properly."[1]

Another child of the same age is alone in front of a video and, as the pictures race by, accepts the situation silently, passively.

Example and Love

Love and good example are the greatest tools we have as parents and early years' educators. The young child is defenseless, trusting, without judgment or discrimination. Yet this is the time of greatest learning. By three the child has learned the particularly human qualities of walking, talking, and first thinking, and taken the first step in consciousness. "I'm taller than my neck," a three-year-old was heard to say.

What do we offer the child under seven to learn when he can absorb so much so fast? The delicate sense organs are all-embracing; the child absorbs willy-nilly the world around, recreating it through the divine gift of imitation in play, speech, and behavior.

Many children today have had to close themselves off from a world with which they cannot cope by forming a hard, protective shell around their souls. One sees pale, defined faces, almost lumpy. Gone are many true children's faces, soft, round, and rosy with bright eyes shining into the world. Why? What is lacking (or too pervasive) that this has become so?

Children in all strata of society are at risk: poverty and discrimination as well as affluence and over-stimulation create an environment in which children cannot thrive. Urban living exacerbates the effects. All parts of their development are attacked by the harmful influences and images around them. Many children are drowning in a bog of commercialism and media. Speed and greed rule. Uncertainty and confusion abound. One blinks and it's all changed, accelerating so fast that we are left gasping. Too much, too often, too early—strength is sapped.

Do we uphold the need for a proper childhood? Or do we dress children as little adults and plunge them into the realms of adult emotions and intellect in the hope that they will become clever and knowledgeable as early as possible? To what detriment? Research finds that those given early schooling do no better than those starting later. Does entrance into an early childhood curriculum lead them to access information they really need, or would their needs best met by providing a stimulating wholesome environment? Children are our future. How can we help them to face the world today?

Moral Life

Every child has an individual spiritual nature as well as an earthly one; it is up to us to nourish both. Then s/he will be able to stand in the world with courage and responsibility. Working with festivals has a healing quality and deepens children's moral understanding. It helps counteract

the breakdown of traditions and out-of-season peculiarities (e.g., strawberries in winter at the supermarket). Festivals cover every aspect of learning with their preparation and celebration, bringing a magical depth of spiritual and soul experience to both child and parent alike, and adds healing to our world of untruths, cons, and hype. A foundation is laid to help the child withstand later pressures of prestige and temptations such as drugs, smoking, and alcohol. The Waldorf school's daily rituals such as the nondenominational verse and candle lighting at break give the children a sense of occasion and continuity. Celebrating each child's birthday kindles self-respect.

Religious feeling is at the heart of the 0-7-year-old's learning. I am not, of course, linking this with any form of creed or organized religion. Wonder is the basis of their search for knowledge. This quality is disappearing, often replaced by only factual and even useless information, and yet wonder is also vital to the adult. As a six-year-old said, "Heaven is more higher than space." The true scientist must, next to clear analysis, also be a creative wonderer with reverence for life. We must not be gulled into answering all the children's questions! but can be silent and leave space for their own answers, as, for instance with the seven year-old who said: "How can a pyjama case walk? . . . (pause) . . . You mean . . . magic?"

Precocious, hardened children become softened and their senses are opened through our education. We care for the room and garden. Even sawdust goes on the compost heap, as well as apple maggots to finish eating, and we rescue lost worms for the flower bed. Listen to this: four-to-six-year-olds weeding around the bonfire, finding worms:

> *"There are three under here."*
> *"This one is so fat, he's eaten a lot of bonfire."*
> *"This one is so small, it was only born last week."*
> *"This one was only born this morning."*
> *"This tiny one just now while we were having break!"*
> *"I'm going to make a bed under that bush for this one."*

What a wealth of "Desirable Outcomes"[2]—all at once!

We care not to waste anything, even water; the future of the planet is at stake, but it is also a picture of caring for each other. We collect just four or five frogs' eggs, wait for their metamorphosis and carry the tiny frogs back to the pond. The Waldorf approach is very practical—out of life and living itself, and relevant to everything the child should be learning at this age. The child needs this living integral experience to accumulate knowledge, for s/he lives in the moment. In winter a candle or two illumine the room instead of electricity—this is both cozy and real.

Home Life

> A six-year-old: *"I've got to go to afternoon care because it's booked and paid for."*
>
> A five-year-old in afternoon care:*"Mummy and Daddy aren't working! They're always going in bed."*

Many children suffer from the breakdown of family life and the vanishing of the extended family. Their parents love them but are stressed; television and computer may replace their care. When a mother returns to work soon after the baby's birth, the child feels lost, however loving the caregivers are. Single parents struggle to cope on their own; in many families both parents are working and do not have enough time for their children. Routines are haphazard. In today's hustle and bustle many are not allowed the time to recover properly from illness. Violence, neglect and abuse are increasing. Domestic work may be replaced by appliances, and meals are not taken together, often merely hurried affairs in the microwave.

In the kindergarten we work closely with parents and caregivers, inviting them to experience a morning, our festivals, and regular evenings as a group when we share developmental aspects of childhood: helping and supporting each other. We visit the children at home, not to pry but to strengthen trust and gain insight into the children's needs. Parents often need and ask for help.

Social Life

We share a nutritious break mid-morning, prepared with the children, beginning with a grace and ending with thanks. They help of their own accord with the cooking or spreading, baking or chopping, serving, laying tables, and washing up. It is a social occasion as well as a nourishing one. A single apple or apricot brought by a child for me is always shared between us all. What a wonder! There are other domestic activities for them to do such as polishing, sweeping, mending (vital to counteract the throw-away mentality but also to give a picture of caring), crafts, washing napkins, woodwork, sewing and gardening. They become deft and able, all this activity in support of later thinking capacity.

A new Israeli four year-old to mother (in Hebrew):
"Why don't Jane and Sarah understand when I speak?"
"Sally doesn't either."
"Yes, she does, she understands everything."
(—actually very little! but gestures speak louder than words!)

Communication has increased, yet racism, ethnic cleansing, violence and war thrive. What a paradox! Increased loneliness brings new problems. Children need to be shown love and compassion, and then they will copy it. Christmas and Whitsun are particularly relevant times for giving a sense of inclusiveness, celebrating the diverse nature of humanity with songs in other languages; but it can happen on a daily basis as well. For example, I learn a song in many languages and there are red, brown, black, and yellow dolls as well as white.

"All right, you can come in our game," said a six year-old, *"but you are allowed* **not** *to play if you want(!)"*

Children are egoistic but have a growing sense of sociability particularly when six years old; because they are under no schooling pressure, they have space for love to help the younger children and organize each other! Their emotions are gently stimulated through love, music, color, and warmth. The images created through the repeated telling of a nature story or fairy tale support the moral and emotional life. Sometimes one needs to show beautiful illustrations as well, to counteract the ugly, frightening images many children carry, absorbed from the media, and so forth.

Modern Life

Technology has brought us many wonderful things; yet along with its advances we need human qualities and especially human warmth. This is most relevant for the child under seven. Our environment is less and less child-friendly. Children are adaptable and resilient but this comes at a cost because they become stressed in their souls. Their delicate nerve-sense systems may be flooded with impressions through harsh colors, news, image-covered clothing, traffic, background music, advertisements, story tapes, electronic sounds, poor and ugly (often too many) toys and books. Barbie, Aliens, Bugs, Transformers, and so forth, leave precious little room for fantasy. Are Disneyland, Toy Story, and so forth, "treats?" Do processed foods, pollution, and the excessive and often unnecessary use of immunization and antibiotics undermine their health and weaken their immune systems? Computer games can give the child an experience of a series of violent images with neither context nor resolution, leading to confusion and resulting in fear. Children cannot cope and lapse into lethargy, poor concentration or bad behavior. Some are stimulated to early sexual awakenings. "Bored" children are actually simply so over-saturated that they cannot absorb any more. Poor sleep may be caused by exhaustion from too many sensations and the absence of any quiet space. Mystery and

wonder are frequently distorted. One even intrudes into the life of the unborn child with prenatal education resulting in unknown consequences. Much of the growth of these phenomena is new since my own childhood. Not that there is anything wrong with electricity or machines! But where and when is the right or wrong place or time? The child-under-seven's consciousness does not separate him from the world; he lives in complete sympathy with it, as the following demonstrate.

A five-year-old, about a dream: *"But you know, you were in it."*
A four-year-old: *"I'm a real rabbit."*
Another four-year-old, watching a eurythmy performance:
"Are they puppets?"

Children catapulted into workbooks, tests and computers are torn away from their real world and forced into a foreign one. This, together with a stressful environment can have harmful consequences. This is a tragedy. For the older a child is, the harder it is to put things right. Worse still, so often this environment is seen as beneficial, and certainly "normal." The good guys and bad guys are often portrayed in equal measure by ugly characters. A website for 2–12-year-olds "protects them from unsuitable material on the Internet," but gives them access to a cold intellectual medium devoid of the wonder intrinsic to their being and still provides questionable material. "Action toys" turn children into passive players. They "soak up" these characters and imitate their behavior, speech, and movement. The bright ideas of the commercial world to rake in money render the children as pawns in their games. One disrespects children in a mistaken assumption that they need to be entertained. Many media images of "beauty," "strength," and "desirability" can lead to anorexia, inadequacy and violence. The same can be said of many toys.

Rhythmic Life

There are many damaged children today who find it a relief to come to the Kindergarten. The rhythmic structuring of the day, week, month, and season helps to stabilize uncertainties and lack of boundaries. Children's natural activity finds many harmonious, constructive, and strengthening outlets. The teacher consciously creates a balance between play and rest, "chaos" and calm, noise and quiet, group and individual activity, humor and seriousness, being inside and outside. How they love fun and laughter. Some arrive pale and go home rosy; some begin to sleep better. Rhythms also bring about good habits.

"Where are the toys?" children sometimes ask at interview.

Day 1: Story.

Day 2: "Oh, not that story again!"

Day 3: Story, child silent.

Day 4: "Can we have that story again?"

This is a recurring incidence with new children.

Children soon warm to unformed playthings of natural materials, just as to the daily repetition of a story. Especially today, the child's inner need for "again!" must be satisfied. We have bricks and logs which in the child's mind can be ships, mobile phones, cheese, fences, or . . . logs. Soft dolls with only an indication of a face are not confined to one emotion. Clothes' horses, planks, and cloths may make dog kennels, castles, shops, kitchens, spaceships, houses. Shells, bark, and pine cones form patterns, money, food, plates . . .

Their creativity knows no bounds. We give them the space and time for unguided play. Goals are their own, not ours. Time flows on; the chimes are the rhythms: waxing and waning, ebbing and flowing. Tidy-up time

begins when I take a cloth and fold it; nothing disturbs their concentrated activity: they gradually notice and follow suit.

Thinking and Consciousness

Two six-year-olds in conversation:

"Let's finish the house now."

"But it's time to tidy up."

"Then, why did you spend all that time playing? If you hadn't spent all that time playing, we could have built the house."

A five-year-old: *"I don't want to play; I'm doing a puppet show."*

What is play? What is not? In this active dream world they lay the foundations of clear philosophical thinking. They find solutions to problems and help each other. Arguments are sorted out amicably, often only through my walking nearby or watching from a distance, inwardly supporting but leaving them free. Alongside mathematics and language, physical and imaginative development are fostered. Warm and peaceful simplicity in which they can flourish surrounds them: plain colored cloths and gifts of nature in ordered baskets, a few beautiful pictures. Patterns and rhythms hold them. They enjoy beeswax modeling, watercolor painting, lyre playing, beeswax crayon drawing, song, poetry and dance.

How can we expect them to work with the 3Rs and testing when they are still at the following stage of consciousness.

Five-year-old: *"Did you build this school?"*

Another, the same age: "Sally, who are you going to marry when you grow up?"

Every child will play with ready-made games, but the depth of learning is not equal to that of games created by themselves, nor of self-motivated activities: "I can do it by myself on my own," asserted a 3 ½-year-old, sharing out spoons at break. Learning in Waldorf kindergartens is integrated, not compartmentalized. Each of our activities covers most, if not all Early Learning Goals.[3] Children grow at their own individual pace. As their thinking and judgment are in seed-form, we take care not to overburden it, rather concentrating on their innate "busy-ness." Forcing the intellect at this age is to the detriment of other faculties. Making choices and decisions throws them back on themselves prematurely. They can do it but at a cost. We are gentle with awakening self-consciousness. "My voice sounds different from everyone else's!" mused a nearly six-year-old. When I do plays with the children, I put out on stands several costumes for each character. Maybe one day we'll have four Snow Whites, and the next day, five. This not only precludes disappointment, it suits their stage of consciousness. While they are still one with the world till 6 or 7, we believe it is not appropriate to make them self-aware or give feelings of pride, guilt or competition. For this reason also we do not display their work, which is quickly forgotten anyway. The importance of the "result" begins only after kindergarten. All this provides a firm basis for enthusiasm and joy in learning.

Movement

Every Tuesday I take the children on an expedition. Well-equipped, with a freshly prepared picnic of muesli and a thermos of herb tea, we set off—to fields, woods, stream, mud, sun, frost, rain, fallen branches, brambly tunnels, older children building huts, story, magic, joy, and mystery await us. We go where the mood takes us. I would do it in a town park or grassy space too! This feeds their senses and understanding of the world around, while strengthening courage and stamina. Many children's movement is too restricted today by over-use of "convenient" baby slings, seats, and buggies (the head hanging sideways and the back crooked with limbs

wedged in), little play outside, much car travel. Physical development under seven years is the basis for intellectual and emotional development, and we place great emphasis on free movement, self initiated and imitative, not directed. What about television and the "mouse?" What does it really signify when the child's report says he has "poor mouse control?" We prepare an endless stream of gestures in songs and poems for imitation in circle time[4] and eurythmy. Children also need to explore and take normal risks.

Future

The modem child needs to develop courage, self-discipline and powers of discrimination to meet the growing problems of the world. Increasing violence, ethical issues, such as gene manipulation, declining health of the planet, a nightmarish number of options, increasing invasion of privacy, untruths in adverts. . . . And yet many are born now with particular qualities of sociability and initiative to care for others and for the earth. Children need to learn adaptability and compassion and to develop intuition through being given a proper childhood with a secure foundation, enough time for truly creative play, artistic work and humor. The real magic and wonder of childhood will help them to become inwardly free. We hold the children close in our thoughts; this is part of our work. We must have the imagination and courage to be ourselves and to teach from the heart as well as the head. Education becomes alive and is true for the children when the teachers do what they believe in; they should not teach just what they are supposed to. They must eradicate personal stress and not be bound by fear. They must be full of joy and initiative—the children will imitate it! One must find the balance between protection and freedom: create a "meadow" in which children can freely exercise their boundless creativity. And some final food for thought:

> A girl of six in my class to her parents: *"Do you know why I'm gooder in the Kindergarten than at home? It's because there's magic there."*

Footnotes:

1. The anecdotes quoted are from children in my kindergarten. For some of these I am indebted to parents.
2. Governmental (Great Britain) expectations for preschool children.
3. Governmental (Great Britain) expectations for preschool children.
4. Imitated movement to songs and poems.

About the Author:

Sally Schweizer, mother of four between 26 and 32, taught in both state and independent schools in London and Switzerland before discovering Waldorf education. Now remarried, (previously Longe) she was herself a single parent for 13 years. Of 19 years as a Waldorf Kindergarten teacher the last 15 have been at Michael Hall in Forest Row, Sussex, England. Her present group consists of 25 children each day of 4 to 6½ years of whom (typically) 11 are partly or wholly not English.

Psychology and Early Years Learning: Affirming the Wisdom of Waldorf

by

Richard House

Steiner Education, Vol. 34, No. 2

Waldorf Journal Project #2

> *We should take care not to make the intellect our god. It has, of course, powerful muscles but no personality.*
>
> — Albert Einstein

The neglect of the emotional

> Emotions are at the center of children's relationships, well-being, sense of self, and moral sensitivity and are centrally linked to their increasing understanding of the world in which they grow up. Yet we have only recently begun to pay serious attention to the significance of children's emotions.
>
> — Dr. Judy Dunn

In this article I will explore a vital area of early years learning wherein experientially informed theoretical thinking and empirical research, in the broad field of psychology (including psychoanalysis), cohere with Waldorf educational philosophy. It seems to me that the ever-escalating malaise within public education and parents' and professionals' ever-increasing disquiet with those trends offer the Waldorf movement an opportunity not to be missed. It is a chance to take our work and values out into the public

sphere, which is crying out for a humane and demonstrably effective alternative to the assessment-obsessed, anxiety-driven fare on offer through public education. One way of doing this is to write to the press whenever we see an opportunity, to challenge current conventional wisdom and set out the Waldorf alternative.[1] Another valuable approach is to draw upon the wealth of substantive literature in a range of fields broadly centered in the psychology discipline in order to vindicate the assumptions that underpin Waldorf praxis. It is this latter approach that I will pursue in this article.

I write as a professional counselor and psychotherapist with over ten years' standing, and as a trained Waldorf teacher with several years' experience leading a Waldorf Parent and Toddler group. As a counselor I am particularly interested in the emotional aspects of human experience and learning. My attention is here because, as Dan Goleman puts it in his important book *Emotional Intelligence*, our "fundamental ethical stances in life stem from underlying emotional capacities,"[2] and "emotional [competence] goes hand in hand with education for character, for moral development, and for citizenship"[3] Certainly, the emotional level of experience is being criminally neglected in the current British government's single-minded obsession with unbalanced and developmentally inappropriate cognitive-intellectual learning at ever-earlier ages. Yet as Susanne Denham has written, young children "are more emotionally sophisticated than we ever previously imagined" and "if emotional competence is so very important, it behooves educators . . . to understand what is really going on in the young child's emotional world"[4]

Let us consider several interrelated issues.

- First, the proper role of play in early learning and the dangers of distorting or subverting its natural expression through adult-centric intrusion;
- Second, the distorting effects of anxiety on healthy learning; and

- Third, the developmental dangers entailed in premature or "precocious" intellectual or ego development.

In future writings I wish to explore a range of other emotion-related issues. These include the nature and quality of "relationship" in early years environments, and its longer-term consequences for healthy learning and relational intersubjectivity; and the centrality of "emotional intelligence" in healthy child development.

The place of play in early development

> Play cannot be pinned down, and turned into a product of measurable learning. This is because play is a process, [that] enables a holistic kind of learning, rather than fragmented learning.
>
> — Professor Tina Bruce

> If we try to cramp and control him by our own notions of what he ought to be, we may close up the very channels that will bring him value and safety.
>
> — Susan Isaacs, *Social Development in Young Children*

The issue of play and its place in early years learning environments has had a particular prominence in recent times. Early years professionals were truly horrified when, in 1999, the British government's initial draft proposals for early learning goals failed to mention the role of play. Following a public outcry at this omission, the government's revised guidelines invented the notion of so-called "structured play," being an attempt to preserve the intrusively prescriptive approach to early years education while paying lip service to those championing the central role of play (such as the Waldorf movement and the interest group called "Let the Children Play"). While invoking the notion of structured play, the government glaringly revealed its limited understanding of the place of

play in early child development. Nonetheless, its proposals were welcomed in the *Times Educational Supplement*.[5] Below are excerpts from a rejected letter I submitted in response.

> The *Times Educational Supplement's* unreservedly positive reporting of the government's revised guidelines for early years learning . . . wholly embraced the assumed beneficence of the new guidelines; and anyone uninitiated in these debates would gain the strong impression from your report that the government has shifted considerably on the issue of play in early learning, and that its revised proposals are universally welcomed in the early years sphere. If anything, however, the new proposals are even more dangerous than the original ones, in that at least the latter didn't pretend to be what they weren't . . . You state quite rightly that the "key concept [of the new guidelines] seems to be the idea of structured and focused play." Yet the notion of structured play is a fundamentally incoherent, self-contradictory concept. My dictionary defines play as "freedom of movement, space for this . . . , especially as spontaneous activity of children." As soon as an assessment-obsessed, objectifying educational gaze oversees and intrudes into the young child's world, the child's activity necessarily and by definition ceases to constitute play. The government's terminological sleight of hand could easily distract attention from its unchanged prescriptive agenda, and must not be allowed to slip through without challenge.
>
> It is . . . difficult to overestimate the damage that will result from the premature intellectualization of the child's early years—as Rudolf Steiner pointed out some 80 years ago. These fundamentally misguided early years policies are likely to keep an army of counselors and psychotherapists in work for decades to come!

What follows are citations from some literature on play from authoritative non-Waldorf sources in the broad field of psychology that thoroughly support the approach to play advocated by Waldorf educational philosophy.

The distinguished early child psychologist and psychoanalyst Susan Isaacs has penetrating things to say about the crucial foundational importance of play. For Isaac, the child's imaginative play is a starting point for building a necessary foundation, not only for cognitive development but also for the adaptive and creative intention that, when fully developed, marks out the artist, the novelist, the poet. In his make-believe, Isaacs continues, the child takes the first steps towards that emancipation of meanings from the *here* and *now* of a concrete situation. This makes possible hypotheses and the "as if" consciousness, "*It is exceedingly difficult to imagine how anyone with even a rudimentary understanding of the young child's archetypally momentous yet infinitely delicate developmental process could seek to impose a distorting, agenda upon it*—a highly complex process in which the child is freely and imaginatively *re-creating* selectively those elements in past situations that can embody his emotional or intellectual need of the present, [as] he adapts the details moment by moment to the present situation"[6] (Susan Isaacs' emphasis).

Several years later, Isaacs wrote that the lessening of inner tension and anxiety resulting from free dramatic play "makes it easier for the child to control his real behavior . . . , helps to *free* the child from his first personal schemas, and to enhance his readiness to understand the objective physical world for its own sake."[7] And in a magnificent section in her *Social Development of Young Children*, Isaacs offers us a perspective on play in the early years that should be compulsory reading for all professionals and education policy-makers. I quote selectively from it to give the reader a flavor of the Waldorf-affirming wisdom it contains.

