

JOURNAL

FOR

WALDORF / RUDOLF STEINER EDUCATION

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Volume 13.1 (April, 2011)
ISSN 1178-136X

Dear Readers,

On 27th February it was the 150th anniversary of Steiner's birth.

Because of Christchurch's second major quake on 22nd February, the College of Teachers at our school celebrated the event a month later. Sue Simpson, the general secretary of the Anthroposophical society in New Zealand was our guest. Sue spoke of the events before the First World War and the wish of Steiner to introduce ideas of three folding and the threefold human being in the economic realm. These ideas did not succeed as he wished, but transformed into the Waldorf movement – the first Waldorf School opening in September 1919.

Many practical impulses developed at and after that time – bio-dynamics, medicine, and curative education amongst others. All had to find their way with the benefit of very few material resources - a post war time which later suffered extraordinary financial inflation – yet grew in strength spiritually. Our college was told about Karl König – the founder of the Camphill curative home movement – as an individual who faced the terror and destruction of the 1938 occupation of Vienna and created, in the first Camphill in Aberdeen, a world movement that is still bringing healing in many realms – social, economic, educational – based on Steiner's Spiritual Science .

Sue compared such events as a major earthquake, flood, fire, war or other disasters, which today cause such trauma in the human soul, with those in 1919 when the old order had to change and it was imperative that new possibilities had the spiritual space to develop.

In this issue we include thoughts and directions concerning resilience – presented by Lisa Devine. Resilience in the human being is like Michael's armour and strong gaze to the future.

Dr Michael Sargent, Robyn Ritchie and Annette Brian make contributions developed further from last year's Australasian Kolisko Conference held in Cambridge, New Zealand – which brought together impulses from Waldorf



Earthquake: 22nd February , 2011 . Christchurch central city – dust rising from falling buildings

education and the Anthroposophical medical movement, including curative education and therapies. Our thanks.

A challenge is given by the previous leader of the Pedagogical Section at the Goetheanum – reprinted with permission from the author – for us to question and research some of the traditions that have built up over the ninety years of Waldorf education: we invite responses from our readers.

We honour a loved and respected teacher of many of us – Audrey McAllen.

Thank you all contributors, Karl Grant for layout and supportive readers. We welcome contributions to our next issue. We particularly thank Robin Bacchus most heartily for his editing, for researching references for the footnotes and also for taking over my previous task of Journal distribution. We hold in our hearts those suffering – especially those in Japan at present .

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Acknowledgements:

Van James: Lettering for title Journal.
Peter Glasby: Photographs of
Botany Camps.

Finance & Orders:

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PO Box 8410, Havelock North, 4157
New Zealand

Published by:

The Initiative Circles of the Education (Pedagogical)
Section in Australia, Hawai'i and New Zealand.
www.anthroposophy.org.nz/Sections/Education

Layout & Printing:

Karl Grant Media Hawke's Bay Ltd, p: 06 870 9028
daylightmarketing@xtra.co.nz

Orders:

Order from – journalwe@gmail.com
1-9 copies \$10.00 each plus post/packing
10-19 copies 10% discount plus post/packing
20 or more copies 20% discount plus post/packing

Next Issue 13.2. Deadline: 31st August, 2011.

The opinions expressed in this Journal are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the editors.

We welcome all contributions on the themes pertaining to Waldorf education. Please forward your contributions to waldorf@clear.net.nz, glasby.peter@gmail.com

Class 11 Botany Camp

– an Approach

Peter Glasby
Queensland, Australia

The world of plants, so essential in human life, can form a moving part of any person's education. In Waldorf Schools, apart from being part of the story curriculum, the plant landscaping of the school grounds, the gardening curriculum and the chemistry curriculum, plants form the subject of one or two block lessons in the primary school in class 5 and 6. After this introduction to Botany well described by Grohman (1996), children learn about plants practically in the gardening lessons which are part of the curriculum from class 6 through to class 10. (Stockmeyer, 2001).

In class 11, botany returns to the curriculum with an interesting suggestion from Steiner: "Introduce a cosmic cell biology based on the cryptograms" – plants like algae, lichens, fungi and moss among others. (A topic to be explored another time)

In class 12 the suggestion from Steiner is for a botany of the plant families. As the school year in Australia, starts near the end of summer, the vintage season – yeast is active in the class 9 wine vats (chemistry) and there is surplus for the year 11 students to study under their microscopes. Towards the end of the class 11 year (nearly class



Fig. 1: Metamorphosis of the Rose leaf to sepals, petals and stamens

12), Spring comes around with its rich flowering period from September to November. It is a good time for taking the study of the plants further. The course has its emphasis in the processes of growth, morphology, metamorphosis, and ecology. The processes of germination, shoot formation, flowering and fruiting are studied using the Goethean concepts of metamorphosis, polarity and enhancement.



Fig 2: Metamorphosis of the organs of a Pinus

The annual, dicotyledonous flowering plants are used as a starting point for this study followed by a study of the life cycles of conifers (Pinus) and ferns, also from the point of view



Fig 3 & 4: Leaf series of Salvation Jane, *Echium* sp. In sunlight (left) and shade (right)

of metamorphosis. They learn to understand these processes so that they can be viewed as proceeding out of a wholeness in which both the temporal and the spatial are encompassed.

They undertake a short project in this time, which involves comparing leaf metamorphosis series of the same species growing in different environmental conditions.



Fig 5 & 6: Salvation Jane *Echium* sp. In two environments; Sunshine (left), Shade (right) by Geraldine Herweijer, class 11. The students learn an appreciation of the unity of organism and environment by doing their own plant project work with plants and also by a study of plant communities.



Following the botany work based at school the Mount Barker Class 11 students go on a two week field trip into the Blue mountains during the Spring time.

Each day a new plant community is visited. The morning is spent learning to use a simple plant key to identify all the plants growing in that area. This involves close and detailed observation. The morning starts off with a time alone. Each student also spends half an hour alone at the site to listen to the sounds of water, the birds and notice the small things that comprise the "landscape" of a site. From this half hour's time they write a description of the site as well as a poem or poems, which goes beyond the observer description to allow the observers to express something of their own

relationship to the site. The rest of the morning is spent learning to use a simple plant key to identify the plants growing in that area. This involves close and detailed observation. After lunch the students each choose a particular "composition" from the location and paint it. Each water colour painting represents 4 to 5 hours work in the field. During the evening, species lists of the days site are collated, poetry is read and shared and students finish their paintings. As the days progress, the students begin to experience how the plant world expresses a different quality at each site. Different species of the same genus appear at different sites.

The week's fieldwork is followed by a 7-day bush walk through the Blue Mountains, with each student carrying what they require for



Fig 7 & 8: Field Work in the Blue Mountains, identification, writing and painting.

food and shelter. During this time they have the opportunity to experience the constantly changing composition of the plant world as they walk through it.

This Botany approach encompasses a variety of styles, including the main lesson style, project work, extensive outdoor fieldwork, a 7 day walk in remote country which traverses very diverse plant communities and landscapes.

Student response: I feel so blessed with all the opportunities that this education offers me. I would like to express great gratitude to all the people who make possible the camps; who put their necks on the line to give the students such unforgettable experiences. I think it will get harder for such camps to happen because of our increasingly paranoid society. I hope that others will have the opportunity to grow within themselves and within the group as I and others have done.



Fig 9 & 10: Water colour paintings of remnant Rainforest Coachwood *Ceratopetalum* (left) and Waratah *Teleopea*.
By year 11 students.



Fig 11 &12: Measuring self in landscape.

Student comments:

I think our school and camps give us maturity, common sense, and loyalty.

To be able to go out into the wilderness for that amount of time is an experience that not many people will have a chance to share. For me to be able to experience this is priceless. Thank you to the Waldorf school for giving me the opportunity of a lifetime.

Camps like this are....priceless, and to be able to live such an experience is a true gift. It gives you a chance to put life into perspective....we are tiny! Opportunities like this are becoming increasingly rare: it is devastating to imagine that some people go through life without 'meeting' and living in nature in this way. To see the magnificence of the Blue Mountains is a real gift – they are ever-changing and awe-inspiring!. I will hold that experience in me forever.

A Chinese story about Painting Likeness

.....The young man said there are six essentials in painting.

The first is called gi (spirit), the second is called yin (harmony), the third is called si (thought or plan), the fourth ying (scenery and effect), the fifth bi (brushwork) and the sixth mo (ink).

Resources:

- Bockemühl, J. (1977). "The Formative Movements of Plants" and other contributions from "Towards a Phenomenology of the Etheric World" Anthroposophic Press Inc., Spring Valley, New York.
- Bockemühl, J. (1981). "In Partnership with Nature", Biodynamic Literature, Wyoming Rhode Island.
- Grohmann, G. (1996). The Plant (Vol 1) Rudolf Steiner Press, London.
- Grohmann, G., (1989). The Plant (Vol 2) Bio-Dynamic Farming & Gardening Association Inc, Kimberton.
- Stockmeyer (2001) ed S. Cradock Rudolf Steiner's Curriculum for Waldorf Schools Forest Row: Steiner Schools Fellowship.

I remarked, "Painting is to make beautiful things, and the important thing is to achieve true likeness is it not?" The sage answered "it is not.

Painting is to paint, to estimate the shape of things, to really obtain them, to estimate the beauty of things, to reach it; to estimate the reality (significance) of things and to grasp it.

One should not take outward beauty for reality. He who does not understand this mystery will not obtain truth, even though his pictures may obtain likeness."

I asked again: "What is likeness and what is truth?"

The old man replied "Likeness can be obtained by shapes without Spirit, but when truth is obtained both spirit and substance are fully expressed. He who tries to express spirit through ornamental beauty will make dead things."

Collected from the Chinese garden, Darling Harbour, Sydney.

Anxiety, Nervousness, & Timidity

An Anthroposophic Medical Perspective

Kolisko conferences world wide work at the cutting edge of two disciplines; where medical issues impact upon education. With more children presenting with anxiety issues, Dr Michael Sargent was asked to give one of the keynote addresses on this theme at the 2010 Kolisko Conference, held in Cambridge, New Zealand. The editors thank and acknowledge painting therapist Margaret Snowden for her original notes from Dr Sargent's lecture – which were later expanded by the speaker).

Dr Michael Sargent,
Christchurch, New Zealand

The Phenomena of Anxiety

Questions of anxiety, nervousness and timidity in children are now common problems that interfere with learning in much more subtle ways than school refusal. Now it is accepted that in children anxiety is a serious problem... upwards of 1 in 5 children over the age of 8 years are expected to have different forms of anxiety behaviours. Currently, counsellors speak of anxiety on the increase among young people. There are huge numbers of students going into tertiary studies suffering from anxiety. They describe feeling “empty”, “hollowed out”, “like a vacuum”. In the United States it is found that 1 in 8 children are clinically anxious or have social phobias. The current diagnoses include:

Generalised Anxiety Disorder — characterised by excessive worry and fear about future or past events. This disorder is usually accompanied by symptoms like headaches, stomach aches, vomiting, and sleep disturbance.

Separation Anxiety Disorder — the fear of separating from primary caregivers, home or other familiar surroundings.

Specific Phobia — a fear associated with a specific object or situation, such as fear of needles, dogs, heights, or the dark.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder — characterised by the presence of severe anxiety reactions or feelings, following a traumatic event, such as witnessing a death or being involved in a near death experience.

Social Phobia — the fear of being humiliated or embarrassed in front of other people... meeting

new people, being at the centre of attention, or in a group social situation.

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder — characterised by intrusive, obsessive thoughts that are usually alleviated by compulsive actions (e.g. washing hands 60 times a day), and checking behaviours (e.g. checking bag 20 times before going to school in case they have forgotten something) — extremely rare in children.

Panic Attack — a discrete period in which there is a sudden onset of intense apprehension, fearfulness or terror often associated with feelings of impending doom. These feelings are accompanied by physical symptoms such as palpitation, chest pain or discomfort, difficulty breathing, and choking smothering sensations.

Agoraphobia — essentially anxiety about, or avoidance of, places or situations from which it may be difficult and/or embarrassing to escape, and/or help may not be available if a panic attack should occur. For instance, being outside the home alone, being in a crowd, traveling in bus or being on a bridge.

A list such as this is comprehensive, yet “anxiety” is really a complex of symptoms that provides a label, but no real understanding of the condition itself or its impact on the child or grown up.

Anxiety and Fear?

Anxiety is a common emotion we have probably all experienced at some stage in our life — most of us feel anxious when faced with difficult situations with symptoms such as sweating, pallor, an increased heart rate, shallow breathing, butterflies in the stomach and dry mouth. When we compare ‘anxiety’ to ‘fear’, which is often an associated feeling, it is evident that we experience fear in the presence of real, outer, immediate danger, whereas, anxiety is a

more general inner response that (may be out of proportion to the reality of a threat) tends to be associated with worrying about future or past difficulties, rather than an immediate situation. So when we now look at these phenomena in terms of anthroposophical pictures I hope we can recognise anxiety is an expression of emotional life, that it is to do with the soul-spiritual human being, and in particular with the astral body.

Causes of Anxiety

When we look at the developing human being it is still a question of how we can understand this anxiety, its basis and its origins?

When we look for causes we need to consider the developmental process, how that is affected by the world the child is living in and the constitutional complex that it brings over from its pre-birth time. Steiner talked about an “epidemic of nervousness” which would arise at the end of the 20th Century. The emotional response gestures to Anxiety and Fear tend towards fixity and paralysis. Anxious children have a subtle tendency to become fixed, and obsessive in a certain way.

Movement is a key; movement which starts with the successful transition from one milestone to the next in early childhood. If the developmental milestones of **Walk**, **Talk**, then **Think** go awry or do not develop in a healthy way, then problems may arise.

These milestones are normally achieved over the course of the first three years of life... walking by the end of the first year, talking by the end of the second and thinking by the end of the third year, at which time the child comes to an ego consciousness, which is marked in the language the child uses — it now has the word “I” as the reference point for itself; the child sees itself in the *first person*, rather than in the *third person*. How the child accomplishes this development and the factors that surround its processes have a lasting impact on how the child grows from this time on and until it dies.

First year	standing & walking	will
Second year	speaking	feeling
Third year	understanding	thinking

Learning to walk arises out of imitation, not so much in terms of the movements but in terms of statics and dynamics — the need to imitate other human beings who have developed an orientation to the spatial world by finding the right balance relationship to the forces of gravity. The child develops its own forces that enable it to move from the horizontal to the vertical. This happens through standing first when the lower limbs enable it to overcome gravity and then, through the use of the upper limbs, spatial balance is achieved which allows it to move freely within the field of gravity. This overcoming of the effects of gravity is the work of the ego. By coming into a vertical position in the spatial world, certain moral/ethical forces work out of the child’s ego, back into its physical body – so long as the human being retains a horizontal attitude, then animal tendencies work, which lack the moral element.

Once the capacity to walk is acquired then forces flow upwards into the brain; through the movements of the legs and the arms plastic forces are at work developing the speech area in the brain. The strength and rhythm of the step brings rhythm into speech, and the freeing of the arms from gravity gives feeling to speech. In speech the astral body is at work within the feeling quality that speech has. Finally the forces that have overcome gravity to create walking, freed the arms from gravity and developed the brain for speech are now working into the etheric body to bring about brain development as an instrument for thinking. Each time one skill becomes more or less automatic so that we don’t have to put extra energy into it, then the same etheric energy forces become free for another task.

As long as the imitative processes are able to unfold in the inner life of the child without hindrances, then development should not be problematic. Things can go astray when human nature tries to intervene (albeit in good faith) to hasten or control a developmental stage. In the case of walking it is possible to ‘teach’ the child how to walk — perhaps sometimes because the child is making efforts to walk or stand — one tries to instruct them how to do it, or uses various gadgets to train them. With speech there can be a tendency to use “baby” talk to the child, rather

than use adult language. Then with thinking the use of instructions that are then revoked or changed — showing a thinking that is confused or muddled. In each of these areas there is an element of “untruthfulness” ... and these leave their marks on the child’s physical constitution — marks which are with them for life. In many cases this ‘unfreedom’ is not evident immediately, but only much later in life when problems arise.

“Children’s organs and vessels form according to the way love, truthfulness, and clarity develop in their environment. Metabolic illnesses arise from learning to walk without love; digestive problems may result from untruthfulness while the child is learning to speak; and nervousness comes from confused thinking in a child’s surroundings.” (*A Modern Art of Education, Rudolf Steiner, Ilkley, Lect 6, 10 Aug 1923*).

He went on to say that the “greatest mistakes in the behavior of any generation are a true reflection of the previous generation... When you look at how common nervousness is in the 1920s, you must conclude that teachers were very confused around the beginning of the century. The confused thinking of that time manifests as nervousness today.” (*Ibid.*)

Pre-Earthly Influences

When a child descends into life from the heavenly realms it takes hold of its physical body, and gradually asserts itself on that body. This descent into life is part of a recurring cycle of earthly life, earthly death, spiritual life and rebirth. Before the soul descends into earth life it is at its largest spiritually at the Cosmic Midnight Hour, afterwards gradually contracting as it passes through the cosmic planetary spheres, eventually reaching the spheres of Venus, Mercury and Moon — the cosmic Moon sphere being the region where souls await earthly birth and souls departing earth life gather. In this descent the human soul is in community with various groups of the Spiritual Hierarchies, especially the Archai in Venus, the Archangels in Mercury, and the Angels in Moon. The capacities that a human being has acquired in its preceding life will affect

the relationships a soul can have with, especially, these spiritual beings. These beings have an impact on how the development of the child proceeds in its first three years of life — the Archai bring the capacity to stand upright and walk, the Archangels the capacity for Speaking, and the Angels the capacity for thinking. Important for us as human beings are these three spheres:

Cosmic Venus sphere:

Archai	— Will,
Standing and Walking	— Ego forces

Cosmic Mercury sphere:

Archangels	— Feeling,
Speaking	— Astral forces

Cosmic Moon sphere:

Angels	— Thinking,
Understanding	— Etheric forces

Oversensitivity

In 1924 Rudolf Steiner gave the lectures that became the basis for the Curative Education movement for children with special needs.¹ He gave various pathological pictures. In one case, that of an *hysteric child* he went to great effort to differentiate this from an adult hysteric, which in his time was seen to be typical of women and to be connected with the developing psychoanalytic ideas of Freud — nowadays it is not a term in use for children and tends to be seen as a psychiatric condition in adults.

The picture he gave was based on an understanding of how a human being takes hold of its body on waking up. He points out how this is far from the simple idea that we might choose to take. In sleep we know that the soul-spiritual elements leave and take a journey of healing and reflection in the spiritual world ... and the remaining elements of the constitution, namely the physical and etheric bodies, which, free from the life-destroying effects of the consciousness brought by the ego organisation and the astral body, undergo rejuvenation in the night so that the human being awakens feeling refreshed. At the time of waking the astral body and ego dive down into the sleeping etheric and physical bodies, bringing them to wakefulness.

¹ Rudolf Steiner. *Curative Education*, Dornach, June 1924).

Rudolf Steiner. *A Modern Art of Education*, Ilkley, Lect 6, 10 Aug 1923.

A simple analogy might be to liken this waking up process to salt dissolving in water — the ego and astral body simply penetrate the etheric and physical bodies and dissolve into them.

But Steiner says that this is not a correct picture. Rather he says that with the Ego organisation the “ego slips into the physical body, lays hold of the physical body — slips in so far that it makes the physical body light. Through the ego’s gliding into it, the physical body loses its weight. And so when I, as an awake human being, stand upright, then for my consciousness — for my ego, for my ego organization which has also its physical expression in the warmth organism — gravity is overcome. There is no question here of the ego entering into *indirect* connection with gravity. The ego, the “I”, enters into direct connection, places itself as ego right into gravity, shutting the physical body completely out of the process. And that is how the matter really stands. When you walk, you place yourself, with your ego organisation, right into the actual gravity of the earth; and you do not do this via the physical body, you yourself enter into direct connection with the earthly.”²

Indeed the ego connects us with the elements — Earth, Fluid, Air and Warmth (Warmth as physical warmth, rather than the more rarefied etheric warmth). The astral body connects us in a similar way with the ethers — Warmth, Light, Sound and Life. Each organ has its own physical body, but also its own etheric body and this in turn is penetrated by the astral body and the ego. So the “skin” of each organ, which is comprised of the organ’s physical and etheric bodies, needs to be a little permeable to the ego and astral body so that they can take hold of the elements and ethers directly. When this skin is impermeable to some extent then there is a congestion of the ego and astral body and this leads to the picture that stands behind epilepsy.

However it can be that the “skin” is too permeable and the soul-spiritual elements ooze into the peripheral world too far outside organs of perception and consciousness. Normally the organ would hold back sufficient for its own needs

but in the oversensitive child, the astral body along with the ego organisation overflow from the organ; what one sees in these organs where the astral body is flowing out is a physical expression of this in secretion — typically in the hands one will find sweating, and sometimes tears in the eyes, and in the region of the bladder there may be loss of urine — enuresis/bed-wetting. It is also to say that the sweating and bodily reactions are not necessarily immediate — the reaction to the soul experience can be one that arises in the process inwardly of “digesting” or processing events of life and only appear several days later in the glandular system. Rudolf Steiner points out that “the child is sore in his soul, and this soreness of soul becomes a dominant idea in him, overriding everything else. If it cannot be made better by means of curative education, then, when the child attains puberty, either the feminine or the masculine form of this soreness will appear. The feminine form will have the character of hysteria, as it was called when there was still a true perception of it. The masculine form will have a different character” which he does not go on to describe but one could perhaps think of narcissistic personality disorder as one possibility.

What do we see in the classroom?

The test of how the child is doing at school is how the child is able to enter into the learning process — in other words its ability to enter into the Curriculum. The Curriculum works on the child in a way that is appropriate for the anthroposophical idea of child development, with stimulation that supports the energies of the developing child in a healthy way. Several objectives for Waldorf education between the loss of teeth and puberty are: firstly to teach the child to breathe and secondly to sleep properly — breathing to help the thinking, and sleep to rejuvenate the body. This is the focus of the middle school years, when the rhythmic system is developing and the feeling life is being cultivated. The educational approach to the child through an artistic medium stimulates the intellect — the normal effect of the intellect is to deposit salty substances, needed for conscious action of the ego, in the tissues

² Ibid Lect 3, 27 June 1924

making them hardened and less enlivened.

Sleep helps to remove these deposits. If the education is abstract and mentally directed this hardening is much more pronounced and much more difficult to remove by sleep; when an artistic medium is used to educate a child of this age, the child will get to a stage in the lesson where it will naturally want to use its intellect but this is kept in balance by the artistic activity, and leads the child from being intellectually active, to being physically active. This physical activity needs to be creative and not of the nature of modern gymnastics or athletics or sport. Creative physical activity causes a fine disseminated “combustion” in the tissues of the body especially in sleep. Physical activity that is structured and constrained only “burns off” the salts in the limbs, leaving the salts in the other tissues, which on waking create irritability in the soul. Sleep that has been prepared by healthy physical activity should disseminate the “combustion process” in a fine way throughout the whole organism, rejuvenating the organism; but when the physical exercise is contrived and mechanical this does not happen, the child awakens restless and fidgety, and unable to sit still to learn.