> Play . . . is supremely the activity that brings [the child] psychic equilibrium in the early years. In his play activities, the child externalizes and works out to some measure of harmony all the different trends of his internal psychic life . . . through his own wishes and impulses . . .

> Play is indeed the breath of life to the child, since it is through play activities that he . . . can work upon his wishes, fears, and fantasies, so as to integrate them into a living personality. . . . [The] passive work of the educator in leaving the child free to make-believe is as valuable a part of his function as his more active services—a point sometimes lost sight of in the modem nursery school [The child's] indirect expression of unconscious fantasy . . . can never appear at the behest of the super-ego [i.e. via external didactic instruction—RH]. *It is always the fruit of the child's own creative wishes. If we attempt to control and contain it, we simply make it lifeless and formal.* [H]ere . . . the educator . . . must be passive and merely supporting. . . . The inner flux of forces within [the child's] own mind . . . is beyond our power to affect and control by any deliberate act. . . . [We cannot] determine the lines upon which his individuality shall develop, and what his actual solution of conflict shall be. The more clearly we ourselves recognize this, the greater support we are likely to be to him.[8]

And finally, here is the psychiatrist and phenomenologist John Heaton on play.

> [P]lay is the performance of the movement as such. It is nothing to do with the attitude of a subject who must take up a playful attitude to an object "play" in order that playing can occur. . . . *If this is not realized, then play becomes distorted, as is commonly done in . . . educational . . . circles. . . .* In play there is a suspension of belief and nonbelief . . . to [the child] there is no conceptual distinction between being and playing. . . . The game absorbs the player into itself and thus takes from him the burden of [self-aware] initiative. . . . Play does not allow the player to behave towards it like an object. . . . [It] *does not point to purposes beyond itself, it celebrates itself.* It creates a structure in which the identity of the player is lost. . . . *Its nature is completely distorted* if it is considered psychologistically as a known thing about which assertions can be made and which people then set forth to cultivate.[9]

In this light, the British government's championing of structured play is comprehensively exposed for what it is—a self-contradictory and incoherent notion rooted in quite fundamental and materialistic misunderstandings about the nature of human existence and coming-into-being.

Anxiety and the Adult-Centric Disruption of Healthy Early Learning

> How serious a mistake it would be to try to *make* little children grow along the lines, which these records show, they can follow. They must be given a large measure of freedom to imagine or to think as the need and occasion arises. If we tried to *teach* them these things formally, *or to exert pressure upon them in these directions*, we should simply waste our time, and *might even do positive damage*.
>
> — Susan Isaacs,
> *Intellectual Growth in Young Children*

While Rudolf Steiner was still alive, Susan Isaacs took part in some detailed qualitative research into young children's behavior at the Malting House School in Cambridge, England (1924–1927), part of which is exhaustively detailed in her book *Intellectual Growth of Young Children*. The book offers recurrent vindication to Waldorf educational philosophy. Not only was Isaacs deeply aware of the need to respect and to not intrude upon children's early development, but, as a psychoanalyst, she was also highly attuned to the deleterious effects of anxiety upon learning. According to Isaacs, "Mental alertness and an active interest in objects are very dependent upon freedom from anxiety and inner tension."[10] For her, make-believe play (which I would argue must be freely chosen, if it is to fulfill the following purpose) brings "indirect aid to the intellectual life . . . by giving external body and form to the fantasized wishes and guilts of infancy, *and thus allaying anxiety*."[11] In other words, rather than having an inappropriate over-intellectualized and prematurely objective concreteness eternally

foisted upon her, the young child needs an *unintruded-upon* space in which to play with, elaborate, and work through her deepest wishes, anxieties, and unconscious fantasies, in order to gain competence in healthily managing *with her own freely developed will* her curiosities and anxieties about relational being and human existence.

Couple this with the psychoanalytic insight that *emotional* states are unconsciously transferred between people—with young children being particularly susceptible to picking up and being affected by others' emotions *long before they are remotely able consciously to understand process and integrate such intersubjective influences*—and we have a lethally poisonous cocktail. Imagine, for example, the inner tensions and resultant anxieties and developmental distortions that are being set up within young children through their being preoccupied by, and having somehow to manage, the irresolvable conflict between their own nascent inner will forces, on the one hand, and an externally imposed adult-centric agenda on the other. It is little wonder that, within a few years of these imposed regimes of early formal learning, children suffer a malaise in their healthy capacity to learn. This is then responded to by *ratcheting up* that same poisonous world-view rather than dropping rampant control-freakery for long enough to allow insight into what might be going wrong.

Imagine, further, the effects upon young children of being force-fed Early Learning Goals by adults trying to pretend that they are not so doing (and hence, incidentally, offering children quite appalling models of inauthenticity to imitate). And these adults typically carry with them all the anxieties associated with OFSTED,[12] such as learning targets, impending inspections, and so forth.

Young children unconsciously pick up all such anxiety and perhaps unwittingly make it their own (given that they are developmentally not yet able to differentiate between their own autonomous feelings and those they are absorbing from the adults and the environment around them). And all

this before we even begin to consider the likely effects on young children of adults relating to them with an adult-centric *preoccupying agenda* of learning goals. Relating in this manner cannot but compromise the extent to which those adults are capable of a full emotional and relational engagement with the young child—and again, with the child learning through modeling and imitation that human relationship entails being preoccupied with one's own agenda, rather than respecting and trusting the will and freedom of children to find their own developmental path.[13] No wonder our culture displays increasing signs of difficulties in relationship, and a pathological narcissism and its associated character disorders.

Seen in this light, what is happening in public early years education is nothing short of the criminal violation of early childhood; and the long-term psychosomatic and psychological price our children are likely to pay for this violation is quite incalculable.

The Pernicious Deforming Effects of Premature Cognitive-Intellectual Development

> Children who are pushed too hard academically, and who consequently advance temporarily beyond their peers, may ultimately pay a price in terms of lost opportunities for development.
>
> —Professor Patrick Bateson and Paul Martin

There is substantial psychotherapeutic literature on the dangers of premature intellectual/ego development, which strongly supports Steiner's insightful cautions in this area. Psychotherapist Robert Royston, for example, describes how "intellectual inhibition and dysfunction" in adult life can be traced back to "a dominating autocratic object" who, in the patient's childhood, established a relationship of domination in which the child's own natural integrated development was disrupted. Thus, "the

child's developmental agenda and establishment of an independent self are impaired in service to the [intense narcissistic] needs of the object."[14] Intellectual blocking and the negation of memory are the kind of adult symptoms that result from the person's inability to digest mentally such a bad childhood experience. Moreover, such debilitating adult psychological symptoms are exceedingly difficult to treat successfully because the patient tends to feel compelled to defeat the therapeutic healing process.[15]

In psychoanalytic object relations theory, an object can be any human person or cultural-environmental influence that the child imbibes (or introjects, in object-relations terminology) and makes part of her developing psyche. Royston continues, "In psychodynamic terms, the autocratic object gives *the self of the subject no space to flourish and instead pushes its own narcissistic needs center stage*, forcing the other, in a variety of different possible ways, to bear witness to the object's superiority."[16] Further, tending to operate "through a range of covert, almost invisible interactions," the autocratic object "uses his or her interactive power to stifle the individuality of the child and will not brook independent ideas or challenge to his or her often dogmatic ideas and maxims."[17] I argue that the intrusive adult-centric, over-intellectual agenda of the early years public school environment constitutes an autocratic object that may well be doing systematic and untold damage to a whole generation of cognitively hot-housed children. And it should also be clear from this example how we can use the clinical evidence from psychotherapeutic data to verify the insights that Steiner bequeathed to us nearly a century ago.[18]

Discussion

> Materialistic learning . . . dominates education. . . . Education . . . has become an institution whose purpose . . . is not to make culture, not to serve the living cosmos, but to harness humankind to the dead forces of materialism.

> Education, as we know it, from pre-school through graduate school, damages the soul.
>
> — Robert Sardello

If the above analysis is correct, then we might expect to witness signs of the harm being done by the current early years educational regime—though of course it is essentially impossible to separate the respective effects of the educational environment per se and the pernicious effects of modem culture more generally (e.g., Healy, 1990). Take a disturbing front-page story in *The Observer:* "Mind control drug threat to children."[19] It reported on the frightening scale of medically diagnosed child "behavioral disorders," with "tens of thousands of schoolchildren with mild behavior problems [now] being drugged with Ritalin . . . simply in order to control them." It is by no means far-fetched to propose a causal relationship between the burgeoning and comparatively recent epidemic in child behavioral disturbances and recent (and autocratically objectionable!) early years policy innovations, which demand a relentless and intrusive control-freak surveillance, measurement, assessment, and testing of children's developmental process—not to mention the forced imposition of premature, adult-centric, cognitive-intellectual learning at ever-earlier ages.

In England, Ritalin prescriptions rose from 3,500 in 1993 to no less than 126,000 in 1998—a thirty-six fold increase in five years. The article highlighted psychiatrists' proposed new drug prescribing powers for behaviorally disordered children—which represents a chronic misdiagnosis of what is at root a profound educational and cultural malaise. For rather than attention deficit and hyperactivity being medically pathologized and their sufferers subjected to normalizing biological treatment, these symptoms are surely far better understood as children's healthy response to, and unwitting commentary on, technological culture's ever-escalating manic over-stimulation and the routine violence it is doing to children's

healthy development—not least its cognitively biased distortions of early child development. And until our policy-makers develop the insight to recognize and to respond to this malaise at a cultural level rather than at an individualized medical level, as is now done, the prevalence of children's behavioral difficulties will inevitably continue to escalate.

Another tell-tale sign of the damage being perpetrated on our young children is the research by Dr. Judith Whitburn of UK's prestigious National Institute of Economic and Social Research, reported in the *Times Educational Supplement* ("Nursery lessons 'damage' learning").[20] Whitburn found that because English children start school so young, "many do not have the social behavioral skills necessary to learn."[21] Before long, the seemingly positive effects of the head-start they receive from early formal schooling are swamped by a learning malaise around six or seven—leading in turn to significant, underperformance in maths compared with their Japanese counterparts, who start formal schooling later. In a letter published in the *Times Educational Supplement*, "Stop damaging nursery children,"[22] I wrote: "It seems highly likely [Whitburn's] findings will apply to educational performance in general. . . . In the light of these findings it will be extraordinarily irresponsible if the government persists with its massively over prescriptive formalization of our early years learning environment."

Conclusion

> The lucid interpretation, the concise formula can be a misleading picture for the child; and indeed, a strain—*an impossible demand on his emerging powers of representation*. The nursery age child is not struggling for clarity, she is struggling for articulation.
>
> — Adam Phillips
> (author's emphasis)

Overall, then, the principal concern here is that those whose early childhood development is inappropriately intruded upon and distorted are likely to end up suffering from emotional-behavioral disturbances in childhood, or—as psychotherapist Adam Phillips has graphically argued in his important contribution to the Anna Freud symposium[23]— end on the analyst's couch down the road. And the fear is that such pernicious long-term effects certainly will not be picked up by public education policy-makers until it is far too late to do anything about it.

Footnotes:

[1] See, for example, my article in *Steiner Education*, 34 (1), 2000, "But what about childhood?"

[2] Goleman, Dan. *Emotional Intelligence*, p12.

[3] Ibid., p286.

[4] Denham, Susanne. p9, p16, 1998.

[5] *Times Educational Supplement,* October 8, 1999.

[6] Isaacs, Susan. *Social Development in Young Children,* p104, 1930.

[7] Ibid., p210, 1933.

[8] Ibid., pp 425–7, 1933.

[9] Heaton, John. pp124–5, 1978.

[10] Isaacs, Susan. *Social Development in Young Children,* p104, 1930.

[11] Ibid.

[12] As Chris Woodhead chillingly called it, "a very fine, sharp instrument"—BBC News, August 2, 1999.

[13] As so clearly argued by Susan Isaacs, earlier.

[14] Royston, Robert. p15.

[15] Ibid., p17.

[16] Ibid., author's emphasis, p17.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Please see Cotrigan and Gordon's 1955 work for a comparable discussion of what they term the mind object, and its debilitating pathological effects on human development.

[19] *The Observer*, February 27, 2000.

[20] *Times Educational Supplement,* p6, January 28, 2000.

[21] Ibid.

[22] *Times Educational Supplement,* p16, February 18, 2000.
[23] Ward. 1998.

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Children's Questions

by

A. C. Harwood

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From about the age of three, children begin to be full of questions, and it is sometimes a matter of great difficulty for their parents to find the right answers. Every question demands its own individual answer, but it can be of great value, in deciding what answers to give, to have a clear idea of the kind of answer required. For it is altogether wrong to imagine that a little child should be given (or even want) the same kind of answer as would be suitable for a child of eleven or twelve, but in a simpler form.

The range of questions, which even young children will ask, is truly astonishing. Indeed, in many respects the youngest children will often ask the most fundamental and far reaching questions—on life and death, and life after death, and many subjects on which parents have often resigned all hope of definite knowledge. A child of four (to quote an actual example) has asked these questions in the space of a few minutes:

Do men die? Will you die? Shall I die? What do the angels say to you? Are angels shy? Who made God? Do you like God? When you die do you come alive again?

It must come as something of a shock to little children if parents declare themselves unable to answer questions fundamental to a knowledge of human life, and the questions of children must be a challenge to many parents to carry their thinking to the point of becoming clear and certain on many things, which they are often content to leave unsettled.

There are two things, however, to be noticed about the questions of little children; they will often ask question after question in rapid succession, as though it were not so much information they were seeking, as the satisfaction of hearing the answering voice; and they will listen with more pleasure to an imperfect answer, which is spoken with love and warmth in the voice, than to a complete and final reply given in a matter-of-fact tone. It is, indeed, to a large extent true that, when little children pour out their endless questions, they are seeking something much deeper than the mere satisfaction of curiosity; they are seeking to bring around them the living tones of the human voice. For the voices which they hear do not remain arrested in their consciousness, as is the case with adults, but penetrate even to those deep unconscious processes which take place in the building up of the physical body. Indeed Rudolf Steiner has shown the exact connections of the sounds of the alphabet with the formation of different organs of the body, and hence it is that eurythmy, which expresses the various sounds of language and music in movements of the limbs, is not only an art but can be used as a means of healing.

It is, therefore, just as much a matter of how you answer little children's questions as what you answer. Pure full tones of speech (and modern voices, especially those of intellectual people, are often terribly clipped and dry) not only give a child a feeling of blessing, they help him form his bodily strength for later life. A child is first nourished by his mother-milk and then by his mother-tongue.

As a guide to what kind of answers little children need, often a child will supply the answer to his own questions and not infrequently reject the one given by the adult for another of his own invention. Such answers which children give to themselves as a rule are much more full of fantasy than those which an adult would supply. A child asks: Why does the sun take the water up into the sky? then adds: Is it for the angels to drink? Or seeing a piece of wire-netting over the funnel of a steam-roller, he asks: Why do they put the netting on it? immediately adding: It must be to keep the birds from building their nests there.

It is not easy for an adult to copy this wonderful power of fantasy, and a sense of intellectual truth may often stand in the way. But it is always good to remember that what little children need is a certain living fantasy in the answers they receive. To offer them logical explanations (however true to a scientific mind) is to give them a stone when they ask for bread.

Sometimes little children's questions arise plainly from their desire to unite themselves with words to the objects around them. A child sees a caterpillar for the first time and asks: "What is that?" "A caterpillar." "What is a caterpillar?" What he wants from the second question is not a definition of a caterpillar in ideas but the joyous affirmation of the reality before him: "That is a caterpillar." "A gypsy-woman lives by telling people their fortunes and interpreting their dreams," says the King of Ireland's Son. "That is why she is called a gypsy-woman."

When children have passed the age of six or seven, they naturally need much more connected answers to their questions. They wait more consciously for the reply, instead of living in the speech. It is at this age, for instance, that children will ask many questions about the heavenly bodies, the nature of the sun and stars, the creation of the world, and so forth. And ready to supply the answer are numerous children's encyclopedias, books, and what not, with beautiful diagrams of the sun, a flaming ball on a black

page, many times the size of the earth, or a man cut in half showing the heart like a pump, the lungs like a pair of bellows, the nervous system like a set of telegraph wires, and so forth. Whether or not these things are in any sense representations of the truth is not for the moment the question, though it is worth noticing that by the time scientific theories reach popular children's books, they are often quite out of date even judged by their own standards.

There will be plenty of time for children to investigate scientific theories at a later age, when they can really understand some of the conceptions on which they are based. For these scientific conceptions arose only at a definite point in human history, and the mind of a child is not to be compared to the wave of intellectual thinking which historically brought them to birth. A child between seven and twelve or so has in him much more of the piety and luxuriant imagination of the Middle Ages. To the child, the stars are not vast spheres incredible millions of miles distant in space; he feels their clear shining beauty as something very close to him. The sun is not a huge stationary mass of burning gasses; its rising each day fills him with a wonderful feeling of joy and thankfulness. The pictures of the heavenly bodies in mythologies are far truer to children than the distances and dimensions of modern astronomy.

The Norse people said that wolves swallowed up the sun at the time of an eclipse, and to a child, who has a fine sense of the devouring quality of darkness, the nature of an eclipse is much better expressed by such an image than by a diagram of revolving shadows. For in an eclipse it is truly as though the wolves devoured the sun, and that "as though" is, after all, the furthest claim made by the true scientist. Newton did not say that the planets are attracted to the earth by gravity, but that they move as though they were so attracted, and it is not his fault that men have made a dogma of a hypothesis.

It is, in fact, of real importance not to give a child scientific conceptions on these subjects too soon. They tend to destroy the vivid feeling and imagination proper to this age; and, because they are received before the child has developed the power of following the thoughts on which they are based, they become matters of faith instead of matters of knowledge. Few adults have even the will to investigate the mathematics on which is based the Newtonian planetary system or modern atomic theories. In a sense a scientific age is the most credulous of all ages. A thousand years ago a man could at least say: "I see the sun move with my own eyes." Today many have to say, "Somebody proved a long time ago that the sun stands still. I forget exactly who it was, and I don't know how he proved it, but it's a fact all the same."

When children begin at this age to ask, "How a thing is made?" it is worthwhile considering how much of the true explanation has real meaning for them. There are children's books to describe how everything is made, but from such books children often get a superficial, almost glib, impression of the work men have to do in the world. Such works are generally illustrated with photographs, which give children an easy picture of various processes, but little feeling for the real conditions under which the work is done. A few flashlight pictures of miners hacking at a seam, together with a section of a mine with the cage descending, and a child will soon think he knows all about a coal mine and turn to the next page to discover how a gramophone works or what the Great Wall of China looks like. But there is something extraordinarily superficial, muddled, and uncreative about such a way of acquiring information. It is really far better for children to make their own pictures in their mind's eye from living descriptions they hear of the intense silence under the ground, of men walking to their work for miles in galleries where they cannot go upright, of the dripping of water, and so forth. In short, they should have such a picture of the inwards of the

earth as George MacDonald gives of the interior of a mountain at the beginning of *The Princess and Curdie*. And, above all, in the mind, there should not be an isolated fact. A knowledge of mining should come as part of the children's general thoughts at the time, in some connection with chemistry, perhaps, or history or geology.

One of the worst results of children's *How It Works* books is that a child will often collect an extraordinary amount of theoretical information and forget to observe things which come within his own ken. Many children can describe the solar system but do not know when or where the full moon rises or what planets are in the sky. They know a lot about the assembling of an automobile but are vague as to how butter or cheese or soap is made. It is always best to try to keep younger children's questions, as to how things are made, to those objects that they can really understand and observe, perhaps by making them themselves. Generally speaking, it is much easier to impart information to children too early than to tactfully withhold it until a better season.

A certain reticence in answering children's questions is of great help in keeping the questioning faculty alive. For it is a sad fact that the power of asking questions only too often fades away as children grow older. It is perhaps a test of whether children's questions have been answered rightly in their younger years to see how profound are the questions they ask when they are older, and if they are readily satisfied with the answers. By the time they reach a more intellectual understanding towards the age of fourteen, they should have a strong desire to probe every question in life to the bottom, and not be lightly satisfied by theory without knowledge. For children of this age, there is a deep meaning in that part of the story of Parsifal where, as a young man, he first sees the wounded knight but does not ask of him the question he should. Many of the questions which children should have in their hearts at this age will indeed only be answered by life itself. They stand on the threshold of life, and life will answer them, but only if they put to life the right questions.

Non-Verbal Education:

A Necessity in the Developmental Stages

by

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> *It is not moral preaching and not reasoned instruction that work on children in the right way: that which works is what the adults in their surroundings do visibly before their eyes.*
>
> — Rudolf Steiner

Typically, human beings never finish learning, and even when getting older they will keep adding new things to what has already been attained. At the same time, it is obvious that the degree and manner of learning changes during the course of life. Every stage of life is specially adapted to certain learning processes. This shows most significantly in the first twenty years where, along with bodily growth, the soul-spirit's ability to take things in and a readiness to learn are buoyant. With this sketch as background, we may focus our attention on the preschool years.

The Development of Learning Ability up to the Beginning of Adulthood

During the course of their development children learn in different ways. In the first years it happens through imitation: e.g., walking, talking,

thinking, the handling of objects, getting dressed and undressed, eating habits, shaking hands when meeting people, and much more. What lies behind this? Learning through imitation means teaching yourself according to a perceived role model. Without any explanations or pedagogical instruction being given, children absorb all the events happening around them, practicing out of their own inner drive until they have attained the corresponding skills. Children do not learn to speak through explanation, nor do they learn to walk through instructions on how to move. They learn these complicated and far reaching human capacities solely through their own inner drive, modeled on the pattern provided by adults. This concentrated, imitative learning of the child—an activity, which is kindled by the role model and tirelessly practiced—is here termed non-verbal learning, i.e., learning without words. Parents who endeavor to set an example for their children in this manner could, therefore, be called non-verbal educators. An example might make clear what this means. In a doctor's practice it often happens that when a mother and child come into the office a problem arises. The doctor has greeted the mother and then turns to the child who also holds out her hand. Often with little children it is not the right hand but the left. The mother who knows about non-verbal education will look on calmly while the child gives the doctor her left hand.