If the education can meet the middle school child with lessons that are artistic, filled with a musical quality, then the physical activities arising out of the inner nature of the child should err towards what is healthy. It is not a question of preventing a school child from taking part in physical games and sports, but rather not as a competitive super-trained athlete. Activities for a school child that support creative – not the intellectual and physical – fill the soul with wonder, support development towards balance in the emotional life, encourage good rhythms in breathing and thinking, and healthy patterns of sleeping.

Another thing that we have considered is the oversensitive child. This child can present in many ways other than being timid, or shy. The oversensitive child has difficulty in meeting the outer world and suffers from this painfully in a real sense. The normal child will grasp the outer

world through the ego insofar as the elements of warmth, air, fluid and matter go, and through the astral body through the warmth, light, chemistry and cosmic life. The oversensitive child takes hold of these too strongly and is drawn out too far into the outer world, and then experiences the world as a “soreness of soul” in a way similar to what we might get when we have grazed our hands and then try to grasp something; as the child comes up against the outer world as it is sucked into it with its astral body and ego consciousness, these soul spiritual elements of consciousness are pressed back, compressed and experienced as pain — pain can be thought of as heightened awareness, or compressed consciousness. So these children can exhibit all sorts of defensive behaviours around their cognitive activities – they can be touch defensive, smell defensive, taste defensive and so on. The normal response to pain is to remove the cause of it — to reduce the compressed consciousness by moving to a safe place, and then to avoid it if possible. In learning situations, then, oversensitive responses may be expressed as withdrawal and isolation from participation which, when it spills over into the realm of ideas, presents as a learning problem.

The sequence of behaviour responses in these oversensitive children is often seen as:

- I Will** ~ the intention to do something arises in the child who is immediately drawn in to the outer world as the intention unfolds and experiences this as pain. This leads to withdrawal...
- I Can't** ~ at this point the child refuses and withdraws... the ego is no longer able to carry through its will intention as the pain in the astral body builds. The necessary step to follow is...
- I Must** ~ this engages the will once more and completes the deed. In this there is the need for the ego to once more regain the upper hand and draw the astral body back from the outer world.

It is possible to see that this can happen not only in the case of the outer world but also for the inner world of ideas — this inner realm also has a will aspect when one realises that ideas need to be given direction and order, in order to enter

into a learning process. The sphere of thought can also become a victim of the oversensitivity and new ideas are no longer possible because the realisation of a new concept is associated with fear. This experience of fear has an impact in the realm of feeling and this in turn stimulates anxiety which evokes a depressive mood in the soul. Steiner says, "Every such idea which, at the moment when it should come to consciousness, evokes fear — every such idea simultaneously causes the life of feeling to develop below it; feelings surge up, and *depression* invariably sets in. Feelings which are not comprehended, not taken hold of by ideas, give rise to depression; only those feelings are not of a depressing nature, which, as soon as they arise, are immediately apprehended by the life of thought and ideation."³

How then can we deal with the oversensitive child?

This centres on the need for those who deal with these children to develop the right qualities within themselves. These children are anxious and jumpy... easily flipped into states of hysteric tears and meltdowns. They bear in themselves a level of anxiety all the time, which is on the threshold of becoming painful, and creating panic. So the people caring for these children need to overcome their inner anxieties and fears in such a way that they are in control of themselves and those in their care. In a way this is the picture of the need for the ego of these folk to be present and in control. The environment around the child with such oversensitivity needs to be calm and have a sense of it being controlled and safe. This is necessary so that child can then be brought into a state of anxiety briefly through small shocks — the sound of keys or a change in the tempo of the lesson. These shocks need to be brought with full consciousness and not arise in an unconscious or habitual way — a deliberate conscious method is needed. For example: when working in a lesson with which the child is comfortable and has no threshold issues starting at a certain speed, then increasing the tempo and being there in front of the child creates consciously further anxiety. Now the build up of this anxiety is clearly able to be

³ Ibid

sourced and so the build up in the astral body and ego is not turned back as soul soreness but now works to incarnate the child's astral body and ego which is supported by the ego of the teacher being present in this process. Through repetition over time the ego and astral body of the child will become consolidated in the organs more strongly.

However it can be that the child has developed more movement in the pattern of this oversensitivity and one sees that there is alternation in mood from a depressive melancholia to one that is manic and overly cheerful. Here the pattern of "I will, I can't, I must" is more evident. An idea rises up in the child and as they try to fulfill it as a deed they meet the soul soreness and withdraw... eventually they may overcome the fear and act but then only to find that the outcome was far short of the original expectation. Again a sense of failure... however if at the point of the idea arising one can intervene and provide not the emotional sympathy, but the strength of companionship, to accompany the child through to the conclusion... this may be achieved by gently touching the hand of the child who is trying to do handwork and is about to become stuck or the carrying within oneself the action the child is trying to do and perhaps gently accompanying the child in movement over or alongside.

What Else Helps?

First, above all, anxious children need a parent or teacher who is comfortable in their own being, secure, calm and able to accompany them with an attitude of steadfast, radiating *warmth*.

Second, place around them strong clear *rhythms* and boundaries. Rhythm means a good balance of expansive and contractive activities. They know in advance what is going to happen, so they don't have to wonder, in fear. Strong, sensible rhythms of mealtimes, sleeping and waking, playtime and work, quiet times and noisy times, breathing in and breathing out as it were, all support the etheric body's life energy, which is low and compromised.

Dr Kolisko pointed out that the main healing balm is a good school curriculum which links the

human being to the world of knowledge, through imaginative activity, story, and human feeling.

Besides this there is also the use of therapies directly to strengthen the organs and create stronger peripheral boundaries to hold the astral body and ego more firmly. The use of Nursing Therapies, Rhythmical Massage, Eurythmy Therapy, Music Therapy, Speech Therapy, as well as medicines is all possible, helpful and may be needed in various combinations. It may be that the "treatments" need to be pursued over a considerable period although perhaps with intervals between courses.

We can assist children in particular through medicines applied *externally*, i.e. to the skin. The skin is our largest sense organ, so it is especially important for these nerve/sense children. **We need to give the child "a skin".**

Copper ointment (Weleda) over the kidneys at night time, for the anxious child. Parent can rub on lower back. Brings immediate warmth for the night and settles the soul (astral body), which is so active physiologically in the kidneys (the seat of anxiety) by day.

Yarrow compress over liver if anxiety is tending towards depression.

Eucalytus compress cloth over bladder at night can help with too frequent need to get up to go to the toilet at night.

Footbath. An easy and gentle settling remedy that releases child from being too awake in the head. Parent or teacher can do this. Find a quiet corner, curtains pulled a bit, dim lighting; this enables child to take in surroundings quietly. Sit on chair, put feet into warm foot bath, with appropriate essential oil, e.g. lavender - a lovely smell for the sensitive senses. Warm towel over knees for comfort and security. Squeeze some lemon juice also into the footbath. Colder hands and feet can lead to bladder weakness, going to the toilet all the time, the remedy is to bring them down into their feet - to help ground them in their body and to centre them. You can put marbles into the footbath so they can play with them with their toes and feel their feet.

Simple massage or body-oiling. A footbath may be the precursor to a simple massage. These children are losing their sense of warmth all the time and being pushed out of their bodies by an over-awake soul life. The rhythmic touch of massage really helps to bring them to a sense of self. Work with rhythm; spiralling, circling, streaming movements all of which restore warmth. The masseur may apply special ointments on organs - cover with a cloth for maximum benefit where the child is in shock, trauma or state of nervousness. For example: a rose/aurum/lavender-soaked cloth.

Work with morning or evening rhythms. Work over liver, kidney and spleen in mornings for incarnation. Afternoon time is more conducive for "digesting" the day's experiences.

Preparation for sleep important. Lavender is soothing and warming - anxious children love to be wrapped up in warmth and containment. (Warmer children not so keen on all that cosiness!)

Nutrition baths. Adding egg, honey and oil to a bath very good for the nervous system, for adults as well as children

Kali Phos or Fragador homeopathic remedies are very helpful.

Also Three Flower Massage Oil, recently developed by Weleda, is a very effective remedy.

- ◆ **Rose** Supports the rhythmic/feeling system with its harmonising, mediating balance and connection to the heart.
- ◆ **Hypericum (St John's Wort)** Supports the nervous/thinking system with its delicate warmth.
- ◆ **Chamomile** Calms, soothes and promotes digestion and the will system.

Simple monitoring of the reduction of anxiety is possible by simply checking how much sweating the child is displaying — are the hands sweaty when shaken? ◆

Dr Michael Sargent, a graduate of the Otago School of Medicine, has worked in medical practice in New Zealand and for the last 25 years also been involved in Waldorf education. At present he is involved with school medicine, being the visiting school doctor in several Waldorf Schools in New Zealand.

The Oversensitive Child

Robyn Ritchie,
Christchurch, New Zealand.

The world is a harsh place for many children today. Their skin hurts where the world bumps them, their ears ache, because the sounds of the world are so harsh and relentless, they recoil from the tastes and smells which assail these senses, reacting to chemicals and excesses which our systems have become too coarse to register. Even the light, and the relentlessness of the visual world, causes distress. Like an egg, whose shell is not properly formed, they cannot escape the impact of the intensity of life in the 21st century.

Parents notice how their child is hurt by the smallest touch, hair dressing and nail cutting are nightmares, clothes scratch and food is limited to a narrow and unvarying range.

How do children protect themselves from the impact of the world? They cling to routine. They may become obsessive in their need to finish things, tidy, straighten or do things in a certain order, wearing the same clothes, going the same way, eating the same food – collapsing into tears and distress if these needs are not met. They may also ‘disappear’ into an imaginary world or only confide in an imaginary friend. They may become a dog, a fairy, a mermaid, for hours, days or weeks, hiding within the persona of something else.

The oversensitive child has many gifts. They are usually intuitive and know what you are thinking before you do, they are creative and imaginative. They respond to the mood or the tone of the environment and will quickly reflect your mood of happiness or of sadness.

To understand the oversensitive child we need to understand something about our sensory systems and how they develop. We need to know about anxiety and how this impacts on our central nervous system and our ability to attend and learn.

Our senses are our windows to the world. Body senses – movement, touch and balance are already functional before birth. Hearing is also responsive before the child is born. At birth, vision, taste and smell are also born. Responsiveness to language and to another person, must unfold as part of the developmental process.

Rudolf Steiner, early in the 20th century, described 12 senses and this is a useful paradigm for building a picture of the interdependence of the

developing sensory systems. Steiner speaks of four body senses with which we know ourselves and through which we come to understand our separateness from the world – the senses of touch, life, movement and balance. Next are four senses for the perception of the outer world – smell, taste, vision and warmth. With a secure sense of self the child is then ready to reach out, embrace and understand the environmental space. Finally there are four more cognitive senses with which we perceive, understand and communicate with other people – hearing, the sense of word, the sense of thought and the sense of the individuality of the other.

We receive sensations from our sensory systems, but we must learn to perceive and understand the importance of these sensations to react appropriately to the world around us. This learning begins before birth as the baby lives within the life processes and the rhythms of the mother and continues after birth in the nurturing, interactive space between mother and infant.

The infant’s awakening to the world begins in the intimate caring space, shared with the mother, through warmth, vision, taste and smell. Initially completely dependent, the little one is called into activity through this nurturing process and gradually begins to take hold of, and own, its body and limbs. The sense of touch is vital in the nurturing process. It is soothing, calming and defining. Security in relationship, and nurture which accompanies it, brings about the awakening of the will to move, to strive to the upright.

The sense of life, or the sense of well being, is also vital to the integrity of the early development. Karl Konig suggests that the organ or system which is responsible for the sense of life is the autonomic nervous system. This part of the central nervous system is made up of two parts. The sympathetic nervous system is our alerting awakening system which speeds up the breathing and the heart rate to ready us for action. The digestion is slowed, blood being diverted from less essential functions. When we attend to something we need this sympathetic response to wake up and focus, this is a normal response. In a situation of stress or fear, a full ‘fight or flight’ reaction diverts energy to only the most vital functions and even the brain’s thinking reasoning capacity is closed down. We

react and respond with the lowest part of our brain whose function is survival.

The second part of the autonomic nervous system is called the parasympathetic nervous system. This opens up the peripheral circulation, slows us down, and brings us into a resting rhythm. Digestion is facilitated and breathing slows; if it slows too much we go to sleep. Between the extremes of these two systems we find the balance which allows us to function optimally.

The oversensitive child, for whom the world is a threatening too big place, lives with the sympathetic nervous system predominating so that a state of low grade anxiety prevails. Living with order and routine and being in control makes this manageable. When the order is lost, when the unpredictable happens, when parents become anxious, then the delicately held balance is upset and anxiety may cause withdrawal, tantrums, obsessiveness, or other behaviours, which signal this distress. Children who have suffered early separation, trauma or abuse, show the extreme of these problems. Children on the Autism Spectrum and those with Developmental Dyspraxia may also demonstrate difficulties in processing sensory information with accompanying anxiety.

The child with heightened anxiety is more aware of the world, being visually hyper-vigilant, noticing everything, is more easily overwhelmed by sound and is over-reactive to taste and smell. Without inner calmness the digestive processes function less effectively and eating patterns are disturbed. In this situation the child lives, like the infant, more strongly in the environment and less strongly in the body. Body awareness through touch, movement and balance are decreased.

To support the child who is oversensitive we need first to develop our understanding. If we acknowledge that the world is overwhelming for the child, through observation we can begin to see when they are supported and at peace and when this changes. What are the triggers that precipitate tantrums, withdrawal, or controlling behaviour. What are the most effective ways to support, redirect and nurture them.

The trusting caring relationship which you develop, as the parent or the teacher, of the oversensitive child, is vital to their well being. They will show you their best behaviour and often also their worst when the world is too much for them. They trust you to understand and to hold

the centre or focus for them which the enormity of life has caused them to lose. Holding the calm place, knowing what helps is the task.

From a more therapeutic stand point we can talk about working with the lower senses. Through touch we affirm the boundaries of our body. Therapeutic touch, such as massage, as well as play based approaches, can be helpful. The life sense is nurtured through rhythm and meaningful routines. Problems related to the digestive process need to be recognized. Improving these by good eating patterns, such as regular mealtimes and sitting together in a calm and unhurried environment. The quality of food, and diagnosis of particular food allergies and intolerances can also be hugely beneficial for the oversensitive child.

Movement is also important. When anxious we move without freedom. Children move with the greatest ease when their imagination is engaged and they are drawn into activity by this. Rhythmical movement such as swinging, rocking, bouncing and skipping, especially when accompanied by the rhythm of singing, can help to free the body of the tension caused by anxiety. Out of movement we hope to find equilibrium and stillness. In stillness we can be centered and at peace. Inner stillness is the starting point for receptivity and for real listening.

The oversensitive child is like an orchid. Like the orchid, the child needs more nurturing and more care than most of the flowers we grow. They ask us to be more observant and conscious in all that we do in tending them. The dandelions in our families and in our classes will thrive, be resilient and flower in spite of us. When the environment is right and we are able to provide the right structure and care, then we see the exquisite flower that is the orchid. ♦

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True Resilience is Robust Vulnerability

Lisa Devine

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“Live to the point of tears”

[vivre et créer. jusqu’aux larmes]

Albert Camus

The film director Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck was playing in his mind with the question: If I could go back to 1933 and had one minute with Hitler, what would I do or say that could change the course of history? Into this tilling of the soil of his soul by the question came a seed. It was the recollection of a conversation with Lenin recounted by Maxim Gorky. This conversation described how Lenin had to stop listening to music, his favorite being Beethoven’s *Appassionata*, in order to finish the revolution. Listening to music made him want to be kind and pat people on the head whereas the revolution required him to hit people on the head. Out of this musing was born the academy award winning film *‘The Lives of Others’*. This film portrays the transformation of a Stasi agent in East Germany who has the task of spying on an actor and his girlfriend to detect subversive activities. In the central scene this agent is listening in to the actor receiving news that his close friend, a playwright, has committed suicide. The state had banned his friend from working and he succumbed to despair, unable to bear living in the world without the life’s breath of his art. The grief-stricken actor begins to play a piece of music on the piano. This music touches the Stasi agent and a single tear falls slowly over his frozen face. For the first time he experiences that people and life and feelings are real. The story from there reveals how he is no longer able to be an obedient agent of the state and secretly acts to protect the lives of others.

The word resilience means to jump or leap back, to rebound. In the realm of the soul it refers to the reshaping of myself when events of the world have impacted or pressed in upon me. It is in essence an ability to respond. Programs developed to increase our capacity for resilience often focus on the activity of responding.

However before I can respond I must first be

impressed, moved by the world in some way. The transformation of the Stasi agent begins with the capacity to feel the impact of the lives of others in his own soul, to be inwardly moved. This capacity to allow myself to be moved by the world can be seen as a capacity for vulnerability, sensitivity, empathy. This capacity is deeply connected with the middle sphere of our being, our breathing. In order to stop feeling we generally stop breathing, we freeze. Music works powerfully on our rhythmic system, moving our middle sphere, keeping it alive and responsive, hence its central role in the film.

Once we have been moved, there is the activity of responding. Angela Dixon from the Children’s Hospital in Sydney has pointed out that when our response to an anxiety provoking event is short-circuited by someone who rescues us, the physiological cycle does not complete itself and we are left with chronic anxiety in relation to that situation. However when the anxiety is allowed to peak and we survive the experience through our own response, then we experience trust in ourselves and our ability to respond.¹

One of the core diagnostic criteria for PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) is a feeling of helplessness. This is the experience of being unable to respond or the experience that this response is not received by the world, that it does not impact the world in some way. The more traumatic an event is, the less impact we generally have on the situation. However it can be enough that the response is witnessed and given value by other people.

A narrative therapist working with children who experienced bombing raids in the Gaza strip interviewed the children about the ways they had discovered to respond to this experience. She then helped them draw up a document for other children about how to manage the effects of a military attack. Their responses included:

¹ Dixon, Dr. Angela. Children’s Hospital Anxiety Clinic, Sydney Australia. Lecture material.

- keeping your mind on the future,
- looking at each other's faces and
- talking to someone if their face is red and upset,
- caring for each other and
- inviting kids who are suffering to play with you,
- inventing games that make you laugh and help you breathe, and
- eating olives because they are the symbol of peace.

The children discovered something called the "relief breath" which was very important each time the bombs stopped and they invented games to bring this about. In this work she is becoming a witness to their ways of responding and in drawing up the document she gives their responses acknowledgement in the community². The children become robust in the face of trauma through knowing that even if they cannot stop the bombs, they can respond. This approach to trauma focuses on strengthening the experience of our capacity to respond which can easily be lost if attention is not focused only on the pain.

Resilience implies that something that was in danger of being lost in a situation reemerges strongly. In essence it is our ability to have a living relationship with the world, to engage in a conversation with the world that honours both ourselves as unique human individuals and the world as a meaningful other. This relationship breathes between experiencing inwardly the outer world and letting the outer world experience our human soul's response. For this conversation to be living it needs to be free from programs and protocols.

David Epston is a family therapist who works with adolescents for whom their conversation with the world has become one in which self loathing, or rage towards the world is the primary experience. A childhood experience was formative in the way he works to reengage these young people with the world. As a young boy of about eight he stole some money from his father. His father told him the money was missing and without giving him a chance to confess asked him to help him find

it. After sending his son to various locations to search, he finally sent him the bedroom where the money was sitting on the pillow. His father congratulated him on being great at finding things. This repeated itself every day for the next week. David never did confess but he stepped up to his new identity as a finder. As a reader you may well be wondering if this is really such a good strategy for responding to stealing. However it is not the details of this response that are the main message but rather the impact of what David calls a ritual of 're-grading' rather the degrading³. His father had given him an alternative identity in his conversation with the world that his soul could expand into. In his work with communities for whom crime is an issue he creates voluntary 'honesty tests' by which a young person can lay claim publically to an honest identity and disavow a reputation as untrustworthy. Between the in-breath and the out-breath of resilience are decisions about who we are, what we value and what we stand for in the world.

We can encourage children to learn new ways of responding to difficult situations but not just as a formula to be applied. For this to be alive they need to see how our human soul responds in living breathing color! It is most powerful when we do this out of our capacity to breathe rather than freeze when face to face with something pressing us, and out of our capacity to stay in touch with our soul's deepest values and commitments. This is a process whereby we dare to find our true response, to go to the dark edge of what we know of ourselves as human beings and respond out of our humanity in freedom. When we stop breathing we are not free, and our soul cannot feel its humanity.

In the words of David Whyte⁴:

*You must learn one thing.
The world was made to be free in.
Give up all the other worlds
except the one to which you belong.*

*Sometimes it takes darkness and the sweet
confinement of your aloneness to learn*

2 Mitchell, Sue (2006). "Debriefing after traumatic situations – using narrative ideas in the Gaza strip" in Denborough, David (Ed.) 'Trauma: Narrative responses to traumatic experience' Dulwich Centre Publications, Adelaide.

3 Epston, David (2008). "Community approaches – real and virtual – to stealing" in his book "Down Under and Up Over: Travels with narrative therapy." Warrington, England: AFT

4 Whyte, David (2007) "River Flow" Langley, Washington: Many Rivers Press

Anything or anyone that does not bring you alive is too small for you.

If not for ourselves, then for the children in our care we need to live in an expansive world that invites us into a living conversation and not a prison of requirements that freeze the soul.

Rudolf Steiner tells us that children around 11 will often engage in anti-social experiments with the world and the ability of adults around to respond with an understanding is essential⁵. We need to see that the child is not a thief but is researching their humanity. We can then respond creatively with the next experience the child needs to have to stay in conversation with the world. When the world around goes into meltdown the conversation can close down and invite a withdrawal into a secret realm of anti-social activity fed by humiliation and self hate. A true inner response cannot be forced or trained but arises in true conversation with the world out of the moment we choose who we want to be. Every choice requires alternatives. The inner side of resilience is the decision to live in a way that we choose.

Nelson Mandela underwent an initiation ritual at sixteen involving circumcision. The required response to the pain of the procedure was to say 'I am a man'. Nelson Mandela managed to say these words but experienced himself as faltering

in the crucial moment. No-one told him that he had done this. He experienced it inwardly. He discovered that he was not naturally brave but would need to learn how to be so. He decided to be someone who did not falter at the crucial moment and that made a tremendous difference for both him and the world⁶.

True resilience is what the poet David Whyte calls "robust vulnerability".⁷ It allows us to keep our soul in touch with and moved by the world, and to draw strength and inspiration to respond from our deepest intuitions, from what we really value and want to stand for in the world. Children need to see us moved by the world and not indifferent. They need to see us responding out of our deeply held convictions not out of protocols and conventions. Then our conversation with the world is alive. We can dare to live to the point or the edge of tears as Camus suggests, knowing that we can respond to anything in a way that our human soul can stand strong in and feel fully alive. ♦

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5 Steiner, Rudolf () cited by Jorgen Smit in a lecture given to a Waldorf Teachers Conference, 1989.

6 Mandela, Nelson (1995). *Long Walk to Freedom*. Chap 4

7 Whyte, loc cit

VISIT OF FLORIAN OSSWALD TO AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

Florian Osswald, the new co-coordinator of the Pedagogical Section at the Goetheanum, will be visiting for 5 weeks in July and August, 2011.