The doctor takes it in a friendly way, however, the mother who is not accustomed to this method of child-upbringing will immediately instruct the child to give the doctor the "proper" hand. Ashamed or disappointed, the child often will just withdraw her hand. The spontaneous readiness to greet has vanished; sometimes the hand sinks down listlessly or slips behind the back, and an awkward silence arises. How different it is for the child who shakes hands out of pure imitation, where it is left to the doctor to determine whether, after having taken the left hand and said, "Hello," he also does the same thing with the right hand, or simply leaves it at one

handshake, knowing full well that things will correct themselves between the ages of five and seven.

If people correct children verbally in the preschool years, their age-appropriate mode of learning is not supported, bringing an element into their education that is only applicable to a later stage of life. Since a pre-school child is able to understood the meaning of an action intuitively and then imitate it, he or she is not ready to take on board explanations about the deed. The readiness for action—both the will and the physical motoric (i.e., its movement) is still bound to the sense experience. The eminent French developmental psychologist Jean Piaget identified this phase as sensory-motor intelligence (*senso* stands for sense experience; *motor* stands for organs of movement, i.e., the muscular system). Intelligence and meaning are not yet abstracted independently from the bodily experience, but work directly, intuitively through the senses so that the movement, dependent upon the senses, happens as one, unified, imitative process. In the most intelligent way, children can do what they see and repeat what they hear. Everything that they experience is understood immediately, even if they have no words or concepts for it. The whole sense world is experienced directly and "sensibly"—it instantly "makes sense!" This only changes when thinking becomes emancipated from the body at which point direct sense experience is lost. When this emancipation occurs, sense experience is accompanied more and more by thought. It is more conscious. This later mode of learning, grounded in thinking, is much harder to attain and goes much more slowly than the intuitive preschool mode.

It is therefore important not to shorten the imitative phase by developing abstract intelligence prematurely. However, this is exactly what happens when the little child is educated verbally, through explanations being offered. Moreover, this premature awakening of abstract intelligence lames the imitative faculty. Waldorf Kindergarten teachers experience this

often, for example, when a child of four is admitted who has already "enjoyed" this mode of verbal education. Such children are often seen standing apart or lolling around with their hands in their pockets watching what the others are doing. They have no inclination to enter into the games that are going on so uninhibitedly and imitatively. It usually takes six months or longer till they are ready to join in and, through seeing what the others are doing, become just as involved.

Why is it so important that preschool children have the opportunity to imitate as much as possible? This is because every activity, and especially every physical skill which arises through imitation, not only prepares abilities for later life but also gives impetus to the healthy development of physical functioning during those years. We must not forget that children are not only learning; day by day they are growing up. Learning and growing are inextricably bound together. So the question is: does every learning process also support the child's physical development? It is obvious that physical development in children is best stimulated by copying and participating in activities that require skillful dexterity rather than by sitting still—as for instance in front of the television or playing with electronically controlled toys and games where a minimum of skillful movement is required. It is also good, where possible, to avoid being hemmed in within small apartments without any interesting things going on that stimulate imitation. Rather, give them the possibility to bring all their physical capacities into play (particularly their movement capability, sense of balance, and their fine and gross motor skills).

Every act of learning is at the same time an act of will. Learning requires effort. With preschool children, the will is still integrally bound to the sensory activity, without any intervening cognition. Uniquely, this gives the possibility for optimal learning in accordance with the functions of the sense organs and the interest with which the child uses his sense organs to take in the world. Some children have more interest, some less. There are

those with the possibility of wide-awake attention and those whose powers of attention are weak. The adults must know how they can awaken the children's interest and gain their attention. This happens when whatever needs to be done is undertaken joyfully and with enthusiasm. Something done with care and in a loving, enthusiastic manner evokes the child's interest much more than when you do things in a listless, disinterested or even grudging way. Something similar can be seen also with older children. For example, when it is a question of who should clear up after the meal, if someone jumps up and says, "I'll wash up today. Anyone coming to help?" and then disappears into the kitchen to make a start, others will now follow suit, rather than when everyone gets up quietly after the meal and tries to make himself invisible with the hope that someone else will do it. The more convinced an adult is about what he does, the more attractive it is for the imitative situation of the child. All this changes when school begins and the child's readiness to act becomes more independent of sense impressions. As motivation, he now needs his feelings to be stirred, for between the change of teeth and puberty the feeling life develops. The children now do not react primarily to what they see and experience, but to what they feel. They judge everything they experience according to feeling. Sympathy and antipathy play a big part in this. Which teacher they like, which clothes please them, which pupils in the class are "slow" (as some children put it)—all this is affirmed and discussed. What pleases them and what does not play a big role in all they do. The teacher must succeed in arousing feelings that give wings to their willingness to learn. However, with learning always being bound up with effort, it cannot only be a matter of the pupils learning what they enjoy learning. It is much more important that the pupils learn to love making an effort of will in the whole process of learning. They can achieve this when they come to like the adult concerned. Indeed, just at this age we meet the phenomenon of those pupils making good progress in the subjects where they like the teacher. For example, a child who has never

understood anything in mathematics suddenly becomes quite a successful pupil after a change of teachers, with the new one having an empathetic connection with the child.

At this age, naturally, verbal education is necessary. It is also appropriate because the intelligence of the child has become emancipated to the extent that she can retain in her memory what the teacher has said. She grasps the meaning that is contained in word and sentence independently of outer action. This ability appears towards the end of the Kindergarten, when it is time for elementary school to begin. You can recognize this in how children listen to a story. As long as they remain in the non-verbal mode of learning their memory is not yet independent. They love to hear the same stories again and again and to play the same games over and over. Grownups are often amazed that the children do not get bored. They do not because their memory has not yet reached this level of independence; the intelligence lives completely in activity. The children have, so to speak, a repetitive memory. In the repetition of an event or story they feel that they know it already. The pleasure of remembering only stirs while re-enacting the event or re-hearing the story, and not in the independent way that is later the case. This new mode of learning hops to the forefront between the sixth and eighth years. You first notice it when all of a sudden the child does not want her beloved bedtime story, but instead wants to hear something new. When she no longer lights up happily when mother says that it's time for *Snow White*, but objects: "I know that one so well already, I want a different one"—then this moment has come. As long as the children are glad to hear the same story repeated again and again they are still in the non-verbal phase in which intelligence is not accessible to them *in abstracto*.

After puberty, eagerness to act requires yet another motivation. Neither example nor feeling alone provides sufficient motivation. Young people must see for themselves what they have to do. It becomes more and

more evident that adolescents will only do what they understand, while acknowledging the reasons. Will and readiness for action have now become dependent on thinking and on insight. Young people do not want to carry out an action primarily to please an adult, but because they see some justification for it. If these different modes of learning in childhood and youth are taken into account, the task of education is made easier. If not, problems and conflicts arise which have to be overcome every single day and are deleterious for the climate of learning.

How does one learn to educate non-verbally?

We are often faced with the predicament—how do we react in the preschool years when the child refuses to do what we ask. How do we get the child to do what we want without a huge torrent of explanation and justification? Here one can learn a great deal in one of the Kindergartens where non-verbal education is practiced. In the Waldorf Kindergarten, for example, it works as follows. When the children are playing outside, walking on stilts or building little dens, and it is time to come indoors to eat, many of them get upset at the thought of their fun being curtailed. It is a great help, in such circumstances, if the meal is always at the same time and the children are accustomed to it. Habit is an important support for non-verbal education. It becomes self-evident that you follow the routine.

The Kindergarten teacher goes from group to group, singing the song that she sings every morning, signifying that they leave their treasured game and come in to eat. A few children are already following her. This extends into a little parade which affects and draws the others. More and more join in until the whole group goes inside. No scolding, no admonition, no telling off—simply going inside embraced by everyone.

A mother once said to me, "When I hear you speaking like this I find it all perfectly understandable; but then when I'm at home I always ask myself, why has my clarity disappeared? It does not work as I hoped it

would." This is the kind of problem that confronts people who are embarking on non-verbal education. So why is it so difficult? Why is it hardly possible today for an adult to refrain from a whole rigmarole of explanations when he wants something from a child? He has to learn that instead of words he needs to act with concentration. One has to do something that usually does not happen today, unite oneself with what one wishes in such a way that one can perform it almost as a ritual, through one's whole disposition, and then bring it to full expression. When I speak about something and simultaneously think about it, I am immediately distanced from it. I think "about" it. I talk "about" it. I am not it. I am not in it—I am not completely at one with it. It cannot speak out of me, or allow it to manifest through me.

This disconnected "talking about a thing" is rampant today. With one person you talk about something in one way and with another person you talk about it in another way; opinions have something relative about them; you do not want to tie yourself down. This is typical of the intellectual culture in which we live. One distances oneself; one does not take things seriously but remains "objective." Seldom is it necessary to really throw yourself heart and soul into something. Many pupils are not used to taking seriously something that has been said by an adult. They think everything can be discussed and made negotiable—that ultimately it is not decisive. And then they are extremely surprised when they meet a grownup whose every word carries weight.

Today we have all been brought up in this rather hazy, noncommittal way of life. This means that a degree of uncertainty will have brushed off on us. Most people have inferiority complexes—they know they do not really understand a lot of what is going on in the world. This kind of uncertainty in judgment, resulting in being unable to form an opinion, is widespread. Also, relativity widespread, is the feeling that what one thinks has only limited value; everything could actually be quite different.

Openness and critical distance are naturally indispensable preconditions for a genuine and realistic striving after knowledge. But they are undermining for the phase of non-verbal education. At that age children simply want to experience the meaning in everything that confronts them. If the adult cannot give this meaning because he or she is not convinced, or is uncertain or experiences things as relative and only of limited importance, the child does not receive what she or he needs. They lose confidence, and through this many typical educational problems belonging to this age group ensue.

The rediscovery of body language

Nowadays there is a whole spectrum of psychotherapies—different schools ranging from sensitivity training to Gestalt therapy—which aim to convey to people what they think and feel inwardly, and how to relearn to express this in an honest way, through the body as well, and to show this in body language. It has been shown that many people become ill through unbearable tension arising between what they experience inwardly and the façade that they show to the world. It is not that I am recommending the above-named psychotherapeutic methods for learning how to educate non-verbally. I merely want to emphasize that the possibility of non-verbal education—that is, the ability to show through body language without words what one is thinking and what is meaningful—is something which is very foreign to many adults in our time, and symptoms of illnesses often appear as a consequence.

For learning how to educate in a non-verbal way I have two recommendations. First, eurythmy where in every movement something meaningful and entirely in correspondence with feeling and thinking is brought to expression—providing one practices diligently. Second, acting or drama, where one learns to move expressively and only to say what one really has to at a particular moment. It would be ideal if parents of pre-

school children would get together in groups, and act small scenes in mime in order to express thoughts and feelings, patterns of behavior, commands and taboos, as well as everyday problems in a non-verbal way. They should then exchange feedback about what they have experienced. It is fascinating to see how engaged children become when an adult makes an interesting movement or when his face has a meaningful expression that is inclined towards mimicry. They love this sort of thing. Not wanting to let him escape from them, they will do everything he wants. They love to provoke simple expressive reactions in adults and like it when their parents show their emotions.

In this connection, it often happens that children in the Kindergarten pick up all sorts of rude words and trot these out provocatively in one or another situation. A typical case might be as follows. A mother meets an acquaintance on the street and begins a conversation. Little Johnny stands there and begins using rude words: crap, shit, suck, and so forth. With interest he observes how the friend becomes uncomfortable and the mother becomes embarrassed. Meanwhile Johnny is relishing the scene. But if the grownups continue talking unperturbed and ignore his silly prattle as a sign that it does not cut any ice, the child will soon realize that the effort is not worth it.

How does it happen that children instinctively know either that they have succeeded with such provocation or that it is not worth their while? Had Johnny just been walking with his mother alone, in all probability he would not have come out with anything of the sort. Such words only came into his mind when his mother started talking to her friend.

Once again, in the non-verbal phase, children instantly absorb the meaning of all sensory experiences. They do not experience the sense experience separate from rational understanding. So it is possible for them intuitively to grasp the moral qualities in the soul life of the adult. That which occurs for us adults in later life only in special situations when, for

example, we sense that there is an "atmosphere" in a room we are entering, or when we notice that two people are in love with each other—this is a daily and ongoing occurrence for children. As soon as the mother meets her friend, the child feels that her interest has been deflected from him towards the other person. Through his provocative behavior he would like to bring it about that he is once again the center of her attention. However, he must learn that this cannot always be, and the mother achieves this when she is quite consistent in doing what she considers is right—in this case, continuing to talk to her friend. If she empathizes with the child, and understands how he feels a little forlorn, it will be easy for her, even while she's talking, to keep casting a glance at him, or make some little movement so that he does not feel left high and dry. In this way she may pre-empt the child's becoming provocative.

Conditions for free and responsible action

There is yet a third hindrance vis-a-vis non-verbal education—the wish of many parents to allow their child to be free, not to follow directions. Hence, in order that he is not alienated, the three-year-old is asked what he would like to eat or what clothes he would like to wear. Whoever realizes that children of this age learn through example and are prone to taking on board any uncertainty in the adult's attitude (for example that he is indecisive about what he wants and therefore asks the child) will change his stance for the sake of the child. Freedom can only develop when one has achieved one's own mature insight. Of course, there are preliminary stages in the development of freedom. In the non-verbal phase of education this consists in allowing the child to imitate what he sees unrestrictedly and without reserve. He must be allowed to move freely. The house should be so organized that one does not have to prohibit the children from this or that; rather their impulse towards activity should be allowed free rein. The example comes from the grownups, but the way in which the child responds

is freely experienced and freely formed. Similarly, later at school, when the children learn something because they like their teacher, the element of freedom plays an important role. Because the child likes doing something, she feels free, even if the impulse for the activity has originated from an adult and not from herself. If children have been allowed to develop through these preliminary stages, they will also be in the position after puberty when independent thinking and powers of judgment ripen, to act out of free, self-determined insight and personal understanding. Only then is true freedom possible.

To summarize: in the preschool era, the key is trust in adults and free play of movement; in the school years love and joy of doing; and in adulthood, recognition for what is true and right is the precondition for free and responsible action.

Adults who bring trust towards the children so that they will make use of their freedom at maturity will feel themselves, in the time up to then, like a proxy, merely replacing those capabilities over which the child has no sovereignty during the course of her education. They will hold back wherever the child has reached a sufficient degree of independence. Correspondingly, the child initially brings to the adult, and especially in the preschool years, deep trust that the teacher will do what is right. An infant lying with open arms and open eyes, his diaper changed, is at the same time an archetypal image of trust-filled bliss. She allows everything to happen to her. Something of this original trust persists through the whole preschool period, expressing itself also in the need to give herself over to imitation. The child regards everything that happens around her as worthy of imitation and trust. That is why it is so important that this trust is not betrayed. It is betrayed, however, when the child experiences that an adult does not know his own mind. Likewise, when the course of the day lacks regularity and rhythm and security. But, if good habits are installed in the form of a definite sleeping-waking rhythm, in regular meal times, and

regular alternation of play and rest, the child feels herself safe and protected, experiencing the course of such a day as something into which she may gladly enter.

Without such clear and well-formed structure in the daily rounds, the growing organs of the child will not get the start in life which they need. Foundations for good functioning of the organs are laid when there is a regular alternating between making that demand on the child and leaving her in peace. Many functional instabilities, in the sense of psychosomatic disorders in later life (automatic nervous system), have their roots in bad eating habits in early childhood. If children eat only according to fad and fancy, with no appetite at meal times because they have been constantly nibbling and snacking in-between, the digestive organs will fail to learn to work together strongly with regularity and then to relax.

As can be gathered from the above, it is straightforward to understand the principle of non- verbal education; the challenge is to put it into daily practice.

About the Author:
Michaela Glöckler is a pediatrician, school doctor and author of several books. She has received worldwide acclaim as a lecturer on a variety of themes related to anthroposophical medicine. Dr. Glöckler is the leader of the Medical Section of the School of Spiritual Science at the Goetheanum, Switzerland.

Child Observation and Study

From the Kolisko Conference

Stuttgart, Germany

Waldorf Journal Project #2

Translated by

Peter Hindenberger, M.D.

Michaela Glöckler, M.D., head of the Medical Section of the Goetheanum, presided over the Kolisko Conference, which was in honor of Dr. Eugen Kolisko (1893 –1939). It drew more than 180 Waldorf teachers, therapists, and medical doctors from more than 25 countries to Stuttgart, Germany. A week was spent discussing different aspects of child development. The topics included curricula of the upper classes (8th–12th), drugs, sects, difficult children, quiet children, school readiness, and so forth. The main theme focused on the six constitutional types of children: large-headed/small-headed, cosmic/earthly, and fantasy-rich, fantasy-poor. All types are healthy; they manifest the action of the "I" on the physical, etheric, and astral body, respectively.

Dr. Glöckler's lectures on these subjects were a rich source of information that reflected her knowledge and practical experience with Waldorf education.

The Six Constitutional Types Found in Children

by

Michaela Glöckler

The Large-Headed Child

The main characteristic of this child is his/her large head in relation to his/her body. These children have large foreheads, a big occiput, and rosy checks. They are quite introverted with good concentration. They are rather dreamy and imaginative and quite artistic. They lack the hardening element as the "I" and the astral body are diverted from the nerve-sense system.

Therapeutically, Rudolf Steiner indicates washing the head and neck with cold water in the morning and a diet rich in root vegetables for their high content of salty substances. However, great care must be taken in the use of salt. In eurythmy, consonants and the big U exercise are helpful. Medicinally, infants are given Plumbum 0.1% ointment on the occiput for four weeks. Preschool children receive Plumbum prep. Dl0, 1 pea sized portion (psp) qam for four weeks followed by Cuprum prep. D6, 1 pcp qam for two weeks to seal the process. School children take Plumbum prep. D20 for five weeks, followed by Cuprum sulfurkum D6 for two weeks. This can be repeated. Vitamin D and potentized hypophysis extract can also be helpful.

The Small-Headed Child

This child is thin and pale. His/her head is small in relation to the body. Especially striking is the small cranium with its often-flat region. The face is quite defined. The small-headed child has poor concentration and is easily distracted. Such children show an analytic "bloodless" imagination. The "I" and the astral body do not engage properly in the metabolic-limb system.

As therapy this child should receive warm applications on the abdomen in the evening. Diet-wise these children need more sweet nutrients like dates, figs, and honey. Also leafy vegetables and teas are recommended. The choice and amount of sugar depends on the given situation. Wool is the fabric of choice in clothing. In eurythmy, vowels, especially the big I exercises, and LM are helpful. Medicinally, silver applications in a low potency on the abdomen or as Bryophyllum argento cult 0.1% internally as well as Primus baths are indicated. After five weeks, Ferrum prep. D8 should be given for two weeks to seal the process. This can be repeated. A good description of these two constitutional types can be found in Volume One of *The Anthroposophical Approach to Medicine* by Husemann/Wolff, p. 106.

The Cosmic Child

The head is the most cosmic part of our body. "It bears the stamp of what we were before our birth, before our conception even. All that is soul and spirit in us has left its mark there, we have therefore in our head a picture of our pre-earthly life. . . . The head is somehow apart from direct connection with the external world. . . . Thought and ideation are connected with the head, but not judgment. Judgment is connected with the middle organism, and particularly with arms and hands" (Steiner, June 13, 1921). Cosmic children have a "talent to live in the prenatal world" (Glöckler). The head is well formed physically and functionally (angelic children) whereas the rest of the body lacks penetration of the formative forces. These children have good perception but are poor in executing and concluding a thought process. They have difficulties naming geometric forms. They do not like to engage in physical activities.

Therapeutically the cosmic child needs to feel the geometry of a eurythmic form rather than the beauty. The eurythmist must ask the child to concentrate on walking a form exactly along imaginary lines. Walking on the balancing beam is also helpful. In main lesson, the teacher must evoke the child's feelings for a hero or compassion for an historic event.

Thc Earthly Child

In the case of what Steiner calls the earthly child, the forces of heredity work strongly, particularly in the metabolic-limb system. These children love earth and, therefore, always have dirty hands. They love material things such as cars, television, electronic equipment, and so forth. They are fascinated by motion. They themselves are constantly in motion. They are practically oriented, although their fine motor skills are below average and this handicap often causes outbreaks of bad temper. Sometimes they dive into an activity without checking out the "details." They can easily define geometric forms.

In eurythmy, the beauty of a form needs to be stressed. An exercise should be walked first leaving out the earthly child, next the child who can do it most beautifully is asked to do it alone, and then the earthly child is encouraged to do it him/herself. Drawing of beautiful geometric forms and rhythmic play with bells seem to be helpful too. These children often need special individual attention.

The Rich in Fantasy Child

These children have a good memory—even too good of a memory. They cannot forget. Their memory-pictures do not only remain but acquire right away a power of their own and keep coming up again involuntarily. The "I" cannot bring the thoughts under control. These pictures come up again, changed in form to fantastic imaginations: the child tells about the visit to the zoo and all the animals she saw, how they talked to her, how she rode on them, and so forth.

These children, these "prisoners of the ideas they have received," (Steiner, June 15, 1921), need to give more attention to writing or painting or any activity or exercise that brings them into movement such as eurythmy or gymnastics. In eurythmy, vowels done while stepping or walking are helpful, so that the "idea remains quietly in the organism instead of coming up again constantly and involuntarily" (Steiner, June 15, 1921). In music, singing rather than playing an instrument assists these children.