The themes are:

"Activating Inner Life for Outer Work with Children and Young People"
and

"Finding Ways for the Spirit of the Subjects to Shine through our Teaching".

July 15th-17th Queensland/Northern NSW Regional Conference
July 20th Sydney

Dates to be announced for the other venues, including New Zealand

August 9th-13th Perth

Contacts : Australia : glasby.peter@gmail.com

New Zealand : Sue Simpson: sue.simpson0@gmail.com

Developing our potential to learn

Annette Brian,

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(with our acknowledgement and thanks to the author and editor of Star Weavings for permission to republish – the author has further edited and added references- NC –Ed.).

Modern research can provide many insights into the human being and in particular, when we combine it with our own observation of a child - how it interacts, behaves and responds to the world around it, it can enhance our interactions with the young child.

The young child is often keen to experience as much of the new world into which it has been born as it can. Through a range of sensory impressions, it begins the formative journey towards self consciousness.

One area of research that can contribute to our understanding of the young child is that of neuroplasticity - that the brain “fires and wires” itself based on experiences; and that these can change over time depending on the nature of the experiences. Any sensation (sense impression) whether it be sight, sound, movement, taste, temperature, touch, and so on; anything we do or experience reinforces a neural pathway. The more these sensations are experienced, the more these neurons are likely to fire in a similar way thus creating stronger neural pathways.

In utero, neurons are constantly being created, with axons [the nerve fibres that send electrical signals away from a neuron], and dendrites [the nerve fibres that carry signals back to a neuron] (see Fig. 1)

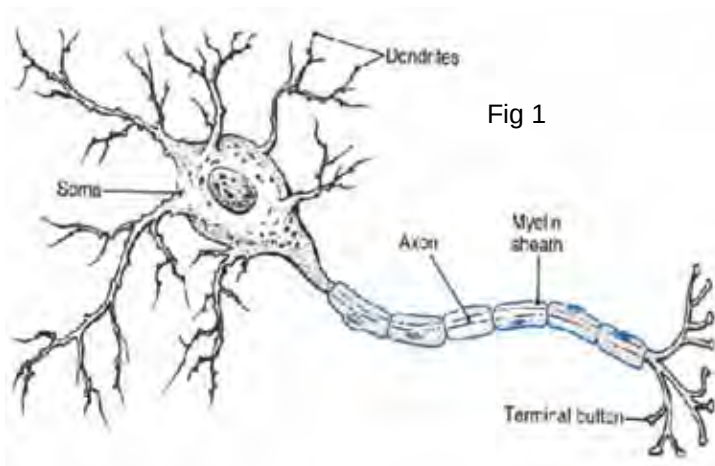
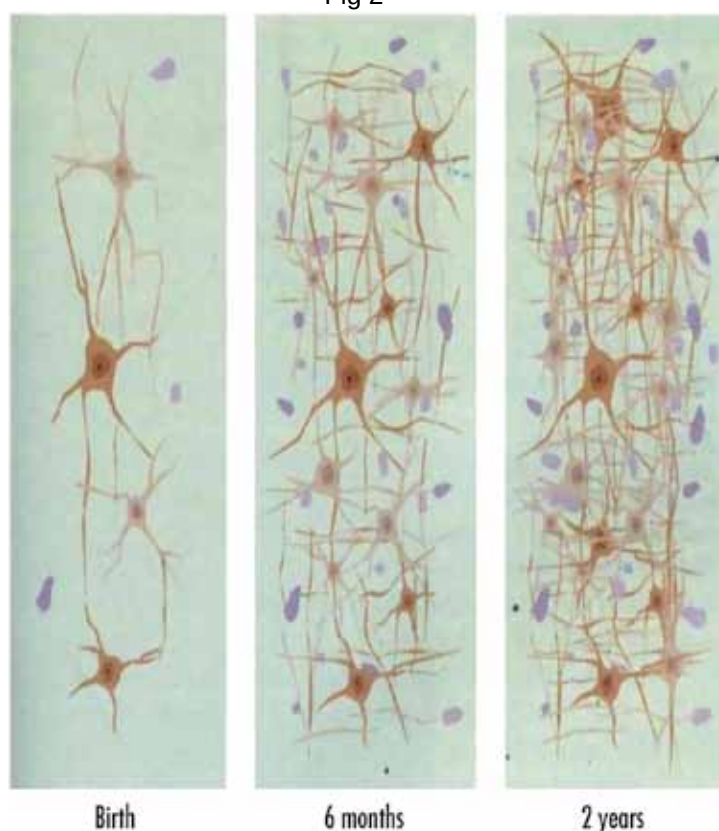


Fig 1

This forms the complex neural circuitry - the nervous system that allows communication along neural pathways – that provides a way to integrate experiences. Whilst the newborn infant has trillions of neurons, and has already started making connections, it is through the first few years of life that these connections rapidly increase (see Fig. 2)

Fig 2



In this way, the nerve -sense system (localised in the brain) is the great synthesizer of everything that is going on in the organism.¹

The phrase ‘use it or lose it’, often bandied about in reference to brain function and skills, refers to neural pruning. Neural pruning is the reduction of neural pathways – specifically those connections that are weak. It is a natural process which happens with age and a necessary process which

¹ Steiner, R. (2005) Education for Special Needs. Rudolf Steiner Press, Lecture One. (previously known as Curative Education).

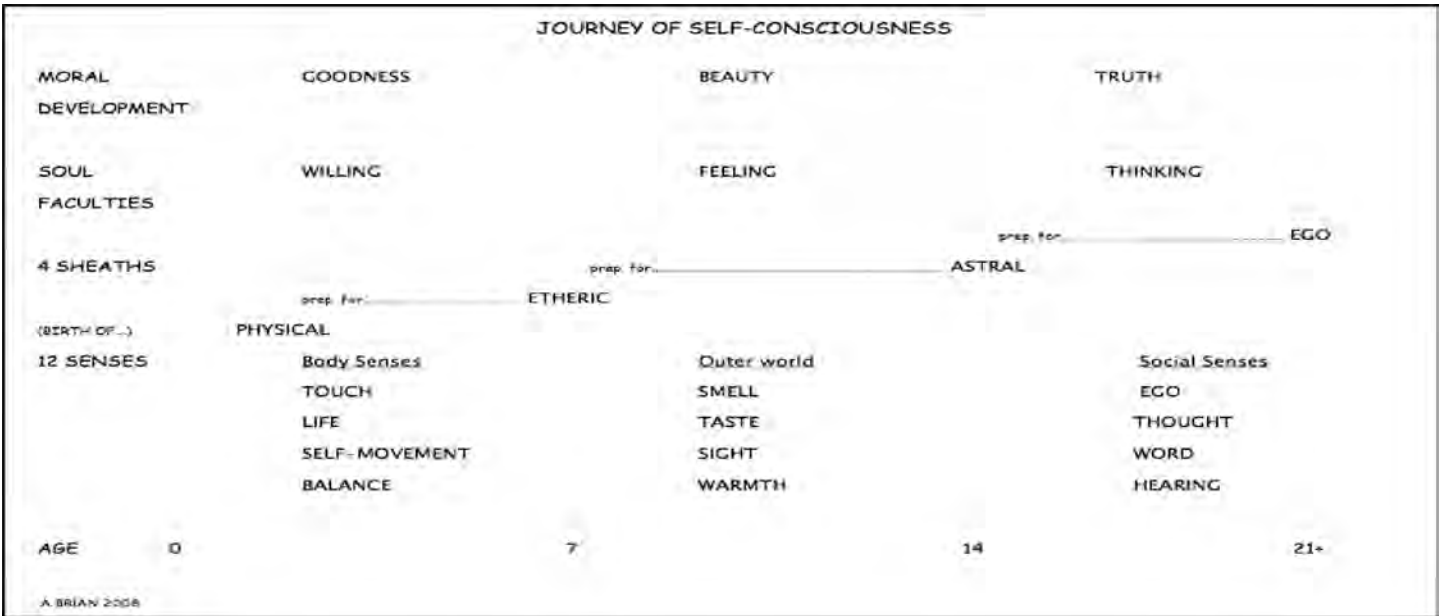
enables the more effective pathways to become even more efficient and established. The more that pathways are strengthened by conscious repetition and continued use, then the more likely it is that these pathways will be maintained.

Both nature – the genes – and nurture – the environment – play a role in processes to do with neural pathways. The main caregivers are very influential as the infant is not yet able to attend to its own needs and consequently is dependent on them to provide such things as food and care that ensure its well-being. The caregivers provide for the infant the environment from which it will receive many sensory impressions as well as providing routines, rhythms and boundaries between what is acceptable and what is not. Furthermore, the caregivers model responses and daily activities which the infant will imitate. A glimpse into how this may work can be seen in the recent discovery of mirror neurons. A mirror neuron is a neuron that fires both when a person observes an action performed by another and when it does that action itself. Though we are still in the early stages of understanding their role, mirror neurons are increasingly recognized as a crucial participant for many developmental processes, including imitation and social learning.² This is, as we know, a fundamental part of the early childhood experience according

to Steiner’s indications which involve imitation.

Taking a very simplistic view, the young child comes with a genetically inherited physical body that is accompanied by an energy/habit (etheric) body. Together, these two will form a body that the child’s soul (astral) and spirit (ego) will come to know as its own. At first however, it is tricky to know this body - it is like when a young child first puts on a glove: it doesn’t quite fit in the way that it should with some fingers cramped too tightly into part of the glove whilst other bits of the glove are not filled and are yet to be discovered! It is the task of the first 7 years for the child to begin to acquaint itself with life on earth, through all the sensory experiences that this entails, by getting to know this physical/etheric body and transforming it to make it the child’s own.³

Rudolf Steiner’s concept of twelve senses provides a way to understand this intricate picture of development. Whilst all the senses are present at birth, they progressively evolve and develop in alignment with the seven year phases of child development coinciding with the births of the physical, etheric and astral bodies. Each seven-year phase contributes to the preparation for the birth of the subsequent body, culminating in the birth of the ego at around 21 years of age. See table below for an overview of these concepts.



2 Del Giudice, M. Manera, V & Keyzers, C. (2009) Programmed to learn? The ontogeny of mirror neurons Developmental Science. Oxford: Vol. 12, Issue 2.
 3 Steiner, R. (1995) The Kingdom of Childhood. Anthroposophic Press.

The following discussion will provide a simplified focus mainly on the first group of senses⁴.

This first group (known as body senses) are those that provide the child with an experience of its own body and are thus to do with the birth of the physical body and preparation for the birth [emancipation] of the etheric body. Touch allows the child to perceive the boundary between itself and the rest of the world, giving an experience of both connection and separation. The life-sense is very much about the child's state of well-being. Self-movement provides a distinction between whether the child is still or in movement. Balance provides the child with a relationship to gravity – it is described by Sally Goddard as providing the child with a sense of 'centre' in relationship to space.⁵ These lower senses when fully permeated by the child provide awareness of spatial orientation and body geography.