The Poor in Fantasy Child

These children have little imagination. They easily forget. They must be encouraged to be more observant while they are reading and also to listen to what the teacher tells them in class. In eurythmy, they should do the exercises mainly standing still so that their movements are mostly done with their arms. Consonants are particularly helpful in calling up ideas. Instrumental music has the same effect.

The goal in this type of child is to activate the "I" to master conscious thoughts. This can be achieved by reviewing the day, starting with the most recent event and then going back in time.

It is often difficult to determine the type of a particular child. Often this is not possible because the child does not fit one of the six categories. She might be a hysteric, neurasthenic, "poor in sulfur," or typical sanguine child, and so forth. The variations are numerous. The safest way to work with children is outlined in the lecture Steiner gave in Stuttgart on September 22, 1920, when he talked about "balance in teaching." He describes the relationship of the "I" to the other three bodies, noting the "I" can be too little or too much bound to the other bodies. Rudolf Steiner gives ideas similar to the ones mentioned in this article. In a practical setting like a classroom, he recommends that instructions change rhythmically between activities that expand and contract a child's organism, so that the child is constantly challenged by sympathy and antipathy. This helps the child to be in the preschool with his/her whole being and, therefore, engage the "I" properly.

Endnotes:

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_____. *Waldorf Education for Adolescence*, Kolisko Archive Publication, 1980.

Husemann/Wolff. *The Anthroposophical Approach to Medicine*, Anthroposophical Press, 1982.

Some Aspects of Child Study Work in Faculty Meetings

by

Magda Lissau

We must learn to perceive the spiritual archetype of man through his picture nature. In the future, man will become to some extent transparent to his fellow man. The form of his head and his gait will awaken in us an inner sympathy and understanding of a different nature from what we find in human tendencies today. For we shall only know man as an ego-being when we have this conception of his picture nature, when we can approach him with the fundamental feeling that what the physical eyes perceive of a man bears the same relation to the true supersensible reality of man just as the picture painted on canvas bears to the reality it depicts. We must develop this fundamental feeling in ourselves. We must approach man in such a way that we no longer see him as a combination of bones, muscles, blood, and so forth, but as the image of his eternal, spiritual being (Rudolf Steiner, *From Symptom to Reality in Modern History*, Lecture V).

In child study sessions, we take a group approach and attempt to fathom a human being's essence using Steiner's insights into the nature and being of humankind. There is a fundamental difference between individual research and a group approach.

Individual research, based on the individual's directed cognitive activity, relates the researcher to the research object. While this possibly narrow focus is capable of producing great insights,[1] and while much of what Steiner indicated to teachers helps prevent a one-sided view, the group approach ensures greater objectivity. Also, it adds a universal dimension not otherwise attainable. Whenever group members weave together a fabric of understanding by listening to each other, avoiding the destructive side

of intellectualism and encouraging heart-thinking in each other, then the picture built up together may touch on the eternal essence of the child and so lead to therapeutic insights. Such a conversation, which is at the heart of a child study, is often referred to as Goethean conversation.

The whole faculty should participate in child study, for the community educates the child in daily contact. Additionally, if there is a school doctor, he or she should also participate.

It is important that all teachers prepare well by reviewing their interactions with the respective child, picturing the child often. The class teacher or class guardian has traditionally given the bulk of the description, as she or he has known the child over a longer period of time and probably has contact over a longer part of each day. However, each teacher who has regular contact with the student should contribute. A description of physical aspects may be given by the school doctor.

A child study has three basic parts:

1. Observations/descriptions/reports
2. Conversation/building up the picture
3. Conclusion/indication of exercises/therapy/tuition

These parts are elaborated on the next page.

Footnote:

1. An example of such insights can be found in the book *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* by Oliver Sacks.

Points for Observation and Description in Child Study

A. History of the child from conception and birth

Report on events from early childhood:

Pregnancy: normal, difficulties, maternal illness, stress, accidents

Birth: Normal, breach, Caesarean, complications

First three years: crawling, walking, speech, memory, complete sentences, when did the child refer to him or herself as "I"?

Childhood diseases and other health problems

Teething

Accidents

Play

B. Physical description of the child (Only observations are noted here, not interpretations)

Skull:

Head: large/small, round/angular

Forehead: high/low

Eyes: wide/narrow, large/small, color

Nose: large/small, snub/beaked

Cheekbones: high, flat

Mouth: small/large, thin/full

Chin: weak/strong, split/receding

Ears: small/large, primitive/complex, flat, standing off/set at an angle/upright, set low/set high (ears are usually located between the end of the nose and the eyes in a frontal view)

Earlobes: attached/free-floating, fleshy/thin

Neck and Shoulders: thick/thin,long/short

Trunk: broad-chested/narrow-chested/pigeon-breast/hollow back/too short/too long—compared to rest of body

Limbs:

Arms: too long/too short

Hands: large/broad/thin/delicate, easily bent back, flabby/hard, dry/sweaty

Legs: long/short—relative to body

Knees: knockkneed, knees form a hollow

Feet: pigeon-toed/pointed out, large/small, narrow/broad

Perception and movement:

Senses: go through all 12 senses and describe any peculiarities

Movements: gross/fine motor movements—describe

Gait: toe/heel first touching floor, rhythmic/uneven, shuffle/springy

Movement: characterize the movements if appropriate, such as a nervous, hoppy, placid, flighty, heavy, determined, tentative, abrupt, cautious, and so forth

Dominance: determine left/right dominance in eye, ear, hand, and foot

C. Aspects related to the etheric body

Temperament: sanguine/melancholic/ choleric/phlegmatic/mixed

Memory peculiarities: What is the relationship to time? Always too slow, too fast, just right, or rolling along (Timerelationship is an excellent indication of temperament.)

Presentation: healthy/unhealthy looking, easily flushed/mostly pale, low/high pain threshold

Relationship to modeling: clay/beeswax

D. Soul forces—aspects related to the astral body

Characterize thinking/intellectual capacities:
picturing/abstract conceptualization/relationships/sequence/logic/etc.

Characterize feeling and emotional capacities: sensitive/insensitive, deep empathy/callousness, tempers/always calm, cruel/sympathetic

Characterize will nature: instinctive mode of action/deliberate mode of action, follow through/leaves things unfinished, difficult to start/difficult to finish, gets stuck easily/able to ask for help, able to plan action/always needs guidance before beginning action, leader /follower

Characterize imagination: strong/weak/bizarre/ artistic/visual

E. Social and ego relationships

What are the relationships and interactions with classmates/siblings/parents/ teachers/ strangers?

What is the social behavior? Temperament?

What is the relationship to nature, to plants, to pets, etc.?

What is the relationship to work: Does she/he take responsibility? Does she/he take pride in good work? in completion? in beautiful work?

What are the artistic capacities?

Describe work in modeling/ drawing/painting/music/speech/drama/eurythmy

F. Learning profile

Type memory: visual/aural/tactile

Relationship to music: learn by imitation/by figuring out by self/by being talked through/by acting out the relevant patterns/by repetition

Group Dynamics

However rich and superbly demonstrated the information is that we gather together in the description part of the child study session, it will be for naught unless a real process of discovery is begun. For the information to become transformed into insight, specific group interaction has to take place. This could take several forms.

The child study could be spread out over two or three sessions. In this case, the following three parts should be separated in time so that digestion of events takes place, and a picture may come about.

The main concern during this time of group interaction is building up a picture of the student. All teachers should participate equally—not only the class teacher—as this is a group effort to form a picture of the individual under consideration. This is the crucial part—a successful conclusion depends on successful faculty work in building up a picture. Without a picture, no real insight is possible (only intellectual conclusions, which are not the same as insight based on the spiritual nature of the human being). Careful conversation focused on understanding the individual with a positive attitude helps build up the picture, which serves as the basis of the third part. Goethean conversation is most useful because it is quite focused—participants need to listen intently to the presenting person. The group creates an organ of perception, and this builds up the picture of the child.

Conclusion/Results/Special Therapy/Special Exercises/Tutoring

Out of the picture of the essence of the individual arises the inspiration or the answer about what to do to help the child, to intensify the learning experience, the sensory experience, and so forth. We have now described the contents of these three parts of the faculty work leading to a successful child study. However, there are also considerations of style.

Remarks on the Style of Group Interaction

It is best if these three portions of the study are separated over time. It is particularly good to have them spaced over three weeks. (Over two weeks is certainly preferable to having all three parts pushed into one short session.) If a complete child study is done in one session, sufficient time must be allotted. It is best to let the description rest for a week. Then, let the picture that has been built up by the faculty also rest for a week. Finally, in the third week decide on the kind of help the child needs, and what faculty can provide it.

1. During the observation/description part those who have something to offer should speak, moderated by the class teacher. Usually all teachers are asked prior to the study to focus their observations on the child for the week.

2. While the picture is built, Goethean conversation should prevail—all teachers, knowing the child, intimately or not, should participate as they wish. Letting the picture speak is the heart of group-oriented child study.

3. On the basis of the picture, all faculty (particularly those who have some helpful expertise including tutoring, artistic, medical, curative) should now transform the picture into a deeper, fuller more complete one in line with the types of children, (fantasy/memory/iron/sulfuric and so forth) described by Steiner in his *Curative Course*.

It may be he1pful to realize that the first part—the report—is most closely related to cognitive activity, the second part—group work—involves the realm of feeling as the agent of picture transformation into intuitive image, and finally the third part—resolution—is related to the sphere of will.

Overview of Childhood Characteristics

Three Physical Types
Four Temperaments
Six Constitutional Types
Seven Soul Types

by

David Mitchell

Three Physical Types:

Endomorph:
Soft and spherical
Large stomach and liver—large digestive viscera
Loves food, and is glutton for affection
Sociable, loves people
Floats easily in water—excess fat
Behavior—exhibits extreme love of relaxation and comfort

Mesomorph:
Upright
Firm skin
Big bones—well developed heart and circulatory system
Relatively strong
Loves exercise, activity
Tries to dominate

Ectomorph: Flat chest, pipe-stem arms and legs

Thin, fragile

Linear

Restrained

Can be over-sensitive

Desires concealment

Withdraws from ordinary social occasions

Temperaments:

Sanguine:

Build: slender, elegant, well-balanced

Walk: on toes (dances like a butterfly)

Eyes: lively, dancing

Relationships: fickle

Food: nibbles

Memory: like a sieve

Interest: the present, here and now

Clothing: new and colorful

To stimulate: ask a personal favor

Parent and teacher attitude: show friendly interest, but be firm

Phlegmatic:

Build: big, fleshy, rotund

Walk: plodding, ambling (has a steamroller-like quality)

Eyes: sleepy, often half-closed

Relationships: friendly, impassive, reserved

Food: eats most everything and is always interested in food

Memory: good concerning the world

Interest: the present, without getting involved

Clothing: conservative

To stimulate: speak directly to the point, use shock tactics

Parent and teacher attitude: show calm strength

Melancholic:

Build: tall, bowed-head, bony

Walk: slow with a drooping, sliding gait

Eyes: tragic, mournful

Relationships: poor, has sympathy only with fellow melancholics

Food: finicky, especially likes sweets

Memory: good concerning self

Interest: self and the past

Clothing: dark, drab, solid colors—is difficult to please

To stimulate: explain how others will suffer if he/she is not compliant

Parent and teacher attitude: show sympathy and empathize with suffering

Choleric:

Build: bullnecked, upright, short legs, husky

Walk: firm, heels dig into the ground with each step

Eyes: energetic, active

Relationships: friendly as long as he/she is in command

Food: spicy

Memory: poor

Interest: the world, self, and future

Clothing: individual and outstanding

To stimulate: issue a challenge

Parent and teacher attitude: recall events and deeds (the next day), be firm, strong, and to the point

Six Constitutional Types of Children

Large-headed child:

Large head in relation to body

Large forehead, big occiput

Rosy cheeks

Introverted

Good concentration

Dreamy and imaginative

Artistic

To moderate: Rudolf Steiner indicates washing the head and neck with cold water in the morning, and a diet rich in root vegetables since these have a, high content of salty substances. However, great care must be taken in the use of salt.

Small-headed child:

Small cranium (often flat)

Thin and pale

Face is defined

Poor concentration, easily distracted

Analytical

Can be physically agile

To moderate: warm towels on abdomen in the evening; a diet rich inleafy vegetables, teas, with lots of sweet nutrients such as figs, honey, dates, and so forth.

Cosmic child:

Full, round head that is well-formed physically and functionally

"All that is soul and spirit leaves its mark on our head." —Steiner

The rest of the body appears to lack full penetration of the formative forces

Dreamy

Not well-coordinated physically

Does not like physical activities

Good perception

Poor in executing and/or concluding a thought process

To moderate: needs to feel the form in geometry rather than the beauty; practice walking on balancing beams; need to awaken compassion for others.

Earthly child:

Forces of heredity work strongly
Loves the earth and usually has dirty hands
Loves material things like cars, trucks, electronics, and so forth.
Loves motion
Quite practical but lacks fine motor skills

To moderate: needs special, individual attention; must be compelled to draw beautiful and accurate geometric forms; should be encouraged to play rhythm instruments.

Fantasy-rich child:

Good memory, in fact, too good; cannot forget
Pictures come up involuntarily
Ego cannot bring thoughts under control
Fantastic imaging and picture-building capacities
Powerful imaginations

To moderate: can become a prisoner of his/her own ideas and methods—keep him/her fluid; attention on handwriting and painting or any activity that brings him/her into movement.

Fantasy-poor child:

Weak imaginative forces
Dry
Easily forgets

To moderate: must be encouraged to be more observant; consonants must be stressed in speech exercises; the "I" needs to be activated; in eurythmy, lots of movements with the arms while standing still.

The Seven Soul Types

The classification of children by temperaments works well up to puberty. It can be dangerous, after this point, to try to categorize the students too rigidly, as most people at this age are a mixture of three or four, with one or two being more dominant. As adulthood dawns, the effect of the ego becomes more apparent and things become more complicated. In fact, instead of pure temperament (which does not exist anyway), we have a much more complex entity. Max Stibbe, in *The Seven Soul Types*, describes seven predominant dispositions that come forward. Below is a summary.

Saturn:

Active introvert
Ego conscious; serious relationship to life
Needs time to work things through
Makes a silent impression
Memory and conscience of a group
Guardian of original resolutions
Keeps view of original aims
Can miss the moment

Jupiter:

Active balanced
Can see solutions to arguments
Decisive
Can be seen as emotionally cool
Jovial at times

Mars:

Active extrovert
Aggressive, dynamic, wants to tackle everything

Brings life and movement

Takes initiative

Can work through the spoken word

Does not always respect the freedom of others

Unsettled by Jupiter

Put in place by Venus

Sun:

Very rare

Can be successful

Accompanied by luck

Needs artistic education or withers

Can deal with other people; charming, naive, spontaneous, balanced

Little personal ambition, hence overestimated

Takes a central position without ruling

Venus:

Passive

Balanced but more extrovert than introvert

Aesthetic type

Strong in sympathy and antipathy

Can be outspoken, judgmental

Can also judge moral beauty, ugliness

Can act as group conscience

More princess than queen

` Strong sense of inner hygiene

Mercury:

Passive extrovert

Mobile, agile

Can effectively combine ideas, people, facts-in-chaos

Good relationship with Jupiter

Diplomatic, mediator

Economical with the truth

Moon:

Passive introvert

Dreamy; agreeably social; good unoriginal taste

Wide interests; nearly photographic memory, but not an exact memory

Can be superficial

Reflects current trends

Encountering the Individuality of a Child

by

Walter Riethmüller

Waldorf Journal Project #2
Translated from the German by
Nina Kuettel

An Image of Adoration

One can hardly tear oneself away from the enchantment emanating from the crib of a newborn baby. It is what underlies everything that nurtures the child, albeit in different ways. The shepherds kneeled down in humility to adore it; the kings bowed their heads in reverence; Mary expressed in her posture a gesture of devoted, fulfilled adoration and Joseph one of reflective meditation. Even we, if we go deeply into the wonder of a birth, cannot resist such a moving impression.

What is it then that inwardly seizes us in these moments? It is surely not the reflexively released protective, mother instinct that is supposed to befall our species when we are confronted with a baby. That is an activity found with chimpanzee babies, puppies, and kittens, and it is felt to be not only cute but also human-like and driven by an instinct to protect. It is hardly conceivable that that activity could be the reason shepherds and kings made their way to the cradle of the infant Jesus. The reasons lie deeper than that and are not to be found in the unconscious, vegetative processes and reflexes of our physical bodies. Higher motives apply here:

the shepherds enthusiastically bringing the news of the healing, world-changing power for the future that was seminally dormant in the child; Joseph considering this mystery; the kings gaining certainty "from the stars" that in this child the "times have been fulfilled" and that world destiny would work in Him in a special way, and Maria's awakened devotion to the child—all lend the fleeting moment space and continuity through spiritual presence. These gestures are thoroughly familiar. Through them the significance of birth is constantly renewed for us, and they determine the aura of the encounter between a child and adults. If a certain motif is preponderant then it is often one-sidedly effectual as a pedagogical program. Such paradigm shifts can be observed in pedagogical history.

The Child as a Hope for the Future

Foremost, this is the current thought: The newborn, innocent, God-near child is the bearer of hope for a paradisiacal new beginning. It is in a position to be that to which previously born adults did not succeed. But, at least they do not see the child as having the ability to make improvements by the child's own powers. Maria Montessori saw the Messiah in every child: "But the child always appears again and always returns, fresh and smiling, to live with human beings. Like Emerson said: 'The child is the eternal Messiah that always returns to fallen human beings to lead them into the kingdom of heaven.'"[1] Expectations of the little one's (socially) healing powers permeate the adult's attitude towards the child. Preservation from aberrance and contemplation of that which the child hides within himself, which is seen as the mystery of our own humanness, are the motifs of an education begun at kindergarten age with extraordinarily positive effects. True humanity that is obviously still pristine shows itself in the child. Here the child is ahead of adults who can learn from him: "He saw that his child was ahead of him in many things. And, he was thankful for this time, the present."[2] This enthusiastic, almost religious attitude toward

the child is robbed of its spiritual motif and comes to us today in the form of senseless catch phrases such as "children are the future." If this thought is carried to its consequential end, then it leads to a revaluation of the generations; everything can be expected from a child and nothing more can be expected from adults. And the apparent perceptions of the current generation confirms this. Traditions count for little, experience nothing, the old is devalued and the new is always better (no matter what defects). How can an adult still be a role model?

The Child as a Genius

One has to admit that this attitude of adoration resides in the heavenly regions of the child's being. It becomes more grounded when one begins to concretely observe and search out labels for these forces upon which such great hope rests. Obviously, it is just such forces that children bring with them that constitute childhood and over which adults no longer have command, forces that voice hope for the future, zest for life, lightheartedness, joy in movement and variety, over-the-top imagination, speech and thought variations to an unheard of degree, and the capacity to follow only the living logic of the moment and not yet the abstract thought that is beholden to pure utility. All of these lavishly available qualities paint the portrait of a child. Are not here the criteria for ingeniousness met? Berthold Otto, a reforming pedagogue, is convinced that "every child, without exception, is a genius until age six."[3] Goethe saw the above indication but was pessimistic about future adulthood, noting that "if children continued to grow in the manner indicated, then we would have nothing but geniuses."[4]

Experience shows that somewhere during the transition into school, children reach a threshold that arrests a further overflowing of their surplus life force, reins in the thinking, and settles lightheartedness. This developmental process can be perceived not only in a child's behavior but

also in the closure and transformation of growth forces that take place with the change of teeth. Here is a licit compliance that distinguishes all living development: the attainment of a higher level of consciousness. In child development, for instance the freeing-up of certain powers of thought during the transition into the seventh year, this attainment of a higher level of consciousness happens at the expense of overflowing life force. Instead of posing questions such as, "Which learning methods are appropriate to this transition?" and "What material would aid here in further development?" the search is on to find those responsible for the "disaster in education." The guilty party is quickly named: school as a whole. Artur Fischer, an inventor, remarked, "Children are full of ideas. But after a few years of school that is all over because they are pressed into a corset that doesn't fit." Boredom and soul suffocation threaten; school does not prepare children for life but only makes life known through its hardship.

> If school can take the most lively thirst for knowledge within a child's soul and suffocate it in boredom, then perhaps just this is its purpose: to introduce naïvely happy, growing children to the disappointments of life. All of the accumulated grievances build, as if by chance, a deep and hard experience. The child enters this stretch of bondage with its own dramatic intensity in order to leave it, injured in a way that is hard to understand and armed against all the injuries to come in the years that follow. . . . And the unforgettably long hardship of school becomes one with the long hardship of life.
>
> — Giorgio Maganelli, creator of Pinocchio

Educational reforms of previous centuries have fed upon this experience and come up with differing approaches. Education "from out of the child" always translates into an attempt to rescue childhood forces and interweave them into the work of the school years, and, at the same

time, pilot children with these forces intact through the difficulty of learning the material and the alleged seriousness of life.

The Child as an Individual

Disillusioned and unnerved by the failure of diverse models and curriculum revisions, one can acknowledge that a supporting basis is missing which could give the admittedly inspiring, but diffuse, "from out of the child" approach a solid foundation. Then, what *childhood* actually is can be considered—perhaps it is an adult invention to define its position of power—what a *child* actually is, considered from a legal standpoint or from a family-sociological standpoint. The dilemma of trying to get at the obviously draining reality of school is clouded rather than effectively worked through by programmatic paradigms such as lifelong learning or the call to teach the basics. This observation signifies for the competent infant, who takes her development into her own hands, relief from the forward look to school, which is unforgiving and paralyzing in its rigidity. The child in general is no longer visible, but rather the individual shines out from behind this self-powered control. What for decades has been indicated by experiments and claims that school should function simultaneously as an individual learning program can now no longer be disposed of by alluding to parental egotism. We are obviously dealing here with an effectuality that did not appear out of nowhere sometime between kindergarten and school, but rather was there and individually active from the beginning.