The senses of smell, taste, sight and warmth provide soul experiences of the outer world and may be thought of as discriminatory senses that evoke a judgment. The social senses of hearing, word, thought and other-ego-sense provide a possibility to comprehend another human being. These senses involve higher cognitive capacities and come about through a metamorphosis of the body senses. Thus, it is that 'the whole motor system in the human being should become a servant of the intellectual system'.⁶

Importance of the Reflexes

The infant begins its experiences via the body senses through a set of primitive reflexes which have developed in utero as part of its early survival patterns. These reflexes are innate, stereotyped movements that are directed from the brain stem and do not come under conscious awareness or control. The primitive reflexes are fully present at birth and are thought to play a role not only in the birth process but also in early motor skills. By six to twelve months after birth, the primitive reflexes

are inhibited or controlled, because pathways to higher brain centres are being established.⁷

Also at this time, the infant's body consciousness progresses from the head through the trunk and limbs to the periphery of fingers and toes.⁸ Starting with the head, the eyes begin to fix their gaze and head control develops. It will continue to lift its head upright when placed on its tummy or back and it begins to involve its hands and arms in order to push up and to eventually roll over. As its muscle tone (strength) improves and it discovers its hands, it will reach for objects whilst steadying itself with one hand or just its trunk. And in time, it will move its own body in order to get to that which is not in its immediate grasp. The movement of its body forward and sometimes even backward, begins with the whole body being in contact with the floor (whether it be on tummy or back) as it propels itself using arms, legs or both and with wriggling movements of the trunk. With continued muscle tone, it will eventually pull itself up into crawling on all fours, sitting and the culmination of all this, is standing leading into walking upright! Persistent practice of these various skills enables the infant to succeed in gaining control over its movements and inhibiting these primitive movement patterns.

As caregivers supporting the infant through these early developmental milestones we are mindful of letting it achieve them through its own volition. By avoiding things that will bring the infant too quickly into the upright position: baby pouches, walkers, jolly jumpers and some prams; the infant is freer to progress through this archetypical path of development. Other examples of support include: ensuring that the infant has an experience of floor-time on its back and tummy to stimulate sensory experiences of touch, movement, balance and encouraging muscle-tone; and to replicate the experience of breastfeeding, the caregiver switches sides for bottle-feeds to ensure equal stimulation of

4 See Appelli, W. The Care and Development of the Human Senses, and Soesman, A. The Twelve Senses

5 Goddard-Blythe, S. (2004). The Well Balanced Child. Hawthorn Press.

6 Steiner, R. (2005). Education for Special Needs. Rudolf Steiner Press. p309.

7 For a fuller discussion of the primitive reflexes see

Goddard, S. (2005). Reflexes, Learning and Behavior: A Window into the Child's Mind. Fernridge Press.

8 Konig, K. (1984) The First Three Years of the Child. Anthroposophic Press.

hand, eye and mouth movements as this is the beginning of hand-eye coordination and fine motor coordination. Furthermore, we are mindful that the young child is eager to imitate the tasks which it sees the adults around it engaged in - stirring the porridge, washing the dishes, pegging the clothes, digging in the garden, and so on. All these activities provide countless opportunities to establish and reinforce neural pathways via repetition and rhythm.

As the developmental milestones of head control, rolling, crawling and walking are achieved, a range of reflexes that are known as postural reflexes begin to unfold and stay with us through our adult life. In very simple terms, they are: the **Righting reflexes** and the **Equilibrium reactions**. Both are concerned with posture, movement and stability, with the former enabling the child to maintain head and trunk in a specific position when the body position is altered in any way; and the latter providing protection when balance is lost or the centre of gravity is altered (e.g. in bike riding).⁹ However, the walking infant is still far from mastering these postural reflexes and must continue to have a variety of lower sense experiences in order to facilitate the connection to higher brain centres.

Midlines - A Stage of Development

At around 3-4 years of age, the young child enters the 'symmetry' stage of motor development.¹⁰ With uprightness the child enters even more strongly into the 3-dimensional world - the up/down, front/back and left/right spatial relationships found in reference to its own body. To begin with, these relationships are indistinguishable for the child due to the midline barriers. The midline barriers give the child a mirror experience of each of these relationships, particularly in regards to the up/down and left/right planes of its body. For example, if the young child makes a curling motion with its fingers on its

right hand at this stage of development, it is likely that the toes on its right foot will also curl and vice versa. In the left/right plane it is not uncommon for the young child to take up a crayon in the closest hand and draw a line beginning on that side of the page, passing the crayon to the other hand at the midpoint in order to continue it across to the other side.

Some observations that I have made illustrating these midline relationships:

- a 4 year-old girl who drew the right side of a butterfly with her right hand and then the left side with her left hand; and
- a 4 year-old boy who held the scissors with his left hand as he cut strips off the left side of the paper – he told me that he needed to use the other hand to cut the other side and proceeded to put the scissors in his right hand to cut the strips off the right side of the paper.

Therefore for the child in this stage, things seem to appear as mirror images and are experienced as identical: for example, 'b' and 'd'; '12' and '21'; 'was' and 'saw'. The child is still grappling with spatial awareness and directionality as well as fine and gross motor coordination. I believe that these are necessary skills to master before being taught the more challenging skills and concepts that are involved in reading, handwriting and mathematics. Research commonly points to strong relationships between retained midlines and primitive reflexes, poor gross and fine motor control in children who have been diagnosed with dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD and ASD.¹¹

*"A person who uses his fingers clumsily also suffers from a clumsy intellect; he is unable to be mobile in his thoughts and ideas... It is better to train the intellect indirectly by first developing outer skills and faculties. These in turn will stimulate the powers of intellect to ripen in a balanced way so that eventually they will become part of the whole human being."*¹² Rudolf Steiner

9 Goddard, S. (2005). Reflexes, Learning and Behaviour.

10 P. Mesker, a Dutch Neurologist and Neuropsychologist, writes on Motor Development in Chapter 1 of 'The Second Grade Development Observation & assessment': Background and Manual by Els Gottgens, translated by Monica Ellis. Available from Mercurius Australia. [<http://www.mercurius-australia.com/>]. cost \$10.45 code 45760005.

11 Two examples of this are:

Taylor, M., Houghton, S. & Chapman, E. (2004). *Primitive reflexes and Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder: Developmental origins of classroom dysfunction*. International Journal of Special Education. 19:1.

Reynolds, D. & Nicolson, R.I. (2006) *Follow-up treatment of an Exercise-based treatment for Children with Reading Difficulties*. Wiley InterScience.

12 Rudolf Steiner, *Renewal of Education*.

Just as the early experiences of the infant can be supported and shaped by the caregiver to enable the developmental milestones to unfold as explained earlier, so too can experiences within the early childhood environment (whether it be care in the home, playgroup, preschool or kindergarten) support the young child in these formative processes, in its most simplistic form of building neural pathways. Permeation of the various activities by the consciousness of the caregiver/teacher provides an over-arching rhythm, mood, gesture, love and respect of self, the world and others that nurtures the young child.

For example:

- the rhythms of the day, week, seasons and year which provide security and repetition;
- the tone and quality of the rhymes, songs, stories and verses accompanied by gestures which begin literacy education in a way that is age-appropriate;
- the free play, both indoors and out which provides the child with endless possibilities and potential for creativity¹³.

Fine Motor Skill Development

We can bring consciousness into activities such as bees' wax modelling, painting, hand and finger games,¹⁴ drawing, craft and cooking in order to foster fine motor development; to inhibit midline barriers; and to establish dominance and gross motor coordination. For example, this can be done quite unobtrusively by the teacher who consistently positions the implement (whether it is the spoon for porridge, the handle for the mill, etc), the finger-knitting loop (N.B. If encouraging right-handedness the loop should be on the left index finger and vice versa for the left-handed child), the paint brush or crayon basket - to name but a few, in order to reinforce a dominant development of one side of the body.

Gross Motor Skill Development

In play environments, many opportunities to

imitate adults or other children around them: to jump, swing, run, skip, walk, pump, dig, sweep, slide, tumble, roll, balance, ride, and climb in the directions of up, down, forward, back, and sideways. There is an increasing need for the children of our times to be helped to develop their lower senses and strengthen their will, as there are many indications that children individually have a greater spectrum of developmental needs.¹⁵

The culmination of the first seven years of life is the birth of the etheric body. Up until this point the formative forces associated with the etheric have worked as an inward artist to build up a physical body that the child can use as its own. It is through the sensory - motor experiences that the child transforms the inherited body to express something of its inner nature. This transformation begins with imitation where the foundations for learning are laid. These foundations are aptly described in the following statement by Audrey McAllen: "well integrated senses of touch, life, self-movement and balance are the basis for the maturation of early movement patterns, for 'dissolving' the midline barriers, development of dominance, spatial orientation, body geography, fine and gross motor skills, postural control, eye movement capacities, as well as a sense of rhythm, endurance and healthy breathing."¹⁶ Thus, preparing the child for the next phase of learning: the class teacher period in the primary school. ♦

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¹³ For a comprehensive exploration of research findings involving play see:

Dr Stuart Brown "Play: how it shapes the brain, opens the imagination and invigorates the soul."

¹⁴ Recently I was fortunate enough to have a very brief introduction to the *Hand Gestures* of Wilma Ellersiek which appear to bring to the young child experiences which provide not only fine motor coordination but also encouragement of a dominant side in an age-appropriate manner.

¹⁵ Rawson, M. (2004). *Guidelines for School Readiness*. Dornach: International Curriculum Research Group of the Pedagogical Section of the High School for Spiritual Science.

¹⁶ McAllen, A. (1998) *The Extra Lesson*. RSCP.

On the Question of the Three-Fold Structure of the Main Lesson

A Stimulus for Discussion

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reprint from the author and editors
of Rundbrief #38, published by
the Pedagogical Section at the
Goetheanum. Translation: John
Weddon).

We reprint this article because it contains some very challenging thoughts about some aspects of Waldorf education (e.g. the threefold Main Lesson). The editors invite responses from teachers for our next issue – Neil Carter- Ed)

Preamble

An article for the ninetieth anniversary celebration of the Waldorf school movement, which appeared in 'The Goetheanum', issue no. 39 of 25th September 2009, concluded by pointing out three tasks. The first of these was to produce a new balance between the forces of form and impulse within the school and within the school movement.

The second one, according to the author, is meant to examine and investigate the habits of teaching that have developed. What we are doing – is it (still) the right thing?

The third task was mentioned as schooling and practising a new awareness for the meaning and content of Steiner's art of education; this represents a paradigm shift from all conventional educational approaches. We need this awareness in order to shape the future of this art of education.

The author also formulated these three tasks in his lecture at the Congress 'Waldorf Schools: 90 Years' of Future' in Stuttgart on 23rd October 2009.

The theme of this article is intended to tackle the second case where action is required, examining what habits have developed in the practice of teaching in Waldorf schools.

The example that will be worked on should serve as a stimulus for people to concern themselves with other themes in this sense. The theme chosen is the common practice of dividing the main lesson into three parts at the beginning of the day.

Synopsis

The classic division of the main lesson in classes 1-8 into a rhythmical part, a work part and a story-telling part affects the way the class is at this time of the morning. There appear to be no grounds to support this structure in the statements or recommendations of Steiner. The case is made that this division is an obstacle for the essential rhythmical and artistic activities and that it can be a hindrance to the process of learning. It is also demonstrated how this division of the morning contradicts the *Study of Man* in important aspects. Finally, it is portrayed how the behaviour of pupils may be judged on the basis of this three-part division.

Introduction

No teacher will fail to think up a meaningful way to start the day with their pupils. In the lower classes there may be a morning circle or else various children will talk of their experiences. Or else they will sing a song, practise tongue twisters or solve a riddle, which has been set the day before, or else the children show one another what they have done at home. In higher classes maybe a poem will be said and mental arithmetic practised. Or else they will clap a rhythm which will subsequently be varied. In short, getting in the right mood for the school day is a really special moment: it is a new day, a day full of promise. The air is full of potency. How am I to greet the children? How will the artistic process begin?

Everything is new; *this* day has never been before! Nobody knows yet what will happen, what this special day will bring. You sense it; you do not fix anything yet; you feel the mood and seek the way to start. Is this the moment for the morning verse

or do you have the song first? Are the children 'there' yet? Not quite. Perhaps an 'echo exercise' will be done with the little ones so that they can feel the geography of their bodies. However, the ball exercises for the integration of the senses of sight, hearing and one's own movement will be done in the break in the school yard or, if it rains, in the corridor; now they will take too much time. In any case, getting in the right mood for the day must not take too long, for the morning will bring a lot. The attempt is made in fifteen minutes to be so far that the morning verse can be spoken. In short, getting in the right mood is a highly individual process between the teacher and the group of pupils. A lot depends on the mood. What is the mood of the morning throughout the year? How does one go from the tender beginning of the day to events of the day in the approach to spring? How does one do this in advent in winter, or else in summer?

What effect does an established, programmed, rhythmical part with definite components have? Saying a poem, playing the recorder, saying their report verses, singing a song, the morning verse, what effect do they have in the morning?

What effect does it have on children or pupils, if this part is extended to over half an hour, often requiring three quarters of an hour? What do we perceive? Does their concentration increase or do we see fatigue and as they get older demotivation (which is interpreted as weakness of will)? Is the expectation of the day disappointed by the beginning, as it only brings something that has already been? Is not the *eager expectation* of what the day may bring deadened in advance, if the child enters school in the semi-conscious certainty that it will take a long time before learning starts, until something new will appear. How does *motivation nowadays* develop in view of habitual activities in the rhythmical part, which does not change through the years and which is continued in the very same sequence?

What about the question of time? If a 'storytelling

part' has to follow on from the 'work part', is there enough time left to absorb and learn new things? Does the story part have to necessarily be at the end of the main lesson? How *intensive* is our lesson, how strong are the learning experiences that are necessary for the children to take them on as a matter of course and thus for their motivation?

Which rhythm is wholesome? Is this three-fold structure the cause of the possible slackness in the main lesson? Which habits can be justifiably formed, where are their limitations? What room for manoeuvring is taken away from the main lesson through this structure?

These are all significant questions; questions which impinge on the quality of the lesson.

The Thinking behind it

There are no grounds to be found for dividing the main lesson into three parts *in Steiner's work, neither in the lectures nor in the books of the teachers' meetings*. This does not necessarily need to be the case, if something meaningful were to be developed. But, whatever is new must then be in accordance with the understanding gained through the Study of Man. However, we do not find any kind of justification except platitudes such as 'all activities need rhythm' (Georg Kniebe). That is true; only the question is 'does this three-fold structure mean rhythm or routine?'

In the chapter 'Elemente des Waldorfunterrichtes' (p. 86) of the book 'Die Zukunft der Waldorfschule' the author of this chapter, Peter Loebell is careful. He names the most varied possibilities of shaping the main lesson but he avoids assigning them to a three-fold structure.¹ This is a correct approach in my view.

In 'Zur Unterrichtsgestaltung im 1. bis 8. Schuljahr an Waldorf/Rudolf Steinerschulen' Thomas Stoeckli writes that Steiner did not use the term a three-fold structure and that teachers should feel free "to shape the lessons individually according to their own insight"(p. 25).² All other references to further

1 Loebell, P. (2000) Elemente des Waldorfschulunterrichts in Kleinau-Metzler, D. (Ed.) Die Zukunft der Waldorfschule. Perspektiven zwischen Tradition und neuen Wegen, Hamburg: Rowolt Taschenbuch Verlag (p. 86).

2 Pedagogical Section of the Free High School for spiritual Science at the Goetheanum, Dornach, and the Pedagogical Research Centre for the Association of independent Waldorf Schools, Stuttgart. (Eds) (1997), Zur Unterrichtsgestaltung im 1. Bis 8. Schuljahr an Waldorf/Rudolf Steinerschulen', Dornach: Verlag am Goetheanum.

reading take the three-part division for granted as characteristic of the main lesson.³

Therefore, if the three-part structure cannot fall back on the instructions of the art of education, then, all at once, it appears to be without any other evidence to support it except that it helps the children to concentrate⁴ or wakens them up or lets them breathe.⁵ However, these are qualities that, according to experience, do not come about through the rhythmical or other parts. Rhythm does not arise through structuring the main lesson and through poems and singing etc. Rhythm arises only through the way in which the teacher teaches. In order to reach an understanding of the processes, we will have to look first at the time of day and at the phenomenon of sleeping and waking.

Time of day, Time and the Forming of Habits

As a rule the main lesson is given in the first part of the morning. In a general instruction Steiner declares that the early morning should be used for new learning, the late morning for all that is based on repetition and the afternoon for artistic activities.⁶

Every school must at least strive to make something possible in this direction, which will surely be easier for small schools than large ones.

They are the questions of hygiene in the timetable.

Yet what is the early morning? In the first part of the morning we (children and pupils too) are different beings than at other moments of the day. We can observe quite a bit looking at ourselves. The morning makes us more receptive, more open for what

comes, but in an active way, whereas in the evening this receptivity is quieter, less active. We are not yet properly 'preoccupied' with the pictures of our day's experiences, in the afternoon the senses are already flooded with impressions. It is true that *the early bird catches the worm*. There is an American study which shows that with a half hour shift in the early morning the results of learning, the receptivity, of the pupils change. Too early is too early and too late is too late. The timing of learning in the morning must be kept to pretty exactly.⁷

Another thing is: how do we treat time ourselves? Do we make use of it as a constant with a linear course through the day or do we treat it as a quality? In the former case we (and the pupils too) will quickly become tired through it, in the second case time will become the pulse between concentration and relaxation. This can become rhythm, not through the routine of a structure, but through the teacher letting the pulse of time breathe through the activity, *tension, relaxation, focusing on a point, expanding it and differentiating, in short: breathing*. The heart too gives a significant picture of this, that of the systole and the diastole. The teacher becomes an artist of time, if he or she uses time in this way. (In eurythmy we speak of 'contraction and expansion').

In general, the striving is to teach the children or pupils 'proper habits', for these form a part of the ability to learn as it develops; an absolutely meaningful endeavour. How do you do this? To a large extent it is a question of the teacher finding equilibrium. We can compare it with a feeling for *music*, between tension and the easing of tension,

3 Sandkuehler, b. (1999), *Lernen Kinder mit dem Kopf? Die bedeutung von Bewegung und praktischen Tun in der Waldorfpädagogik*, Stuttgart: Verlag Freies Geistesleben (p. 42). (Do children learn with their heads? The importance of movement and practical work in the Waldorf pedagogy.)

Kniebe, G. (1996), *Aus der Unterrichtspraxis an Waldorf/Rudolf Steinerschulen*, Dornach: Verlag am Goetheanum (p. 20).

Richter, T. (ed.) (2006), *Paedagogischer Auftrag und Unterrichtsziele – vom Lehrplan der Waldorfschule*, 2nd Edn., Stuttgart: Verlag Freies Geistesleben.

Eller, H. (1998), *Der Klassenlehrer an der Waldorfschule*, Stuttgart: Verlag Freies Geistesleben (p. 26).

Brater, M., Hemmer-Schanze, C., Schmelzer, A., (2009) *Interkulturelle Waldorfschule. Evaluation zur schulischen Integration von Migrantenkindern*, Wiesbaden: VS Verlag fuer Sozialwissenschaft (p. 84).

Patzlaff, R., Sassmannshausen, et al. (2007) *Developmental Signatures. Core Values and Practices in Waldorf Education for Children Age 3-9*, Ghent, NY: AWSNA (p. 127)

4 Keller, U.L. (2008) *Quereinsteiger: Wechsel von der Staatlichen Regelschule in die Waldorfschule*, Wiesbaden: GWV VS Verlag fuer Sozialwissenschaft, P. 345.

5 Richter, A. (2009) *Schule mit Theaterprofil* in Schneider, W., (Ed.) *Theater und Schule: ein Handbuch zur Kulturellen Bildung*, Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag. P. 169.

6 Steiner, R. *Education as a Force for Social Change* GA 296, Lecture 2, p. 50.

7 Bronson, P. and Merryman, A. (2009) *Nurture Shock* New York, Twelve Hachette Book Group, pp 38-44.

between quiet and loud, between fast and slow, high and low. If this equilibrium is not present, then habits turn into *rituals*. Then the *justifiable* forming of habits runs the risk of becoming an end in itself. The quite unintentional result will be that the will to learn is frustrated as will be the 'desire for learning', for it is not being addressed or not sufficiently addressed.

If this is the case, the door is opened for *educationally undesirable power relationships* and the exerting of influence that impair a healthy relationship between the teacher and the pupils. That happens when the teacher subordinates him- or herself to the dictates of ritual. The freedom of being together has vanished. (See the section on Assessments and Reports).⁸

This leads to unrest in the children's souls, for in the morning they have come in the mood for learning, not for going through some ritual or other.

The 'rhythmical part' takes on the character of a ritual, when, for instance, the pupils of class six have to recite their own report verse in front of the class on the day of the week on which they were born. (We are now leaving aside the question whether this habit is psychologically suited to this age). As such the habit is not bad. (Even if we must hope that the verse is no longer needed after half a year: the pupil will have developed and left the verse behind). However, if this process has not taken effect, then we see the ritual: a pupil who is as uninterested as possible recites his verse in front of a bored 'mass' of pupils. The procedure is of no value to anyone. It takes time, though, easily ten to fifteen minutes from a certain class size upwards. If you add in the remaining elements of this part of the morning, truly precious time is gone. Thus, I dare to question whether playing the recorder in the first part of the morning is the right activity. Just watch a group of children that plays the recorder in the early morning and a group of children who do this in the music lesson later in the morning. A great difference is to be noticed; (a difference which, strangely enough, is not to be noticed with singing). How about the much praised stamping, what does

that achieve? You can see that it makes the children tired instead of awake. Stamping makes them tired, not awake.

The real rhythm, which we must always heed, is not between parts of the main lesson, but rather the rhythm which reveals itself with the children or pupils. When do they get tired, when do they waken up? That is the essential consideration. Whoever teaches according to this principle, will dissolve half the discipline problems just through doing this.

Let us consider the process from the viewpoint of the understanding of man.

Everything that we do with our bodies, that we do through the will to be active, for example, moving about, dancing around in a circle, stamping with our feet, clapping, all these activities are of spiritual nature in their essence. All this is achieved by a thought, which changes 'magically' into a movement. Thus, Steiner characterises gymnastics as the most spiritual subject (!). The peculiarity of this spiritual activity, for example of a movement, is that one is not in it with one's wakeful consciousness. *We sleep in our wills*. This is why these activities make us tired. The idea is very widespread that you stamp around vigorously with a group of children in order to get them awake. In fact, it has the opposite effect. You can observe it with the practising of the times table when it is linked to movements. Then you will see the pupils carrying out the procedure 'as in a dream'. Spoken in chorus a kind of 'trance' ensues: it is carried out as in sleep. Teachers will do well to lose no time in breaking this link between *movement in sleep* and *knowledge gained through wakefulness*.⁹

If the rhythmical part is now followed by a 'work part', in which the pupils have to take in what comes from the teacher, unrelated to the subject matter, then the intentions of the art of education have been prised out of their context and dislocated. For these presuppose that the rhythmical element enters the learning process just in the way described above. If what has been described above becomes living, it will make no

8 Steiner, R. (1986) *Soul Economy and Waldorf Education*, Anthroposophic Press, GA 303, Lecture 6. Steiner calls this inappropriate, harmful exercising of power by the teacher over the child or children the 'vampirising' of the relationship.

9 Steiner, R. (1992) *The Study of Man*, Stuttgart, GA 293, Lecture 11. Aka 'The Foundations of Human Experience'

difference how long a 'work part' lasts; it can take an hour, it can be shorter or longer; the pupils will cope with it, for the rhythmical intensity will satisfy their will to learn. It is significant that every pupil takes home the experience that he has learnt a lot. This is the most essential thing in the main lesson.

Story Telling

It can be a blessing in the life of a class community, if a story begun earlier on is continued in the final quarter of an hour of the main lesson. When is it a blessing?