The Preschool Years as a Learning Environment

The assurance emanating from an infant's active urge to explore and zeal for learning focuses interest anew on preschool development in the hope that here the key to successful learning can be found. If the kindergarten is already seen as being hardly threatened by formal learning,

then how much less so the first three years of life! Many would like to ascribe everything to these first three years and nothing to later development stages. Proponents of early learning programs such as Head Start in North America legitimize what they are doing by pointing out the educational potential in early childhood. A look at the formation processes of the brain during this time span (especially nerve cell linkage on a grand scale by synapses in the outer cortex) reveals potential that, if not engaged within a certain provisional time window, will atrophy. Is this an invitation to unlimited utilization and stimulation of the early childhood urge to explore so that no resources are lost? This path was quickly trodden. The spirit of exploration no longer lodges in the shoes of a child, but rather in the baby's diapers.[5] "Instead of peacefully sleeping infants or plump, healthy, apple-cheeked babies, we see slim babies sitting up by themselves; 'competent infants' contemplatively wrinkling their brows . . ."[6] The child up to age three and her brain development are understood to be synonymous.[7] In the euphoria over astounding feats of learning and toddler competencies, one can overlook differentiating limitations that are critical of the research methods (for instance, the lack of long-term studies on childhood up to youth and the uncritical application to humans of certain statements about rat brain changes). Acceptance of a fundamental brain plasticity, with its attendant possibility for life-long learning, is something of a hindrance to early childhood advancement as stylized by experts! However, these important indications break through the protective encirclement of the cradle during early learning programs. The kindergarten years reveal themselves to be the period when it should to have what schools must be kept from if they remain as they are: A field of social experimentation and an Eldorado for the joy of discovery.

Time for experimentation, time for mistakes, for practice and repetition—the kindergarten offers all of these things as well as a fundamental introduction to the natural sciences, language and art. In

kindergarten the world can become a laboratory, a studio, or a workshop for the children, or a forest, or the moon.[8]

Donata Elschenbroich in *Weltwissen der Siebenj hrigen*, (*World Knowledge of Seven-Year-Olds*) enthusiastically speaks about the variety of possibilities suitable for today's children when children's desire for life experience is met as detailed in her concept of preschool/kindergarten. This is unlike formal schooling's depressing threshold where this desire for experience is not met. Who would not want to be in a kindergarten where foreign languages are delved into through songs and games and where children are animated to sing, speak, dance, and move through rhyme, tone, and rhythmic speech and music? Who would not want to enjoy painting and be where beginning attempts to write are honored and led into suitable written correspondence without being tied to a right or wrong? And where, without competion, regard for the achievements of other children is instilled as is the ability to forgive? To have time for "mistakes, for practice, for repetition—the kindergarten offers all these things."

Elschenbroich's book has five pages of suggestions, and there one finds obvious but almost forgotten provocative ideas about what a seven-year-old child could or should experience, for instance, seesawing, a pillow fight, cooking with Dad, woodwork, making a bed, cleaning, making butter, whipping cream, elementary care of the sick or injured to get a feeling for the fact that the world changes, send and receive mail, learn curse words in two languages, use the telephone, and basic concepts of what the computer can do, and so forth. Some suggestions are thoroughly questionable and should be rejected. For instance, there is no rationale for having computers in the kindergarten. This comes from a passing comment that children are completely capable of handling this technology. However, the most impressive thing is her attitude towards the child. The child is taken seriously in his originality and his subjugation to childhood.

Reverence for the Individuality

The kindergarten fails as a bearer of hope when the reality of school does not honor children's world knowledge. Elschenbroich's impulse comes to a standstill when it encounters this depressing experience, and here it becomes evident that pedagogy is indivisible. Experience tells us that, above all, education in many of today's schools takes away the motives to gain world knowledge and stands in obstructive opposition to the child who expects and needs motivation, encouragement, and enhancement. This lack of reverence for childhood forces, suited to the state-regulated school system, can only be reversed when the puzzle of child individuality is not exhausted by genetic programming. In that respect, one must more exactly and seriously ask the question of "where does the child come from?"

In Greek philosophy the soul is in a process that runs through three phases of reintegration (metoikesis)—preexistence, existence, and post-existence. Unfortuantely, the knowledge of preexistence has fallen away from humankind. In this regard Sloterdijk spoke of a birth-oblivion. It is time to come to grips with this consciously suppressed reality because we can imagine what "could be learned and developed about depth of understanding for oneself and others, a comprehensive humanization, with that kind of expanded memory."[9]

This is also the central motif of the pedagogy of Rudolf Steiner. In Waldorf education the individuality does not exhaust itself in living in the here and now, but rather Waldorf education considers the experiences that the individuality of the child brings with him from his preexistence, revealed in the form of abilities and life impulses. With an attitude that looks only to the future and to what one would like to attain with the child, one cannot do justice to the child's own life intentions. No justice is done with an attitude of one being simply at an observation post where much is seen and little noted. Trusting in the genius of the moment seems too risky within all of life's changes.

Rudolf Steiner gave to Waldorf teachers a meditation with three attitudes to prepare for encounters with children: "Reverence for the child's being that existed before birth; enthusiastically pointing toward that which will succeed the child; protective activism for that which the child experiences."[10]

For a long time now, Waldorf education has not been alone with these motifs but they are still not a matter of course, having been only somewhat introduced into modern school practice. The rediscovery of the importance of the first seven years has opened up a more general willingness by non-Waldorf educators to confront uncomfortable questions that cannot be answered by reductionistic experiments. Pedagogical events and programs should be waived in order to make room for the needs of each child's individuality. There is a cosmos of childhood experiences and actions that "no child psychologist or pedagogue has ever been able to measure. Namely, a *realm of competence* that belongs to the child, is self-created, trodden, and ruled by the child. We can only be visitors who wonder at and enter with reverence this realm and who hold within *the echo of our adulthoods* those conditions perceived as positive by the children. We can only be those who protect this realm from insubordinate intrusions (from sexual violence to pedagogical functionalization) and at the same time lead the children into new connections of discovery through an *encouraging setting-free* resulting in an expansion of their competence."[11]

The attitudes that make isolated appearances in the Christmas motifs, referred to at the beginning of this article find their spiritual synthesis in the encounter between Mary and the Child. The encounter between mother and child reveals a gaze that utters the knowledge that every moment one is facing the full individuality that fatefully joins past, present, and future.

Footnotes:

[1] Montessori, Maria. *Kinder sind Anders (Children Are Different).*
[2] Handke, Peter. *Kindergeschichte (Stories of Children),* 1980.
[3] Berthold Otto (1859–1933) founded a school in Berlin in 1906. He represented a kind of pedagogy that included the concept from out of the child through natural learning within a loosely structured instructional framework.
[4] From *Dichtung und Wahrheit* [*Poetry and Truth].*
[5] This expression was borrowed from the title of research done by Gopnik, Kuhl, and Meltzoff.
[6] From Elschenbroich in *Die Zeit* 44, Oct. 25, 2001.
[7] From the beginning of part I of a UNICEF study (about children's situation in the world), "Children Need a Good Start in Life." It reads, "Brain development is essentially completed during the first three years of life. Long before many adults are even clear about what is going on, the child's brain cells reproduce at a frantic pace. Countless synapses are formed and the pattern for a whole lifetime is imprinted. In only thirty-six months children develop the ability to think and speak, to learn and draw conclusions. At the same time the foundations for values and social behavior are imprinted," (p15).
[8] From Elschenbroich in *Die Zeit*.
[9] Elschenbroich in *Weltwissen (World Knowledge).*
[10] Steiner, Rudolf. Lecture, September, GA 302a (Complete Works), 1920.
[11] Baacke, Dieter. *Einfuehrung in die Probleme der fruehen Kindheit (Introduction to the Problems of Early Childhood),* Basel: Weinheim, 1999.

Tell Me a Story
The Narrative of Active Learning

by

Martyn Rawson

from *Paideia* No. 11

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The traditional debate as to whether human behavior is learned or inherited seems to have found an answer—it is both. The young child is an unwritten page, a "tabula rasa," or an imperfect being, "weak and helpless, without knowledge or understanding," as the English philosopher John Locke (1632–1704) put it. In his *Second Treatise on Government,* Locke outlined the duty of parents: "To inform the mind and govern the actions of their yet ignorant nonage [offspring] till reason shall take its place and ease them of that trouble is what the children want and what the parents are bound to."[1] In Locke's view, the task of parent and educator is to fill up the empty page of the child's mind with everything a responsible adult may reasonably be required to know or be able to do.

Nor is the child, it seems, a being whose entire maturation and development is contained within it, as Jean-Jacques Rousseau discussed in 1762 in *Emile or Concerning Education*. The book opened with, "God makes all things good; man meddles with them and they becomes evil."[2] Yet education is necessary, Rousseau continued; without it "prejudice, authority, necessity, example, all the social conditions into which we are plunged

would stifle nature in him [the child] and put nothing in her place. He would be like a sapling chance sown in the midst of the highway, sent hither and thither and soon crushed. . . . [R]emove this young tree from the highway and shield it from the crushing force of social conventions."

According to Rousseau, the task of education is not to inculcate morals and social values but to allow nature to bring forth what slumbers in the soul of the individual. Parents should protect the unfolding individual from all impressions emanating from the human environment that might hinder the child's development, and they should surround the child—but not smother him—with a warm embrace of love. The ideal mother was the devoted figure of Sophie, Emile's patient, devoted wife. The ideal environment was Rousseau's idealized bourgeois family, no longer held together, as in the Middle Ages, by economic, dynastic, or feudal bonds, but by love alone.

In our century, the nature of the human being and in particular the nature of child development has continued, like Foucault's pendulum, to endlessly revolve in a swing of opinion. Recently, discussion has focused on language acquisition, moving between various versions of the nativitist and behavioralist positions—that is, behavior is either inborn or learned. Currently, consensus seems to have settled for the hard-wired or innate, genetically pre-programmed theory of language acquisition. The matter is far from resolved, however, since factors such as timing, language environment, encouragement, and social interaction all clearly play important roles. Most recent research points to a combination of inborn predispositions and social circumstances. Above all, language acquisition and general learning both involve far more active participation of the child than was hitherto thought necessary.

The Active Individuality

Perhaps the single most important discovery of modern psychology is the recognition that children are highly active in the process of learning.

Between inborn predispositions and adaptations on the one hand and cultural, environmental inf1uences on the other, there emerges a third factor, the individuality of the child. This individuality is the active agent in the process of learning, active from the beginning.

In early childhood, this individuality expresses itself less through self-consciousness and more through the unconscious will-forces in activity. We see this will-activity in the urge to raise the head and the trunk and in the whole stretching process that culminates in standing upright. It comes to expression in the attention the infant gradually directs to the world around him, and especially in the effort to make contact with the mother and other people in the child's environment. And this happens long before language makes verbal communication possible. It is this core of individuality around which memory forms, and it is, of course, this same core of being that comes to self-consciousness. Anthroposophy calls this individuality the "I" or ego. As Rudolf Steiner put it: "Essentially everything which comes into our consciousness does so through the 'I.' The 'I' is that which connects us to our environment."[3]

Steiner's understanding of development differs then from both nativitist and behaviorist approaches in that in his approach the "I" actively individualizes what is inherited and responds in individual and unpredictable ways to what comes towards the child from the cultural and physical environments. In both cases, it is the activity of the "I" that is decisive in relating the being of the child to his body and genetic inheritance and to the circumstances of his upbringing.

Thus, we can see that in this sense the bearer of individuality, the "I," is central to the processes of both maturation and learning. Associated with the emergence of self-consciousness around the age of three years old, the "I" is also active in the child long before. The "I" is by its nature active—it could be termed the "I-activity." We must reckon not only with the conscious activity of the "I" in the learning child but also with its

unconscious activity. Both before the age of three and after, the "I-activity" is at work within unconscious organic processes as well as in the unconscious levels of the mind, and specifically during sleep. The "I" is active within regenerative processes and above all in the processing of the daily's sense experiences. This activity of sorting, digesting, and assimilating linguistic and other impressions is as vital for language and cognitive development as it is for psychological orientation. We can understand why Steiner said it is through the "I" that the individual relates to the world.

Until recently it was thought that most early childhood behavior consisted of genetically determined reflexes gradually overlaid with layers of culturally imposed patterns of reaction and response. We now know that, far from being unwritten pages or bundles of reflexes, babies are active in creating learning situations through interaction with those around them. They seek social contact, can maintain it once engaged, and can even end it when they need to.

Research on infants has shown that babies as early as six days old can imitate gestures such as sticking out a tongue without having any consciousness that they have a tongue let alone knowledge of how to control it. They can select sense impressions that have meaning for them—such as the sound of their mother's voice played on a tape—when they are two weeks old. At three months, they can learn through trial and error to master the voluntary movement of their limbs, such as sharpening the focus of a projected image by varying the strength of suction on a wired-up dummy, or operating a mobile attached by a ribbon to one foot.[4] These facts would remain anecdotal curiosities were it not that their explanation presents us with a challenge and one not merely of academic interest. In understanding these phenomena, we define the nature of human beings, which in turn determines our approach to education, and much else besides. We can put it down to pre-programmed responses, but that philosophical position is demonstrably unsustainable by the evidence of our experience as parents

and educators. What precludes the possibility of total hardwiring is the part played by the child's own activity.

The Sociable Baby

Babies are above all characterized by their sociability. They have a clear preference for faces and face-like shapes, and they can quickly distinguish the human voice from other sounds. It is particularly in social contact and communication that young children show active initiative in engaging their parents and siblings in interactive exchange. They seem to want to communicate and have a compelling effect on others. It is hard to resist speaking to a baby even though we know that she does not yet have the ability to vocalize any response. In no time at all we are using voice, facial expression, and gesture to set up a meaningful exchange.[5] And it is precisely this two-way web of feedback and interaction that is so vital for learning.

What begins with stimulating milk-flow in the mother's breast through suckling, and continues with the search for eye contact, becomes a pervasive powerful and flexible general endeavor to find learning situations.

Hand in hand with the complexities of physiological maturation, such as the brain's rapid growth and later motor control, goes the exploration of soul life. Between the ages of seven and nine months, the baby learns to respond to the mother's feelings. When the mother looks on encouragingly, the child feels able to go on exploring the room. If, however, the mother has a serious expression, the child will stop exploring and return to her. For a child's developing abilities, parental reactions are essential in reinforcing the emerging sense of self. Development in this sense is, as the American psychologist Daniel Stern puts it, "a task which children and parents have to master together."[6]

On the whole, adults seem to be aware of this in that they usually respond to the demands of children in helpful ways—unless they place

them in front of a television screen, which does not respond to the child's searching need for feedback and interaction, as Dr. Sally Ward's research at the Speech, Language and Hearing Center has shown.[7] Adults apparently approach babies and seek eye contact at exactly the appropriate distance—around seven inches—the optimal distance for infant eyes. Likewise most parents seem to know intuitively how to judge the fine line between demanding too much and too little in play with their children.

In language learning too, parents assist their children by speaking more slowly and by careful repetition of basic linguistic constructions including grammatical variation when appropriate. Parents often use extremely subtle methods of supporting language development, for example, by creating highly structured and ritual linguistic situations in which language becomes predictable in a familiar context, such as at the supper table, during dressing, or bedtime. This is described by Jerome Bruner as *scaffolding*, a termed coined to denote the parent's role in supporting language development.[8] Most parents do not correct mistakes directly, such as adults would do to each other when learning a foreign language, but rather reiterate what the child said by way of confirmation but using the correct form:

> Child: "I eated up all my mu-lee."
> Parent: "Yes, you ate up all your muesli. Can you eat up all your bread too?"

The ideal scaffolding situation, according to Bruner, is when the parent is in tune with the child's developmental level and therefore talks in a way that demands linguistic skills that are always a bit beyond what the child is currently doing, but not beyond his reach.

This corresponds to Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky's concept of "zones of proximal development."[9] Vygotsky said that there are two

measures of what a child's cognitive ability is in any given situation: what the child can achieve without help and what the child could achieve with the help or instruction of an adult or more competent peer. The distance between these two levels of ability is the zone of proximal development. Vygotsky argued that what the child can do with help at one stage, she will be able to do on her own at a later developmental stage. Social framework and intrapersonal achievement are vital for child development and learning.

As Susan Engel has shown in her comprehensive book *The Stories Children Tell, Making Sense of the Narratives of Childhood*,

> The input of the "other"—in many cases, a parent—is central to understanding what the child can do and is learning to do. Family interactions may not only be the context in which children's thinking develops; they may also help shape how the child thinks.[10]

Interaction between parent and child is a part of the process of linguistic and cognitive development, especially if parents are receptive of the child's needs. Nowhere is this more true than in that archetypal human activity, storytelling.

The Meaning of the Story

It was Gordon Wells, in his seminal book *The Meaning Makers,* who identified the importance of storytelling not only for language but also for cognitive development. Based on the Bristol, England, study "Language at Home and at School," a longitudinal project involving children from the earliest acquisition of language through primary school, Wells' research highlighted the importance of stories as a preparation for literacy.

Stories, he concluded, were better than other methods for several reasons. Firstly, in listening to stories, children can "gain an experience of the sustained meaning-building organization of written language, and its characteristic rhythms and structures."[11] Secondly, stories extend the range

of the child's experience beyond her actual life circumstances. Thirdly, stories provide an excellent opportunity for the kind of collaborative talk between adult and child that helps children understand the world and stimulates the child's inner dialogues. This self-talk forms a key stage in the development of independent thinking.

What Wells said concerning written stories also goes for oral stories that are either told from memory or made up spontaneously. I feel the child's perception of the thought processes involved in telling rather than reading a story are more direct. Of course, the written story may have more consciously structured form; it may have high intrinsic artistic merit, but the thought processes involved are more removed. Unprepared reading may cloud the inherent literary structure through inappropriate emphasis on sentence structure. At a more advanced stage of literacy, the child will be able to recreate the vivid story pictures by reading on her own. In the young child, then, the perception of the story-telling activity is a complex one involving the observation of gesture, facial expression, hearing and word recognition, and perception of an individual's thought and imaginative processes at work. All these elements are inseparable from the story content itself.

At an early stage, stories should be told from memory. Parents often notice how relating the most mundane stories, in effect merely recounting the day's events, will be listened to with rapt attention by young children. Children have an intense interest in how adults organize sequential events in narrative form. The child's naïve unreflected attention may perceive cognitive processes in what the adult says. The child can learn—through assimilation and imitation—from perceptions to which older children or adults need no longer pay attention.

A child must learn the symbolic value of language to eventually be able to grasp the abstraction of reading and writing alphabet letters, comprehending qualities symbolized by numbers, and so on throughout

the curriculum. Meaning is communicated by context on the one hand and by imitation on the other. If something has meaning for an adult, the child will assume meaning for that word or symbol. A story gives context; it is imbued with personal meaning by the teller. Thus, hearing stories enables a child to grasp the symbolic value of language before having to cope with the added abstraction of writing.

Understanding through narrative helps children organize their experiences, describe events, and follow instructions. Most importantly, children who have become used to hearing and expressing themselves in narrative form can more easily understand adults' language. Such children can understand when they hear about things not present in the room and perhaps quite outside their life experience, a classroom factor as teachers tend increasingly to talk about other lands, other times, and other peoples.[12]

In order to direct their own thought processes, children must be able to use symbols and relate them to their own direct experience. As Wells put it,

> Stories have a role in education that goes far beyond their contribution to the acquisition of literacy. Constructing stories in the mind—or storying, as it has been called—is one of the most fundamental means of making meaning; as such, it is an activity that pervades all aspects of learning.[13]

Storytelling is probably as old as human culture and certainly as old as language in the form we know it today. The heritage of each culture, including the sum of its knowledge about the world, and its technical achievements as well as its worldview have traditionally been preserved in its oral story traditions. To a large extent cultures define themselves through the sacred stories they tell in ritual circumstances. A fine example of this is the Songlines of the Aborigines, which relate the narrative biography of the landscape and its relationship to the people.

Literate cultures have incorporated their values in sacred texts, which are read at significant moments in the annual cycle. Most such texts are in narrative form and describe the journey of the soul, as in the *Egyptian Book of the Dead* or the *Tibetan Book of the Dead,* or record the history of the people.

Modern cultures continue to record what society deems valuable, using books and now electronic technology. However, the principles remain the same. Even scientific facts are told in narrative form; otherwise they would be incomprehensible[14] to most readers. Stories provide a meaningful interpretation of those aspects of human experience seen as fundamental and of abiding concern. What is so essential about narrative? What makes narrative? What is in a story?

Narrative Structure

Jerome Bruner has characterized narrative as follows.

- Narrative must have sequence.
- Narrative must have a plot, a sequence that conveys meaning.
- Narrative must have a high point, a tension that meets some kind of resolution.
- A narrative may be true or not. It is indifferent to facts.
- A narrative distinguishes between the usual and the unusual.
- A narrative directs attention to personal or subjective experience.[15]

Implicit in this characterization is the fact that narrative uses formal, even ritualized forms for describing the world. It also implies a speaker-listener relationship that is dynamic rather than passive. The meaning is enhanced by context—including background information assumed to be known to both storyteller and listener. For that reason a mere list of events does not constitute a narrative because it has not been constructed with a

particular listener in mind, nor has the list been constructed with any particular meaning in mind other than face value. It is often the sequence that imbues the events with a particular meaning, as does what is left out of the account.

According to speech-act theory,[16] telling stories is a kind of doing, an action which has three components: the actual story as it is told, what the speaker intended to achieve with the story, and the effect the story has on the listener. This framework enables us to see how storytelling by and for children can involve active social and conceptual interaction. A story can provide the pretext for establishing, clarifying, or changing relationships. Stories can help form bonds, resolve conflicts, and share experience as well as provoke, annoy, or attract attention. What is told can often be quite secondary to how and to whom.

Stories as speech acts are particularly important for pre-school children in play. Narrative structure can provide a basic plot, which enables the children to take roles in a play situation. If they are playing doctors, one child can be the doctor, the other the mother with the sick child ("and then let's say the mummy goes to the doctor and the little girl says, 'I feel really sick,' I'll be the little girl and you be the doctor, okay?"). This plot generates sequences of play with dialogue and includes narrative parts ("then she gives the mummy some pills and writes in a book").

Young children spend a lot of time and energy in collaborative storytelling in which role-playing is highly varied and complex. Through such stories they not only learn to socially interact, they learn to organize their experience and what they know and also learn how to communicate that knowledge to others.

We Are the Stories We Tell

Stories not only help children give meaning to their worlds, improve their listening, verbal, and literacy skills; they also, as Engel has shown

evocatively in her study of children's narrative, help children construct their identities. Children are the stories they tell. Stories not only reconstruct and communicate experience, they are experience. As Engel puts it:

> But a central reason it is so important to understand all these whats and hows of storytelling is that the stories play a vital role in shaping children's sense of themselves and their presentation of that self to others.[17]

Engel notes that a developmental line runs through the stories children tell, from the simplest "I did this . . ." kind to the elaborate stories that children of eight or nine years old make up.

Through the stories children tell about themselves in the past or the future ("I'm going to make a sword and chop up that monster . . .") emerges a sense of extended self, which includes both enduring and transient aspects of their personality. The stories map out a region—the child's inner home base and the areas of its surroundings—that the child has explored. The details may be imaginary or real. In fact, in young children the imagination may even be more compelling than objective outer reality. The world of "I want to be" is as important in defining a sense of self as "this is what I am." Of course for an adult to have a sense of self largely defined by imagination could be psychologically risky. The healthy transformation of this would be a set of ideals one strives to realize. Adults may appropriately define themselves by the ideals and sense of truth they bear within them.[18]

In both children and adults, it is the "I" as core of the individual's being that clothes itself in the garments of the extended self. The "I" itself remains invisible—in the sense that a person's self becomes visible to us when we get to know them—though we can recognize it through its activity.

The content of such narratives helps to define and give expression to the child's being. What is vitally important to the child is the child's own perception of that being, the perception of self. Children gain this perception in and through their relationships to the world and to other people. "I went

in the shop with daddy and this big dog was there!" It is essential for the child to tell her story to a listening person who can respond in an affirmative, participatory way. The story will need to be told several times until the encounter with the dog has become a shared and assimilated experience. Throughout this process, the child is able to gain a perception of herself in relation to a specific experience and through the eyes of another.

Stories and Drawings

Just as young children's drawings[19] unconsciously reveal something of the dynamic process of the inner being of the child coming to terms with and mastering the physical organism, so too in a similar way do stories. Children's drawings express the sense of bodily well-being, balance, orientation, and co-ordination of the body in space, and this is true whatever the child's professed intentions may be. In this sense their linear quality expresses the unconscious forces of the will and their use of color is the soul's response to bodily experience. In a nutshell one could say that the child's drawing shows to what extent the child feels at home in his body.

Stories, however, reveal another realm of the child's whole being, less that of the motor-will activity and more of the linguistic-cognitive part of the soul. Stories express how the child understands the circumstances of his life and relationships. It is, of course, artificial to separate the cognitive from the motoric will, especially in the young child. The two realms are closely integrated at that age. It is the feeling realm of the soul, the middle, that is the source of both drawing and storying. Nevertheless, I suggest that the child's feeling life responds to the bodily-organic sense of his own being through the expression of movement and drawing, whereas storying and speech generally are more conscious and therefore a reflection of the cognitive pole. What is fascinating is when a child first draws a picture, a self-contained activity, and then engages an adult to relate its story. The educator must use both drawing and storying as diagnostic tools.

Collaborative Learning

Through the process of narrative construction, children can reflect on themselves in the present, in relation to themselves in the past or future. This involves dialogue and exchange. The child needs to hear, and often, the adult's own version of events: "Do you remember we went down the garden and peeped into the little birdie's nest?" Following this, the child needs to construct the narrative herself on the basis of the adult's scaffolding. This way the child gains a two-way perspective of himself in and through the story. Actually, it is usually three-way, since there is an adult's version, the child's version, and the collective "we" in the form of a dialogue, with both parent and child taking turns recounting the event, possibly to a third party.

Many psychologists have used storying with adult patients in therapy to recast the story of their lives. In telling the story from a slightly different perspective, patients can change the way they see themselves or their relationships to others. This points to the fact that when we tell a story about ourselves, we become an object that we can relate to or simply contemplate from another point of view. This provides an inner perspective. The way we represent ourselves in stories and the way stories shape us varies as we develop.

Engel's Five Phases of Narative

Engel describes five childhood phases of narrative used by children to develop a sense of the self. The first phase involves children gaining an initial sense of self by participating in the stories their parents tell about them. They learn that they can be both subject and object of events in the world. While still dependent on adults and older siblings, children begin the second phase around the age of three when they develop sufficient personal memory to describe their own past experiences. As Engel puts it, "Parents have become vital partners in describing past experiences to fill

out their children's sense of themselves over time."[20] Parents not only provide support, they influence the process in other important ways:

> When children tell stories about their past to and with their parents, not only do the parents' specific contributions help shape the content of those stories, but their role as audience affects what children put into the story. The child may include details that will please a parent, attract his attention, or provoke him. The child's sense of his listener will end up influencing what goes into the story anyhow it gets told. Ultimately, that story will contribute to the child's inner sense of self.[21]

The third phase sees children between four and five expanding their circle of conversation partners to include peers. These kindergarteners increasingly learn through feedback from their playmates during play. Initially three- and four-year-olds tend to talk to each other while playing; by the age of five, they tend to talk more about what they are going to play. Between the ages of six and seven, they spend most of their time telling each other about what they like and dislike and exchanging stories, especially common experiences: "Remember when we made that hideaway." This helps form social bonds and strengthens the sense of identity. Not to share in the memory challenges a child's sense of personalized past.

Engels describes the fourth phase as the increasing ability to hold different ideas in the mind at the same time and the ability to return again at intervals to certain topics and themes. Earlier the child has been far more bound to present experience and the circumstances of the immediate environment. Engel writes:

> Whereas two-year-olds use stories to understand the social world contained in their immediate family life, children of seven, eight, and nine years old use collections of stories and

> ongoing sagas to penetrate the complexities of the expanded world in which they are now active.

The fifth phase sees storytelling dwindling. There is less at home or school. Engel suggests that what is retained is the repertoire of stories/ memories that we use to give friends and new acquaintances a certain picture of ourselves. What does seem clear in my observation of adolescents is that storytelling becomes internalized. Children speak to themselves when they are engaged in some concentrated activity. In order to remember the sequences or stages in a complex process they have not quite mastered, they use self-talk and later internalize this in the form of thought. A similar situation occurs with the identity reinforcement of storytelling. Speech becomes internalized thought, and storytelling withdraws into inner memories, dreams, and reflections (in C. G. Jung's autobiography). Literature, of course, is the other outcome of the storytelling development of childhood. One assumes that Dostoyevsky, Dickens, Ben Okri, and Kate Atkinson all started off as infant storytellers. As Ben Okri writes in *Aphorisms and Fragments*:

> It is in the creation of story, the lifting of story into the realms of art, it is in this that the higher realms of creativity reside. . . . It is easy to forget how mysterious and mighty stories are. They do their work in silence, invisible. They work with all the internal materials of the mind and self. They become part of you while changing you. Beware the stories you read or tell, subtly, in the night, beneath the waters of consciousness, they are altering your world. [22]

Conclusions

Given the importance of storytelling for child development, points worth remembering include:

1. Certain features of linguistic development appear to be universal. These include the tendency of children by the age of three years to sequence their experience when describing it. They talk about what happened and then what happened next. This is the first prerequisite for narrative. By the age of five years most children have mastered the other prerequisites of narrative, place and time. They can say when and where it happened. When children recall events they usually have an opening, a high point, and an ending.

2. Children adopt the storytelling characteristics of their culture. In all cultures children "learn to tell stories in order to become full participants in their community and to develop relationships with other people, as much as they do to formulate experience for themselves.[23]

3. Stories are crucial to cognitive development and in the child's developing relationship to self and the world.

4. Children's capacity to tell stories becomes increasingly individual.

5. Storytelling may be an inborn predisposition but it requires from the beginning willing, enthusiastic, and skilled partners. Parents and educators need to value children's stories by responding to them in appropriate ways. We need a phenomenology of stories, and we need to train our observational skills to recognize their qualities.

6. Teachers in kindergarten and elementary school (though this is far more likely in elementary school) need to avoid stifling the storytelling habits of children through formal and informal instruction and correction. School teachers must find ways of encouraging rather than hindering the storytelling process. Wells writes that many school situations limit linguistic development and learning generally because of what he terms the "transmissional" concept of teaching.[24]

It is not possible., simply by telling, to cause students to come to have the knowledge that is in the mind of the teacher. Knowledge cannot be transmitted. It has to be constructed afresh by each individual knower on the basis of what is already known and by means of strategies developed over the whole of that individual's life, both inside and outside of the classroom.[25]

Bearing this in mind and taking account of the need for an interactive learning relationship, a number of factors limit learning opportunities. These include too much frontal teaching, in which the teacher does most of the talking, and groups which are too large for individual children to have the opportunity of interactive conversation of the kind needed to develop skills and further understanding. Also, too little allowance is made for individual children's abilities and experiences. Learning becomes passive when there is too much emphasis on the teacher's lesson plan and too little emphasis on where the individual child is—that is, building lessons on what the children know in a given situation. Wells stresses the necessity of active involvement of children in their own learning. He points out that too many teachers fall back on the "being talked at" style by which they were educated. What Wells terms collaborative teaching methods activates the child's own learning activity. In anthroposophical terms, one speaks of engaging the child's "I" or ego.

The engagement of the "I" is at risk where outcomes are too rigidly defined in the curriculum and teaching methods are used that deliver these outcomes as "efficiently" as possible. Rather, in education, the journey is always its own reward.

This method of teaching does not imply that the teacher become redundant or relinquish responsibility for guiding learning situations, far from it. In fact a collaborative partnership between child and teacher is a great art, requiring considerable professional expertise. In a Waldorf school, most teachers would see partnership with the young child as being with

the "I" of the child, the child's higher being. The teacher, of course, converses with the child but the collaboration as such consists in recognizing what the "I" of the child is communicating. As the child becomes more mature, that dialogue increasingly needs to become direct and verbal.

7. Engel identifies two ways teachers neglect or stifle the developmental potential of storytelling: an overemphasis on correctness and logic at the expense of the child's impulse to convey personal meaning and not taking what children have to tell us seriously, seeing the child's inventions as childish.

8. The role of the listener is an active, creative one. This means not only encouragement but appropriate responses. Storytelling is a collaborative process. In order to collaborate we have to enter into the story. It is no good asking questions outside of the framework of the story or introducing your own, different story.

9. Children need to experience a variety of styles of storytelling using different genres. Engel gives revealing advice: "We tend to reserve great stories and poems until we think children are old enough to appreciate them. Instead, assume that if they start hearing beautiful language, well-constructed narratives, and different genres early in life, they will acquire a vocabulary of narrative in the same way that they seem so easily to acquire a vocabulary of words." This accords with basic practice in Waldorf schools.

10. Allow children to read, hear, and write stories about the things that concern them. This includes things from which we usually try to shield children. It is better that they retell the story of some television crime series than repress the experience. The beauty of stories is that we can change them in the retelling and, in so doing, we can change our relationship to them. It may sound trite but it is good to talk and even better to listen!

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Sleep as a Task of Waldorf Education

by

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The paths trod by children night after night into the depths of the spiritual world into which they immerse themselves are of immense importance to the success of our education. Rudolf Steiner already pointed this out at the beginning of the *Study of Man* like a prelude to the founding of the first Waldorf school.[1] At the same time, the task of fathoming a connection between daily experience and nighttime sleep was put forward in order to fructify our teaching practice. Especially the rhythmic phenomena of the nightly rest period exhibits impressive characteristics that together with the background of various indications by Rudolf Steiner are very interesting and motivating. Hansjoerg Hofrichter pointed out such phenomena in an article in *Erziehungskunst* in May, 1994.[2]

The state of sleep is not a passive giving up of oneself. It is actively initiated.[3] The fact that we can, today, by reason of observations made on people sleeping, describe the various states of sleep has been adequately documented. Aristotle circa 350 B.C. identified the phases of rapid eye

movement that are associated with dreaming. What is remarkable is the rhythmically swinging immersion into the various observable states of sleep. Measurement of electrical brain activity by an EEG gives an exact delineation of the physiological processes.

The Physiological Phases of Sleep

When falling asleep, the frequency of measurable current changes from 8 to 12 Hz. (the so-called alpha waves) to the beta waves of 13 to 40 Hz. In a second phase, these beta waves are superposed by isolated deflections in order to then finally be replaced by the slow delta waves (approximately 3 Hz.) in the third phase of sleep. The actual deep sleep that has the slowest electrical brain activity of one wave per second, the so-called "slow wave sleep" (SWS) begins after approximately 20 minutes. When it appears for the first time at night it can last up to 30 minutes. However, we reach this state of sleep only two, or three times during a seven- to eight-hour rest period and then only in the beginning of the sleep period.

In phases three and four, growth hormones in the blood plasma rise markedly. During experimentation people were purposely wakened at the beginning of this phase of deep sleep and only allowed to experience the other phases, complained of strong physical indisposition and had marked difficulties with kinesthesia the next day.

After the fourth phase (about 50 minutes), the "way back" through the other phases begins and lasts about 20 minutes. Then begins the phase of so-called "paradox sleep." This REM sleep, so named because of the observable rapid eye movement (REM), is apparent through significant increase in bodily functions. The heart rate increases for a short time and fluctuates between 50 and 90 beats per minute during the entire REM phase. Breathing becomes faster and more irregular. The body hardly moves. Even muscle tension that otherwise prevents the lowering of body temperature

is suspended during this time. At the same time, eye movement behind closed lids can be detected. The delicate muscles of the middle ear, which serve in the selection of certain sound phenomena, also become active.

We always experience our dreams during this phase even if later we cannot remember them. Even though the brain's electrical frequency (beta waves) clearly indicates that the person is in a state of light sleep, it is hard to awaken that person during this time. If, by certain purposeful interventions, this paradox sleep is prevented for extended periods of time, the person taking part in the experiment often complains of psychical disturbances. The person feels tense and irritable, displays aggressive behavior, anxiety, suspicion, and possibly experiences significant memory lapse. There are indications that the REM phase benefits the consolidation of memories.

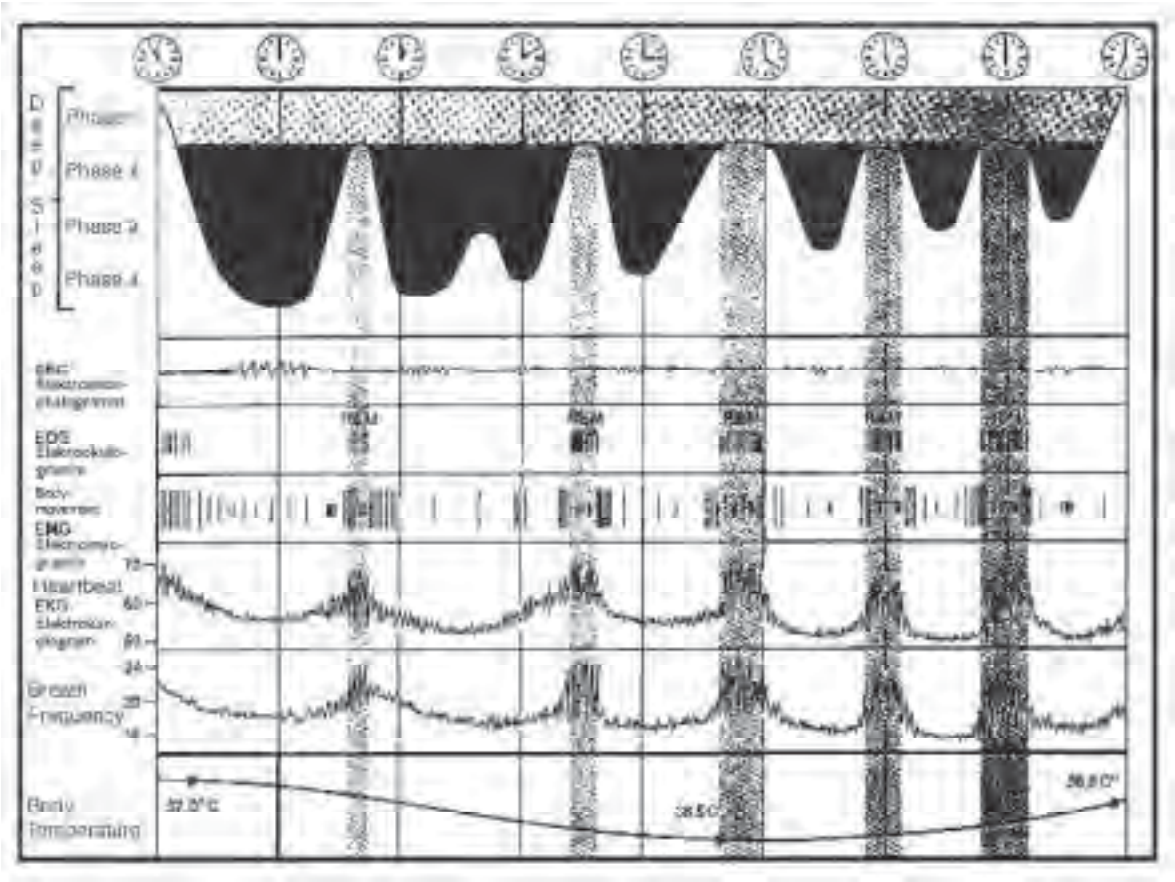
After this episode we can wake-up for a short time and then we begin the nightly journey anew. The entire journey, from falling asleep to the first REM phase, lasts on average about 90 minutes and consists of these four parts each of about the same time duration:

- immersion, phases one to three, about 20 minutes long
- deep sleep, phase four, about 30 minutes long with the tendency to become shorter with each passage
- the return, phases three to one in reverse order, about 20 minutes long
- paradox or REM sleep, about 20 minutes long with the tendency to lengthen with each passage.

In the first half of the night, deep sleep occurs only twice while the length of time of REM sleep continually increases until it reaches 40% in the morning.

It is significant that the cycle described varies little between individuals. So it is that with people who normally sleep only a short time, the portion of deep sleep is increased—and with long sleepers, above all,

the length of phase two is extended. For the rest, the pattern of a five-time upswing and downswing lasting approximately 90 minutes each applies for all adults. The entire curve that we complete by repeated immersion into the world of sleep is marked by a slow decline in body temperature of about 0.55 C° during a period that lasts about five hours ending with an increase in body temperature.



Dream Images and Their Preparation

Dreams during the REM phase are only accessible to our memory in full when we awaken immediately after this phase. Often they appear addled and seem to have no connection to the previous day's experiences. The fact that small children have especially extended dreamtime shows that the content of consciousness that comes about is, at first, hardly determined by the physical world. In total, the percentage of REM sleep with newborns is about 50% (16 hours of sleep) at its highest point and

then sinks to about 18.5% with a 12-year-old child. It then increases once again to 22% with young adults and finally, little by little, to just 13.5% with the aged.[4]

Rudolf Steiner also described how the quality of dreams change:

> Dreams of the small child still reveal the creative energy that comes from the spiritual world and is active in the physical body, as opposed to adults where dream content is confused and must, upon awakening, be inserted into a space/time order by the physical body.[5]

Access to the dream world of the small child is unequivocally lost. Only through their own efforts can adults come close to the active, spiritual hierarchies during sleep.[6]

Just as dreams are the domain of the small child only older children and adults are in a position to carry reminiscences of waking life into the world of sleep.[7] This apparently happens during the phases of deep sleep. In other words, it has been shown that not only during REM sleep does consciousness content come about that can be remembered. Sleep-trial subjects who were awakened during slow wave sleep could report on sleep experiences that did not originate from a previous REM phase. Such experiences were, however, much more strongly built upon ordered elements of the previous day's experiences.

The impression arises that the subsequent dream experiences are in some way prepared in the deep sleep phases. Waking experiences are carried into the depths of the spiritual world while during REM sleep images can arise that emanate from the creative energies of the spiritual world. However, we normally see only the after-images of our earthly life mirrored that we have ourselves painted into our dream phases.

The physiological process of sight inverts itself in dream images. With cats it has been determined how in a waking state the movement of

gaze follows an outer light stimulus followed by an electrical impulse in the corpus geniculatum of the brain; only then does the seen image appear on the optical cortex. During a dream, the opposite occurs. The impulse to the corpus geniculatum happens first followed by the movement of gaze. The image comes about in reverse order—from the inside to the outside. The decisive moment at which it is possible for daily happenings to be carried into the dream world occurs with the freeing-up of the etheric body at the beginning of the change of teeth. Only so far as the child is already in a position to carry his or her earthly experiences during waking life into his or her nightly world is that child approachable through Waldorf education.

> And just as much as comes in from the earthly world during sleep containing nothing more of the world beyond, exactly in that measure, is the possibility opened to us, in the age between the change of teeth and sexual maturity, to approach the child through education.[8]

The freed-up etheric body no longer gathers archetypical images that work through the physical body directly from the spiritual world, but takes them, self-prepared from daily experiences, along on the nightly journey. The Waldorf curriculum replaces the effects of form-creating spiritual beings. So, that is how the high value placed upon the significance of sleep should be understood as Rudolf Steiner indicated at the beginning of *The Study of Man*.[9]

Instruction That Is Education for Proper Sleep

In three different instances Rudolf Steiner described how we could teach the curriculum so that it could further work in sleep in the positive way.[10] If we lead the children into a creative activity such as form drawing, it is necessary to evoke an outlook of an inner nature. For instance, inner activity should receive an impulse that creates a sense for symmetry. The child should be able to form the logical completion from out of him- or

herself. The active urge to finish incomplete forms stimulates the body of formative energy to pulsate further during sleep. The child has, through this, the tendency to finish what was begun so that through the night a permanent ability can be attained from the practiced activity.

If the physical body and the etheric body are engaged by outer activity, perhaps through eurythmy, then the two higher bodies, the astral and the "I," have the tendency to resist this activity because it does not, at first, suit their own impulse. Nevertheless, the movements are impressed upon these higher bodies, and they carry the memory of them in the spiritual world at night. There, the activities of the day can be attuned and put into accordance with the spiritual experiences. Only through this working together can the eurythmy work of the previous day unfold its health-giving force.

In the first case, it has to do with leading the formative activity of the children into the sphere of creative thought of the spiritual hierarchies.[11] The second example points us to another way: Outer activity of the physical body and the etheric body, (and this applies not only to eurythmy), must be in accord with the laws of cosmic forms of movement and rhythms. That is how the energy that is changed during the night can also radiate toward the activity of the following day.

The Sleep Between Observation and Understanding

If we do not stimulate the children to their own physical activity during a lesson, then there is a third aspect to consider. We must stimulate the deliberate, understanding perception of the children when we teach from a phenomenological science experiment or describe a historical event in such a manner that they direct their full attention to the lesson content so that they are constantly coming to conclusions. In other words, the children do not just take in a stream of words or behaviors, but rather they recognize patterns and forms and organize sequences of action and units of speech together into something that makes sense. It is best when the events

presented are inserted into a space and time order because this appeals to the whole being. The students must, thereby, through their will, wholly connect themselves to the forces and laws of the objective, physical world. The next step is to characterize the bare facts that have been presented. Once again in review, we look at the content, and underline what is essential, so that we can evaluate and judge the order of importance of different particulars as they apply to the whole context. With this, we further stimulate the feelings of the children before they are dismissed from the lesson. The conclusions that were formed can now further work on the limbs during sleep in that part of a person into which the astral body and the "I" withdraw.

What is experienced by the waking day-consciousness is processed in the metabolic regions and altered through the mediation of the planetary energies of Mercury and Venus. Through this, a transformation now begins to unfold. Namely, during the night the etheric body unfolds its activity in the head.[12] It should be recognized that the electrical currents of the brain slow down and the steady rise and fall of the delta waves increases. The astral body, with its faster and unsteady rhythm, has gradually withdrawn from this region. The events perceived during the day now appear as images in the conceptual activity of the head that the children find before them the next morning.

Mercury and Venus as Representative Images of Sleep

These two planets so strongly deviate from the other wandering stars in their laws of motion that they really cannot be commensurately presented in the same spherical system with the Earth. They must be considered in connection with the words "contrary to Earth," just as the ancient astronomers in the time of Pythagoras described them.[13] Talking about these two planets, Rudolf Steiner spoke of a "stumbling around within themselves."

Mercury and Venus, as viewed from the Earth as the nearest planets to the Sun, never stand in opposition to the central star. They can, therefore, at no time be seen as full-shining heavenly lights at midnight, but rather only mornings and evenings at the thresholds of sleep. To our perception they move in front of and behind the Sun.

Venus, especially, gets up to one quarter the distance from the Sun close to the Earth. No other planet comes so close to the Earth. Then it goes back into the cosmic deep behind the Sun. One recognizes again from this image the slow sinking and rising of body temperature during sleep. Between these two extreme positions of the lower and upper conjunctions, Venus can be seen either as the morning or evening star. Like Mercury and the Moon, Venus maintains its brilliance by reflecting sunlight.

Mercury structures the synodal (coming together or conjunction) orbit of Venus, lasting $1\frac{3}{5}$ years, into five sections. With a median synodal orbit time of 116 days, which is subject to strong fluctuations, Mercury goes around the Sun (as viewed from the Earth) exactly five times during a Venus-synod. As opposed to Venus, Mercury is never seen because it remains in the immediate vicinity of the Sun. With every lower conjunction, when it comes nearest to the Earth from behind the Sun, Mercury describes a loop with its retrograde course during a period of 19 to 24 days (22% to 28% or about a quarter of the synodal orbit).

Venus also remains retrograde (always as viewed from the Earth) for 42 days during its lower conjunction. In eight years Venus traverses its entire orbit exactly five times before its particular phenomena are repeated at about the same places in the zodiac. During these eight years Venus describes a looping path around the Earth in the shape of a five-pointed star. Mercury divides each of these five loops into five sections. These five sections are again structured: the synodal Moon orbit at 29.5 days corresponds almost exactly to one quarter of a Mercury synod. The following comparison chart can be made with the physiological phases of sleep:

Venus synod	Nighttime sleeping period
Immersion into the cosmic depths during an upper conjunction and renewed nearing to the earth	Sinking and renewed rising of body temperature
Length: 584 days	Length: seven to eight hours

Ratio: 1:5

Mercury synod	Gradual immersion into deep sleep, renewed emergence with a phase of paradox (REM) sleep and possibly short awakenings.
Travels around the sun with a retrograde period near the earth that makes up about one quarter of the orbit time.	Average length: 90 minutes
Average length: 116 days	Five rounds make up one nightly rest period.
Five Mercury synods make up one Venus-synod.	

Ratio: 1:4

Synodal Moon Orbit:	Physiological Sleep Phases:
Length: 29.5 days	Immersion (20 minutes)
Four Moon orbits correspond to one Mercury synod	Deep sleep (30 minutes, tendency to shorten)
	Return (20 minutes)
	Paradox Sleep (REM) (20 minutes)
	Tendency to lengthen

Mercury, like Venus, changes its direction that is visible to us every time it comes near to the Earth and, for a short time, executes an opposing movement to the Sun's ecliptic. Mercury behaves like the astral body when it comes out of the spiritual world and nears the physical body and wants to enter into it so that perhaps there is a short awakening. This coming near is completed five times every night during REM sleep before the "longing of the soul for the physical body becomes so great that it sinks into it."[14] Even though the synodal orbit times of Venus and Mercury are different from all other rhythmic orders, there is something that they have in common. By reason of their nearness to the Sun, both of them execute their path through the zodiac (viewed from the Earth) in about the same time as our central star—that is, a year. So, they draw their own rhythm from the steady course of the Sun in cosmic space.

Observations made by modern sleep researchers can anticipate in detail the laws of movement of Venus and Mercury. These two planets bring growth forces close to the human soul when the physical body and the etheric body are in plant-like states.[15]

The physiological processes in persons who are sleeping are divided into two large groups. Many sequences point to configurations of time that generally apply and that stand in established relationships among themselves. Especially in the deep-sleeping phase, the frequencies of brain electrical current along with the delta waves come close to the beat of the pulse. In the biological time-organism of human beings, pulse and breathing act as equalizing centers between long-wave rhythms in the domain of the metabolism and high frequencies in the domain of the nerve-sense system.[16] During REM sleep the brain's electrical activity accelerates and the heart rate and breathing become irregular. The rhythms dissolve out of the cosmic order and exhibit no more ordered time configuration until the person again moves into a state of quiet sleep. However, these states of sleep in which both higher bodies are blended into the order of cosmic rhythms are significant for the transformation of daily experiences.

The Astral Body Between Waking Consciousness and Dreaming

After they have been processed by the human "I" and the astral body in the metabolic-limb system, carried out into the spheres of planetary transformation forces and mirrored into the active etheric body, the images of waking perception now appear as unconscious pictures. On that foundation, lessons the next day include a review of the previously presented events with the goal of forming a concept. Now, in preparing for what comes next, that part of the events that are licit and compliant to laws must be raised into consciousness so that the pictures that came about during sleep take on meaning.[17] Namely, when the picture is not made conscious the etheric body has the tendency to penetrate the physical body. Its uncontrolled effect would work clear into the nerves and blood processes.

If the astral body does not succeed in carrying over the perceptions of the day into deep sleep, the transformation through the planetary forces does not come about and consequences can be felt. It can be assumed that dream pictures of the subsequent REM phase are then overshadowed by the impression of the day's events and remain limited. Dreams require a preceding immersion into slow- wave sleep as is proven by complete sleep deprivation: In the closing period, at first the portion of deep sleep is increased, and only in the second night is the portion of REM sleep increased.

However, if our dream pictures merely mirror echoes our daily experiences then sleep is missing its enlivening effect. We feel refreshed following dreams which rise above the laws of time and space and whose contents come from totally different spheres than that of our daily lives.[18]

Concepts from the Realm of Imagination

Still, refreshing, healing sleep is not the primary goal of the school lessons. It is the symptom of a successful link-up with the spiritual world. Sleep should sandwich itself between perceptions filled with feeling and the formation of concepts.

As human beings we are organized into the world so that we experience observed things and their associated meanings as separate. The activity of our senses, that can only pass on disassociated pieces to us, is supplemented by this conceptual thinking so that we gain knowledge of objective world-connectivity.[19] This process should now be interrupted for the students and continued by the immersion into sleep. What is changed through this for the formation of concepts?

In observing a physical experiment or in merely registering historic events, the students form individual perceptions. They draw conclusions from what their eyes and ears offer them, and recognize and organize them according to their personal, previous experiences. The conclusion, however, is an act of will like that which we otherwise principally carry out with the limbs. This act of will is seamlessly inserted into the lawful processes of the physical world.

The goal of the processes of knowledge is the concept, which belongs to observed and registered content. However, this arises for our thinking into the head only insofar as at night the etheric body can unfold its activity. Between individualized perception and the understanding of supra-personal world events, the student completes his or her steps to knowledge. In the best case, feelings of having evidence for and a deep certainty of experiencing truth arise. This perception can spread in the soul as becoming reacquainted with something old and trusted, warm and light-filled.

Whoever can find the connection with the universally valid world organization and experience it personally lifts him- or herself above the mere acting-out of his or her own sympathies and antipathies. "A true individuality will be that one who reaches the furthest with his or her feelings in the realm of the imagination."[20] This connection happens at night for the student insofar as his or her daily, waking observations can meet the individual's own genius.[21] What is being taught here through the world of hierarchical beings is the way from limbs to head, from conclusions to understanding.

Footnotes:

[1] Steiner, Rudolf. *Allgemeine Menschenkunde als Grundlage der Paedagogik* (*The Study of Man*), first lecture, August 21, 1919.

[2] Hofrichter, Hansjoerg. "Der Schlaf – ein vernachlaessigtes Thema" (Sleep, a Neglected Subject) in *Erzeihungskunst* #58, Stuttgart, 1994.

[3] Sleep is initiated through a low stimulus-frequency and tension of the ascending reticular activation system (ARAS) in the brainstem, whereas a high frequency and tension of the same system causes a person to awaken.

[4] The percentages in youth age groups reflect the normal reduction in amount of sleep beginning at about age 14; this affects, above all, the percentage of deep sleep while the absolute duration of REM sleep remains practically constant.

[5] Steiner, Rudolf. Lecture on April 9, 1923.

[6] In his book *Knowledge of Higher Worlds*, Rudolf Steiner describes how the dream world of the student of the occult changes during the course of his or her endeavors.

[7] Steiner, Rudolf. *The Study of Man*, first lecture.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Steiner, Rudolf. Lectures on August 14, 1923.

[11] Kranich, E. M. Die Veraenderungen von Wachen und Schlafen im Kindes- und Jugendalter. (Changes found in Waking and Sleeping during Childhood and Youth) Found in: *Der Rhythmus von Schlafen und Wachen und seine Bedeutung im Kindes-und Jugendalter* (*The Rhythm of Sleeping and Waking and Its Significance in Childhood and Youth*), by Stefan Leber. Stuttgart, 1990.

[12] Lecture by Rudolf Steiner on August 20, 1922, Complete Works #305.

[13] Steiner, Rudolf. Lecture on May 2, 1920, Complete Works #201.

[14] Steiner, Rudolf. Lecture on April 21, 1923, Complete Works #349, and also a lecture on March 21, 1923.

[15] Kranich, E. M. *Die Formensprache der Pflanze, Grundlinien einer kosmologischen Botanik* (*The Language of Form in Plants; Guidelines for Cosmological Botany*), Stuttgart, 1979.

[16] Hildebrandt, Gunther. "Zeiterleben und Zeitorganismus des Menschen" (The Experience of Time and the Time Organism in Human Beings), found in *Was ist Zeit? Die Welt zwischen Wesen und Erscheinung* (*What is Time? The World between Being and Embodiment*) by G. Kniebe.

[17] Steiner, Rudolf. Lecture on July 14, 1921, Complete Works #302.

[18] Steiner, Rudolf. Lecture on December 25, 1921, Complete Works #303.

[19] Steiner, Rudolf. *Philosophy to Freedom*, from chapters titled: " The World as Perception," "Getting to Know the World," and "Human Individuality."
[20] Ibid., p 87.
[21] Leber, Stefan. "Der Rhythmus von Schlafen und Wachen," (The Rhythm of Sleeping and Waking), Stuttgart, 1990.

The Effect of Lunar Nodes on Human Biography: Our Hidden Plan

by

Susanne Donato

Waldorf Journal Project #2

Translated from the German

by

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In a lecture in Dornach, Switzerland, on April 16, 1920, Rudolf Steiner explained how the macrocosmic breathing process in the heavens is connected to the microcosmic breathing process in the human world and comes to expression through a rhythmic time cycle of 18.6 years. In human biography, we find this rhythmic cycle in the *lunar nodes rhythm* or *moon nodes.* According to Steiner, important things are happening with the human soul at these points in time.

The nights that a person lives through at these points in time are the most important nights of a person's life. There it is, where the macro cosmos completes its 18 breaths, completes one minute. And it is there where the human being, in a way, opens a window to a wholly different world.

What are these lunar nodes whose influence upon human lives is noticed again and again over a vast cycle of time?

The Astronomic Lunar Nodes

First, let us ask the astronomers and allow them to explain to us the movement of the heavenly bodies. We will assume the vantage point of earth. Seen geocentrically, the sun orbits the earth. We call the orbital path that it delineates thereby the ecliptic. The moon also orbits the earth. Vis-à-vis the sun's path, the ecliptic, the moon's orbital path is inclined about 5°.

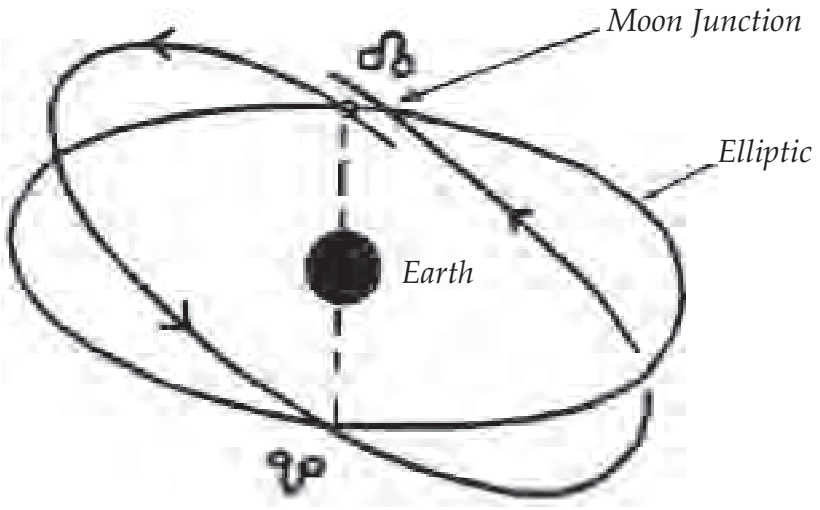

Figure 1: The arrows show the direction of the moon's orbit. The earth is to be thought of as in the center of the orbital paths.

The points at which the orbital paths of the sun and the moon intersect are called lunar nodes. Because the moon completes an orbit around the earth in one month, in this period it intersects the sun's orbital path twice, one time in a northerly direction called the north or ascending lunar node, and a half-month later in a southerly direction called the south or descending node. Within these monthly repetitions, the intersection point moves retrogressively through the ecliptic. After 18.6 years this intersection point has traversed the entire ecliptic (360°) and stands in practically the same place as it was 18.6 years earlier. In reference to human biography, it means that after 18 years, 7 months and 9 days, the ascending lunar node is again standing at the same place as it was at the time of a person's birth.

Everyone can paint for themselves the picture of the dramatic consequences of our insisting on staying in the womb.

So we decide to give up the protection and safety of the mother's organism. During the difficult and painful physical birthing process, we pass through a door to the other side and our independent life begins. At first we take elementary steps: the first breath, intake of nutrition, and digestion. Also for the first time, the organism must adjust to changing temperatures. Suddenly, we are exposed to previously unknown and, at first, apparently threatening experiences.

The signature that we recognize in the lunar nodes at birth we will find again in all the later lunar nodes during our lifetime. For one, it is the decision to say goodbye to conditions that no longer offer us possibilities for our inner and outer maturing process. Often, this decision will first channel itself in unconscious levels of our being and will at first only express itself in that we feel uncomfortable, lonely, misunderstood, and constricted by conventions and rules. We feel insignificant and unimportant. We get into controversies with parents, friends, colleagues, and neighbors. A yearning grows within us to do everything differently and begin something totally new. Then, more or less consciously, old securities are given up in order to accommodate our inner growth.

Just like physical birth, these birthing processes also do not happen without labor, pain, and discomfiture. Injuries during these births cannot be ruled out. The birthing process can go quickly or slowly. It can be light or accompanied by dramatic events. Dr. Frank Nager, a cardiologist in Zürich, says in his book, *Goethe der heilkundige Dichter* (*The Dramatic Birth of Goethe*), "Who came into this world half-choked, dark-cyanotic, and appearing to be dead. After this very first, early brush with death, the first and fourth lunar nodes also brought the poet to the brink of death."

The First Lunar Node

We reach the first lunar node at 18 years, 7 months and 9 days after birth. This has to do with breaking away from one's family. It is necessary to unwind oneself from the stream of inheritance, from parental authority. It is the beginning of a new independence.

Now it is also time to remove ourselves from people with whom we no longer share a common future in the sense of our birth impulse, people who can no longer contribute anything to our further development and vice-versa. School and other friendships of our youth come to an end. The connection to parents loosens and must transform from a parent-child relationship to a more equal, hopefully friend-based relationship. We are moved by such questions as: What is the meaning of my life? Under what life impulses did I come onto the scene? Where on earth do I find the place where I can realize those impulses?

We question ourselves about the right education, the right career. Even when we have already had to start a career for individual or family reasons, served an apprenticeship, say, or are already tied to a job, even then, we often ask ourselves: Am I on the right career path? Is this my calling?

If these questions are not asked or, in the case of a negative answer, no way to change is found, there can be grave consequences in the future. The yearning for self-realization arises. At the time of the first lunar node, we begin to form our own personality; we begin working on ourselves. Just as a crawling baby one day stands upright, and, following the example of adults, wants to stand on her own two legs, so we also, at the age of 18 or 19, want to inwardly stand upright, develop our own ideals and values, and act upon them.

In this context, it is interesting that of the physical healings reported in the Gospels, an age is given only three times and two of them shed light on lunar node events.In the *Gospel of Luke*, a story is told of a woman who

has suffered an illness for 18 years. "She was bent over and could not stand upright." Through Jesus' intervention, through word and deed, she could "on the spot stand upright again."

This picture is amazingly exact. At this age, we still need outside help, a call from the outside, in order to seize uprightness. As a crawling baby, we had the example and encouragement of those people who stood upright before us. It was parents and siblings who helpfully held out their hands to the striving child. At 18 or 19, it is often the call of a spiritual force, of destiny, that points the way to uprightness.

Goethe's biography shows how dramatic and forceful this directional calling can be. In June 1768, the 18-year-old law student at Leipzig suffered a life-threatening hemorrhage. The deeper meaning of this threat was explained by the poet himself. Through disharmony he had so stressed his organism "that the systems contained within it finally had to break out in a conspiracy and revolution in order to save the whole" (found in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*). An indication by Rudolf Steiner makes clearer what the aim was. "That which lived within Goethe as his individuality was much larger than that which his organism could really take in" (Lecture, November 11, 1906). Through the illness, Goethe experienced a loosening between his etheric body and his physical body whereby he gained the ability to permeate himself with extrasensory imaginations. It was an original kind of initiation, and it had the effect that his physicality was not broken down at an early under the immensity and force of the Goethe individuality.

A concise description of the characteristic and task of the first lunar node is:

From home into the world,
Search for our own physical home.

By that, it is not only the geographic location that is meant, but also our field of activity and where we can make ourselves at home. In Goethe's case it was his earthly body itself with which he had to struggle to achieve as his home.

The Second Lunar Node

At the time of the second lunar node at 37 years, 2 months and 20 days, the third birthing process takes place. Now it has to do with unwinding oneself from larger social connections that hinder or cripple the pre-birth impulse. The workplace, the circle of friends and colleagues, the larger circle of relatives and neighbors are all newly experienced and evaluated. The social environment as it has existed up until now is put to the test. Also what has existed within the soul is questioned and newly evaluated.

Now the questions arise: Have I found my place socially? Within which human connections do I feel comfortable? Do I feel understood? Which people in my environment can I also count on in crisis situations? Who values me in my particular character? Where am I welcome with my special abilities? Where can I bring those abilities and be active?

If the answers are not positive in the context of social associations, then new social connections are sought. At this age, Goethe found his ministry and social life in Weimar so constricting and suffocating that he fled to Italy. Enlivened and rejuvenated by the impressions and experiences of his Italian travels, he could write to Mrs. Von Stein on January 6, 1787: "Every day I peel off a new husk and hope to return as a human being." This soul-spiritual rebirth endowed him with a comprehensive outlook on nature. While in Italy, he formulated his ideas on metamorphosis of plants and animals and plant and animal archetypes. The special light and color experiences of this southern landscape led to his theory of color.

Oftentimes, there are surprising changes in careers at this time. The late 1970s dropout/alternative lifestyle movement was often attributed to the second lunar node. Successful industrial and bank managers, often 37 to 40, voluntarily end their careers and turned to alternatives. Their new jobs frequently have underlying social motives that afforded little outside recognition but are more satisfying to the inner person. They drop out to follow their hearts. During this time, destiny now also demands conscious renunciation and sacrifice. Events of destiny, which happen to us at this time, should be seen as strong appeals to our independence and initiative and demand the unfolding of our heart forces.

As a 19-year-old we have perhaps left school with a sense of relief and lightheartedly left our parent's home. It was, in a certain way, the natural flow of life. But the separations and tasks that now come toward us become tests of the heart and demand courage and self-confidence.

In the *Gospel of St. John*, we find the story of the lame man at Bethesda. He has been crippled for 38 years and has no one who will carry him to the water. Jesus asks him, "Will you get well?" And the invitation he extends to the sick man is irritating: "So, take up your bed and walk." That is exactly what the cripple cannot do. But the cripple has understood what Christ meant. It is the power of inner adaptability, his soul-force, that overcomes outside adversity as it is presented to us here with the picture of a lame body. We can no longer allow ourselves to be carried by our fellow human beings. We must ourselves become those who carry others. We can understand the second lunar node as the following:

Search for our own place of soul;
our soul home.

By developing our soul-forces, our heart-forces, we can also make ourselves spiritually at home in our own social environment.

The Third Lunar Node

The third lunar node, occurring at 55 years, 10 months and 28 days, almost 56, brings further social leave-takings and new orientations. Retirement approaches: In Japan and France the retirement age for many jobs is now 55. Career crises seem to accumulate. In Germany workers in this age group are urged to take retirement. But even where that is not the case, where no outside stress of this sort is present, we often come to an inner distress. Work that we have carried out with devotion and engagement for many years suddenly seems stale and empty. The activity does not satisfy us anymore. We can no longer be enthusiastic about our jobs or work.

In some longtime marriages and partnerships, emptiness, boredom, and indifference have encroached. All at once, these things, long covered-over by daily activities and routines, suddenly come to the fore of our consciousness and can lead to crisis in the marriage and possibly divorce. Or, anxiety awakens as we feel our waning physical strength that prevents us from fulfilling duties.

We take stock of ourselves: Was that all? What of my life's desires and goals have I realized? What tasks and possibilities do I still have left? The wish and desire to leave something lasting and significant to the world live in us. Since our physical energy becomes less, we must, more than ever, examine what is important to us, what is essential, and ask: What do I still want to do? What do I still want to attain in my life?

At the second lunar node the question was: In what human social connections do I feel comfortable? Now a spiritual element arises: Do we still have common interests and goals? Do we still have anything to say to one another? Or are we just staying together out of habit? Friendships and social relationships are examined and weighed according to their spiritual connectivity and lasting value. Encountering serious illness and death also becomes more frequent. How many people at this time become ill with

cancer, have a heart attack, or suffer the threatening climax of a chronic illness? The thought of dying and death comes more strongly into consciousness and serves to sharpen our gaze into the spiritual world. We become contemplative. What comes after death? Where do we come from? Where are we going? What deeper meaning does life have?

Spiritual and religious questions become important. If we have, up to now, felt only nominally connected to a religious community, we now sense the need to deepen our religious experience. We truly want to know. We want to experience the reality and truth of the spiritual world. The title over this period of our lives could read:

How do we see ourselves being seen in the world?

We experience ourselves as spiritual-creative beings and want to know: Where is my distinctive place in a spiritually everlasting house?

It Is the Spiritual Home that is Sought

Goethe reached his third lunar node in 1805. He became ill in the first months of this year and was plagued by kidney colic. His friend Schiller also became ill during these months. On May 1st, Goethe visited him for the last time, and on May 9th Schiller died. Three weeks later Goethe wrote to Zelter about the loss of his good friend: "I thought I would lose myself, but instead I have lost a friend and at the same time half of my being." But Goethe did not remain in this resigned state. Some time later, while looking at Schiller's skull, he said:

> What more can a person have from life
> Than God-Nature revealing itself
> How it allows the solid to trickle away to spirit
> How it solidly preserves that created by spirit.

The Fourth and Fifth Lunar Nodes

The fourth lunar node occurs at 74 years and 5 months. The fifth lunar node is at 92 years, 1 month and 9 days and nowadays is more and more often experienced.

Up to this time, whoever has attained to a certain wisdom and has resolved the tasks of the previous lunar nodes, in accordance with his or her individual possibilities, for that person the heavenly realm becomes permeable and he or she can let some of their wisdom radiate into his/her surroundings. The lunar node energy that now streams toward us is no longer important for one's own becoming. It is a gift that, with our aid, can be further bestowed upon all of humankind. In the domain of the fourth lunar node, we can create warmth of soul and a soul-home for those people surrounding us. If we have gained enough spiritual strength and qualities, then in the domain of the fifth lunar node, our physical body itself can become a place of the spirit.

The signature of the fourth lunar node is singular in Goethe's destiny. His heart-forces underwent a two-fold test, physical and spiritual. In February/March of 1823, Goethe had a heart attack, which again led him to the gates of death. He had just recovered when the 74-year-old became inflamed with passion for the 18-year-old Ulrike von Levetzow. But his offer of marriage, presented through the Grand Duke Carl-August von Weimar, was delicately and discretely refused. The poet must abjure personal happiness. In three poems that Goethe later combined under the title "Trilogie der Leidenschaft" (Trilogy of Passion), we can see how Goethe mended his broken heart by gaining deeper insight into his experiences.

Past – Present – Future

The lunar nodes occur at exact intervals, to the day. However, the node-related events can happen over weeks and months, as everyone knows

from experience. When we look closely at these occurrences, we discover in them a clearly integrated dynamic of time, best represented by a swirl.

Figure 2

The past becomes effective, something comes to an end, a kind of vacuum comes about. Within this vacuum, the future shines forth. But this future is still unformed and it takes our own, courageous decisions to grasp it and make it our own.

We can understand the astrological or astronomical exact lunar nodes as the turning points where our past that has been worked through can become our future—or where everything can come to a standstill. Only when the turnabout succeeds can we proceed in harmony with our birth impulses.

The Descending Lunar Nodes

Previously we have spoken only of the ascending lunar nodes. There are also effects of the descending lunar nodes. They occur halfway between two ascending nodes, i.e., in the 9th year, 27th year, and so forth.

The signature of the half-node is a initial, tender suggestion to find what the compelling task of the next ascending node will be. On the other hand, at this time another chance presents itself to resolve whatever was not accomplished during the previous node. Events having to do with the

descending lunar nodes are seldom outwardly apparent. They are times of quiet separations and changes and take place in the deeper layers of our being.

Our Hidden Plan

If one asks individuals about their life goals, most of the answers name external goals: I want to be a carpenter, a college professor, computer expert, an artist, a successful manager, an entrepreneur, build a house, be a loving husband or wife and have children, have a lot of friends, have a convivial home, earn a lot of money, and so forth.

Whoever has attained certain goals has also experienced that happiness and satisfaction are usually of short duration. What penetrates the consciousness, at the latest by the third lunar node, is what we carry with us as a hidden plan from the moment of our birth. It is the desire to create something that will outlast us and, in the best sense of the word, to achieve self-realization.

We are not the professor, the opera singer, the homeowner, the happy family member. Those are only props on the stage of our life. We are a distinctive "I," and we want to be recognized and acknowledged as such. We want to carry something into the world that only we can bring.

The Lunar Nodes: Processes of Purification and Change

In our times, the danger is that we totally go submit to superficialities and thereby lose ourselves. The lunar nodes repeatedly bring us anew our pre-birth resolutions, our hidden plans, and punctuate them into our memories again so that we can come through all the aberrations and find our way back to our paths of destiny and our original tasks.

The questions "Who am I?" and "What do I want?" come into our consciousness in ever-new forms at these times. And the lunar node events start processes of purification and change at ever-new levels:

- The first lunar node in the realm of the personal,
- The second lunar node in the realm of family, friends, and career, and
- The third lunar node in the realm of the supra-personal human.

Social connections and relationships, which serve only to tie us to the past though they are dear to us but out of which nothing new can come, must be left behind. With such connections, development comes to a standstill. It does not go any further. A vacuum comes about. We are called upon from the outside to make destiny-changing decisions. Lunar node forces stream into these breathing spaces of fate, call forth renewing energy from our inner self, awaken the will to sculpt something new of our own.

At first, this something new announces itself through inner alienation, upheavals, and partings. We feel misunderstood, have self-doubt, experience our own inanity, feel insensible, helpless, deeply lonely, and abandoned.

But then thoughts are born out of this inner distress and courageous decisions are made that ignite us with new life and new energy. We enter into a pioneer-mode and an atmosphere of departure that, at the same time, awakens our willingness and courage to sacrifice and our ability to assert ourselves.

Whether the lunar node process brings about dramatic change or occurs practically unnoticed varies from person to person and can be different from node to node. For a person who lives strongly in the past and holds tight to what is known, rejecting the new, it can become a long, painful struggle wherein perhaps only a grave stroke of fate, a threat to existence, or a confrontation with illness and death is what leads the person to change. If a person can lead a life that is in harmony with her or his birth-impulses, the lunar nodes can pass almost unnoticed. But they will always experience once again a reinvigoration and intensification of those impulses.

Lunar node events and experiences are as varied and individual as people themselves. But what they all have in common is that at this time a window to the spiritual world is opened through which we can look at our hidden plan. Then, strengthened by spiritual energy, we can make progress in our striving to unfold our deepest life impulses.

The Adolescent Years

by

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The transition from childhood to youth brings many problems. The critical faculty is awake but not yet maturity of judgment. The impact of life becomes deeply personal but the direction in life is in no way clear. The most familiar relationships fall subject to question. The young person needs guidance but jibes at authority. He guards jealously the little flame of independence of which he now becomes aware. There is a longing for self-expression and little ability to express—this gives rise to all manner of crudities. There is quick resentment over little things. Moods swing easily from elation to depression. The will to love and be loved brings confusing emotions and desires, if not actual eroticism, nursed to profusion by our "sexy" age. Ideals and aspirations wrestle with worldly ambitions, "castles in the air" are rife. Even the intelligent youngster is not secure from sudden follies. To understand is not to conform. Temptations come strong. Vanities play their part. In a chaotic environment where the adults themselves live in fear, anxiety and contradiction, what can these young folk do? The pronounced delinquent of the headlines covers incipient ills that are far more widespread than is generally admitted. There is much corruption

everywhere. Moral appeals may bolster up "the good" but they have little effect on "the wicked." Where is the method? Things that were once considered "bad" are now considered "not so bad." Alternatively, placard morality is busily in search of scapegoats. Meanwhile the adolescent, no longer just a child to authority and not yet an adult responsible to himself, does as best he can; for the most part he seeks refuge in his own kind. But the sensitive and susceptible suffer acutely. A disturbed life of youth may easily wreck a whole lifetime. Theories do not help. For the youngster most of all, proof of the pudding lies in the eating.

Two questions occur:

How can we best prepare for adolescence?

How can we best educate the adolescent?

Waldorf education claims that childhood makes one whole. As surely as a plant has root and leaf and blossom and yet is indivisible in its unity, so surely does childhood comprise its three main phases, pre-dentition, elementary years to puberty, and adolescence, each succeeding the other in the one great process of becoming man. The ideal of such a school can only be to guide the child through all the years from kindergarten to college entrance. Exceptions there will have to be—children have joined our schools as late as the eleventh grade with happy results—yet the ideal remains. In this total range of childhood there is a natural progression from limb to heart to head. That which the little child can learn to do, that which the elementary child can learn to feel, the adolescent can learn to understand. Almost ninety years of work, spread today through some 900 schools in many lands, have brought much evidence in their wake.

The little child lives primarily by imitating all that is around him. His open consciousness, little aware of "self," allows the world to stream into him just as it is; in this sense nothing escapes him. For him the world is

action: thoughts and feeling also act upon him. This immense receptivity and power to cope bespeak a devotion to life and a trust in man comparable only to a religious attitude of selflessness at its highest level. The power of the spirit in these years is strong. The little child grasps the world with fearless hands, transmitting all things to the depths of its own inner being; that which is thus received in infancy is uttered forth in latest maturity. The child that has learned to pray in his earliest years will know how to bless in his old age, says Rudolf Steiner. The little child carries within him an unconscious faith that the world is grounded in goodness. The adult who admits the truth of this in heart and soul, striving to think, to feel, to act accordingly, striving also to create a harmony of life in the environment, removing all nervous influences such as radio, television and the rest, will be best able to help, guide and encourage these early growing years.

The child in the elementary school years lives first and foremost by his feelings. What we remember best in later years are the things we felt most, whether in people, in circumstances or events. In these years, education is of the heart, not by precepts but by an appeal to the imagination. The ideas of good and bad mean nothing to a child of seven; but a story with contrasting characters, the one "good," the other "bad," though the words be never mentioned (it is best to leave the story to speak for itself) will go straight to the child's heart. There are colors that live harmoniously together and others that clash; there are tones that merge in happy concord and others that are strident and discordant; there are actions that are beautiful in themselves and others that are ugly. The child, wakening from infancy, builds up an inner world of impressions penetrated with feeling; more and more as he grows older, this becomes his refuge and his home. Even as he approaches the more thoughtful years from twelve to fourteen, it is still a "felt" thinking, a thinking with the heart. For the adult this is the gift that makes him an artist or a poet; for the child in these years it is natural. The ideal that lives below words in these years is that of beauty. In

all that is 'beautiful' in thought, in word, in action, in nature itself, we behold more than the outer eye can yield; here the spirit shines into the world of the senses. It was a scientist who claimed that "art enhances consciousness." The teacher must above all work as an artist-he describes all life with all its many faces, be it in literature and history, be it in the kingdoms of outer nature; he brings the precious intangibles of the world to the child's powers of apprehension. The scribes and the Pharisees of our times will regard this as fanciful; they are wrong today as they were of old. One who has witnessed health and strength and cheerfulness and confidence entering into a child's looks and gestures as the years go by must know them wrong. The story of man, rooted in depths, powers and dimensions of creative existence beyond his knowing, is itself the revelation of a mighty and transcendent work of art.

Then comes the birth of independent thought, the love of the abstract and non-sensory, following as near as possible the phase of puberty. Here disturbance makes itself felt at once. There is much on record to show that puberty may set in too soon and true adolescence correspondingly too late, making an uneasy gap where many harms arise. Then education needs to be alert and therapeutic; but we are concerned now with the normal. The adolescent looks outward with a new gaze and also inward. All that he has quietly assimilated through his childhood years, all he has learned and felt and practiced, the capacities he has been able to develop, the difficulties he has had to encounter—these now meet him at the level of thought. He enters upon the phase of learning to know himself, of having to learn how to face himself. At the same time, his environment lights up for him with a new interest—it pulls him to itself. He recognizes his world, the world he is to enter fully one day, the world of enterprise in which he must play his part. This birth to a life of independent thought does not come overnight, nor does it come equally to all children. It is generally blurred in the ninth grade, comes to clarity in the tenth, and grows to relative strength in the eleventh

and twelfth grades, but it invariably brings with it a force of personal enthusiasm for life. If it does not, then something is badly amiss already. The adolescent wants to believe in the world, he wants to love and approve his age, he wants to have confidence in life, to enjoy and admire and even idealize the achievements that confront him. He wants to be modern, to accept what is there as his right, his heritage, and careless opposition on the part of his elders will easily drive him to rebellion. The ideal he brings is for truth. The first assumption of his nature is that the world is built on truth. His spontaneous aspiration is to be a true man, to live in truth and to expect truth in others.

But now, by degrees, there come the contradictions. She reads the headlines and dives down beneath them, sees the inconsistencies in adult life, is first astonished, then bewildered, and then unhappily dismayed. In her first burst of confidence she may easily mistake good for evil, evil for good. She is met with a presentation of life where spirit is denied and matter exalted. Is the human an animal after all? The learned say so; true, the human is something more, but how much? She begins to question her childhood faith—then she believed because others believed, but now she wants to justify belief. She questions her dependence on her parents—is she not herself and why should she not have her own way? She questions the authority of her teachers—are not they, too, only humans? As she enters her most sensitive years at seventeen and eighteen, she nurses many a doubt and sorrow in secret. She wants a hero she can trust and follow, one of her own choosing. Where can she find this hero? Is there truth? If so, what is truth? What is life really based on? Youth is naturally introspective. Is there a soul? Is there a God? What is she herself apart from heredity and environment—is she anything at all? How can a human being's statement be more than his opinion? Who knows?

Not all will place their questions as radically as this or as consciously. Some will, but all carry them in mood and feeling; this is the bond of

communion the young have with one another, fellows in adventure, and the loves that follow. This is where the problems begin for the adolescent himself, for his parents, his teachers. What can life offer? At the same time life does offer many attractions and rouses many desires and longings; healthy youth is virile and has wants and tastes and appetites. Even these bring inner conflicts and moral doubts and scruples. One of the most honest lads I know confessed he thought himself a liar and he suffered from it. Another, realizing for himself that all desire was selfish, fled from love and then asked whether desire for an ideal was not also selfish. At eighteen, beginning for some with the thought of national service and all its implications, life suddenly seems conditioned against one's will. The reverse is to abandon oneself to mere living, taking all things as they come. Are there not theories today to excuse almost any line of conduct? Chastity, it is taught, belongs to the Middle Ages. Gratification relieves repression. How are the young to know? Some turn religious; many go the other way. We adults must admit that life is a welter—we do our best, but our own premises are often none too strong. Life is sadly inconsistent, yet we want strong men and gracious women and a generation that loves the truth.

All this puts the greatest possible burden of responsibility on education itself. If the adolescent has been rightly protected in his kindergarten years, if he has been rightly guided through his elementary school years, if in these earlier years he has felt the force of goodness and the strength of beauty, he will also find his way to truth. Then the security of the heart will come to meet the doubts of the head and the turbulence of the will. He has been taught through art and can be further taught to develop a sense of fitness in life itself. He has been taught in such a way that he can clearly discriminate between fact and theory, that fact will always hold the truth in itself but theories have changed and will change again. He sees as a matter of course that life is a conflict and always has been and that it must be so. There are thoughts that add to the content of life, that make it nobler,

and others that take away, reducing man to an ignoble thing. There are dragons to fight in this age as in all ages, and the call for knighthood is as strong as ever.

The animal lives by desire; humans can acquire motives to combat desire. The plant lives by necessity; humans can call to their aid powers of self-determination. The crystal is bound to its form; humans can strive for inner form and can also transform. Creation is bound in law, and humans are also bound—but we can unbind. Defeat is not the end but only the spur to further effort, and there have been victories and human beings have never yet been finally defeated. In the end all rests on the initiative of mankind, whether we can draw up from the depths of our own being the powers we need to humanize existence. Goodness, beauty, truth—these are his attributes, his childhood faiths before he is a man; these he can apprehend in consciousness and translate into life and so declare himself and find his way to freedom. The greatest have known that freedom can be born only from within even as manhood itself must be born from within—nothing can make for true manhood other than man himself. But then goodness, beauty, truth, expressed in religion, art and the search for knowledge, themselves give evidence of man's real being—he has engendered them and through them he is related to his source. If education can lead to this synthesis of confident striving within the soul of the human being, it has surely led to something.

In a Waldorf school, instruction is a means for education, and education has to do with a right growing into life. There is no indoctrination, only the aid a child needs at the different levels of his growing to discover his own inherent powers, so that in adult life he or she may truly find him/herself. For the adolescent the teacher should be a witness for truth. His knowledge needs to be rooted in the realities of human nature, realities that far transcend the light of common day. The knowledge that Steiner has given, of man as a being of body, soul and spirit, that knowledge the teacher

can make his own, and with that he can work. It is a knowledge that brings illumination to human life and shows the way to inner freedom, a knowledge that enables the teacher to address himself in confident mood to the highest potentialities in the child, making of himself the gardener of the most precious plant of all. The perilous years of adolescence require such a knowledge in the teacher; then the stability engendered in the first years of childhood, the training in social relationships and heart-fitness of the middle years with the class teacher, flower into a right independence of outlook, right discrimination and judgment, right confidence and right initiative in the adolescent. But that this may come about at its best, we need to guide the child progressively through all his years of schooling.

In the ninth grade the child begins to waken to himself, in the tenth grade he begins to waken to the earth as a whole, in the eleventh grade he begins to question into the meaning of life, in the twelfth grade he may come to the assurance that the ultimate answer rests in man himself. He has learned to understand the descent of the human being to earth, he has learnt to love the kingdoms that surround him, and now he can foresee the means for man's re-ascent. He has learned to appreciate the scholarship of his day and to view it as a transition process to an age of new discoveries when religion, art and science which appear to have fallen apart will one day be reunited to give new insights to the meaning of life on earth. He has learned to see that the contradictions which surround him are of human making and may be resolved again, that in this lies the task of evolution and that life is a call to action. He has learned to value each person for him- or herself. This his childhood will have given him to take into adult life. The details he will by then have forgotten but the attitude and the endeavor he will remember. He/she will have been prepared to enter life.