When the pupils have the unconscious or semiconscious feeling they have worked so hard that there is just enough time for a story. If too little has been done before this, the pupils experience mainly unconsciously (though this unconscious element is expressed through restlessness): 'we have only just started to learn something and now it is all over'. Then the story has a disturbing effect. Here we have an example of a time rhythm. Every activity needs its own time.

What is the right time for storytelling? What is the 'kairos' or right moment for, for storytelling? Having the storytelling definitely at the end of the main lesson is no considered point of view; rather it is something set in stone. The storytelling must fit into the course of the day. If the class teacher has a lesson, maybe, at the end of the school day with his own class, this is ideal for the story-telling. It is splendid to close the school day with a story.

Does the story-telling have to happen on the day of the religion lesson? How many tales and stories can people 'stand' in a day, in a week? The handwork teacher reads something as the children are so hard-working, on the same day there is a religion lesson and the stand-in teacher has brought a story from his 'emergency reserves' with him. Have the teachers in the college meeting concerned themselves with the issue of how many stories a certain class hears in the course of a day? In order to catch that we can ask in the college meeting how, for example, the day has looked for class 5b: which lessons did they have, in which lesson was a story told? Besides the rhythm of the lessons there is, therefore, also a rhythm of the course of

the day, which must be considered. Conversations at the college meeting are helpful with regard to this.

What does a surfeit of tales and stories mean for the pupil? All intellectual activities mean that the pupil's ego connects with their body. The ego 'settles'. All pictorial aspects in the lesson mean that the ego loosens itself from the body.

That is a rhythm specific to Waldorf education, seeing to it that the processes of the ego, connecting with and loosening itself from the body, are in the right relation to one another. If the former activity is too strong, the ego becomes a prisoner of the body; then, the needs of the body dictate life. If the second activity is too strong, the body loses its bearings. Life is exhausted through unfulfilled wishes of ideals that are never realised.

The way to this rhythm is teaching out of the life rhythms portrayed here.¹⁰

Assessments and Reports

As described at the outset, the three-fold structuring of the main lesson is considered from the perspective of outsiders, by researchers, as a distinguishing feature of the Waldorf method, because it is to be found everywhere and in the literature, as portrayed, it is not examined critically anywhere at all. However, those who view Waldorf education critically from the outside and research it do have (justified) questions about this lesson structure.

We are now touching on a fundamental question.

Let us put it this way: if the Waldorf movement does not examine and take a critical look at its own educational practice, science will do it instead. And it is already doing it. It would certainly be better if this capacity for critical dialogue would be exercised in the school movement beforehand. If this is not the case, we will find accounts such as the following.

The problem of the rhythmical part of the lesson improperly featuring as a part of the report is described thus from the perspective of an outside person, "With the daily routine running into the main lesson (the rhythmical part

10 Steiner, R. (1993) Meditatively acquired Knowledge of Man, GA 302a, Lecture 4. Aka 'Balance in Teaching'

is meant) *Max seems to fulfil the requirements in this initial ritual in a way that at least saves him from being interrupted or excluded. The subject matter in this sequence (of the report) is not an area with learning content such as competence in reading, writing, arithmetic etc., but rather behavioural requirements, i. e. supporting the ritual, fitting in with the class and loyalty towards the teacher. As there is no indication in the written recommendations on Waldorf school reports that the rhythmical part is meant to be an item in the class teacher's report and, therefore, this does not represent an aspect worth assessing, in Max's case the assumption must be made that what is being highlighted is the matter of course. What would be taken for granted with the other pupils would be a demanding task for Max. It could be supposed that his expressive and effusive personality is inclined to throw up behavioural problems in such strongly formed, ritualised, collective activities."*

This is the description of the researcher who is following the pupil Max's biography. Then he quotes the next sentence from the class 2 pupil's report, *"However, he often needs – to the dismay of the teacher – this first quarter of an hour to quieten down and then be able to join in calmly with the work part."*

You are not quite sure how to read this last sentence. Does it mean that Max needs the rhythmical part in order to quieten down or that after the rhythmical part he needs a quarter of an hour to come to himself so as to then join in with the work part?¹¹

Of course, not giving the teacher a chance to speak in such a piece of research is also scientifically questionable. Nevertheless, it needs to be pointed out that it follows from this passage how both the outsider's view and the insider's view takes this structure of the main lesson as an essential characteristic of Waldorf education.

The attempt has been made to roughly portray the following: this three-fold structure does not belong to the essential characteristics of Waldorf education. On the contrary, it can be a hindrance to the development of a teacher-pupil relationship which breathes between teaching and learning.

Conclusion

This article was written as an example of the necessity after 90 years of Waldorf teaching to examine the way it has developed; not to damage it, but rather renew it and reinvigorate ourselves.

I have formed the conviction tried and tested through the years that the source, or spring, of renewal lies in the original intentions. If this spring begins to bubble up in us, we will become viable for the future. The possibility will then arise of not having to make a lot of unnecessary diversions. Something new does not need to be taken hold of because it is new, but which has to be dropped later on because it did not fulfil its promise after all. For instance, has the idea of 'moving classrooms' been evaluated? Does it achieve what people hoped from it? Has the idea developed further? Has this approach to teaching, which has now existed for years, been evaluated?

However, time marches on. If we do not undertake this renewal through the questioning of our teaching habits ourselves, others will do so or else they are already doing so. At this juncture, we can point to the publication of Professor Heiner Ullrich, 'Vom pädagogischen Bezug zum harmonischen Passungsverhältnis'¹², to Gunther Grasshoff's 'Zwischen Familie und Klassenlehrer'¹³ and perhaps to Georg von Breitenstein and Fritz Schuetz's 'Paradoxien in der Reform der Schule'¹⁴.

With all these passages we may say what we please – one thing is and remains an omission, namely, that we did not write them ourselves. Consequently, it is necessary to face up to this research. ♦

11 Idel. T-S (2007) *Waldorfschule und Schuelerbiographie*, Wiesbaden, VS Verlag fuer Sozialwissenschaften, p 85.

12 Rupert, M/ Badawia, T / Luckas, H (Eds.) (2005) *Ethos-Sinn-Wissenschaft*, Remscheid, pp. 237- 262.

13 Grasshoff, G (2008) *Zwischen Familie und Klassenlehrer*, Wiesbaden, VS Verlag fuer Sozialwissenschaften.

14 Hoelbich, D. / Grasshoff, G. (2008) in *Paradoxien in der Reform der Schule*, Breitenstein/Schuetze (Ed.) pp. 217-229. This analysis of the activity of the class teacher is very well worth reading. It is important for us to be observed in this manner. We are offered the opportunity of judging what is the archetypal intention and what the practice of teaching makes possible (or not).

Something to be passionate about

A review by John Allison,
Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

A Passionate Schooling

**Alduino Mazzone PhD in collaboration with
Susan Laing**

ISBN 978-0-646-53672-9

Available from www.passionateschooling.com

I knew I would love this book when I first saw its cover and title. It's stylish. Those words have the *sprezzatura* that signifies the true vitality of Steiner education. Alduino Mazzone – in collaboration with his partner Susan Laing – has written a testament both to his life and work, and to Steiner Waldorf education. For a small book, its range is comprehensive; and yet it is accomplished.

In his Introduction, Alduino sets out the core concepts of his enquiry. I'll present them here as a list, noting that in each case Alduino elaborates his meaning. He suggests Waldorf education is based on a number of broad concepts:

- a spiritual anthropology;*
- an epistemological foundation;*
- a clearly articulated metaphysics;*
- a spiritual psychology;*
- a social theory;*
- an educational methodology and curriculum.*

As a list it may seem daunting. In fact, many teachers will know something of the spiritual psychology and a probably a fair bit about the educational methodology and curriculum, but may prefer to leave the rest to the anthroposophists, as it's sometimes said. But these other areas are the source of the originating forces of the education; if we do not work our way into them, the education may be in peril of becoming merely a set of recipes.

I want to enthuse about the way in which Alduino enters those complex territories. The book is lucid, and in this clarity it reminds me that the more original meaning of "theory" is not something invented in the brain but "a way of

seeing". In this sense, Rudolf Steiner's theory is not complicated but it *is* complex.

To help us on our way into this complex way of seeing, in the first section of the book a succinct biography of Rudolf Steiner is presented, placing his development into an historical, social, and intellectual context. The times in which he lived were very interesting; in the humanities, sciences and arts, extraordinary events were occurring. This initial sketch helps us see him both as a man of his time and of the future.

Then, in eight brief chapters Alduino explores the "key ideas underpinning Rudolf Steiner's educational thought". These include the basis of spiritual science; freedom and thinking; the human constitution; human development; evolution of consciousness; the threefold human; the significance of the Christ; and how the schools arose from the seeds of the threefold social order.

This is deep stuff! But the gesture of the author throughout is generous. There is a passage in *A Passionate Schooling* that we all could well reflect upon. Alduino introduces Rudolf Steiner speaking of a particular experience of the presence of Christ: "He suggests that what streams in as grace in this way could be called an expression of the highest self and an early manifestation of the potential of the human archetype ..." And then he quotes Steiner directly: "This that comes from the spiritual world may be called whatever we like, that is not important, only the feeling is important."

In these times when dogmatism and a fundamentalist refusal to think independently are rife, these words are a wonderful reminder of how an open mind can embrace spiritual reality. It also may help those teachers in Steiner schools who find it hard to get to grips with the originating ideas of this education to find their way... Anthroposophy, livingly perceived, is illuminating, inspiring. But a

new teacher may often encounter an ideological tyranny in a Steiner School: “Rudolf Steiner says...” Or “this is how we do it here...” Then, concepts such as the “etheric body” can seem like “autopilot phrases” rather than living ideas clearly seen by the colleague attempting to instruct the new chum. I feel this book is approachable, and hope that those who have had such experiences may be encouraged to read it.

In *A Final Word*, Alduino reiterates his plea “encouraging continuing research into Steiner Waldorf education, with the suggestion for one to ‘unashamedly immerse oneself in the spiritual ground out of which Waldorf education emerges’ for a more profound understanding of how and why it works”. He is talking about the effect of *potentising* that comes through spiritual penetration.

Throughout *A Passionate Schooling* I felt I was engaged in a dialogue; much was familiar, and some of it was contentious for me. It made

me think, and re-evaluate my understanding. I recognised that I was learning, anew or newly, and this was refreshing.

I would recommend this book to anyone who, coming new to Rudolf Steiner’s body of work, feels daunted by the substance of it, or by the way it is presented. Alduino provides a way in. And for those of us who may feel quite comfortable with Rudolf Steiner, Alduino has some original insights, some fresh perspectives on the familiar, and a deeply enlivening approach to anthroposophy and Waldorf Education.

So this book is good for all of us. Schools would do well to purchase copies for their teachers’ libraries and for collegial study. Those parents who want to learn more about the basis of this education would find it accessible, and teachers would find it good holiday reading.

Alduino Mazzone – I salute you for this accomplishment. ♦



A Passionate Schooling

At its heart this book is a passionate plea for a deeper understanding of Waldorf education and to provide readers – be they beginning or experienced teachers, prospective parents or other people having a general interest in education – with an opportunity to examine the key ideas which underpin Steiner Waldorf education and the context in which they arose.

May be ordered online at: www.passionateschooling.com
Or contact the Australian distributor:
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STAR WEAVINGS

*A Newsletter of the Australian Association
for Rudolf Steiner Early Childhood
Education*

Published bi-annually in March and September

Editor: Vicki Kearney

Subscription enquiries to : PO Box 446, Samford,
Queensland 4520 Australia
email: avenuesforchange@gmail.com

Audrey McAllen Obituary

December 30TH, 1920 – November 17TH, 2010

Audrey was born on December 30th, 1920 and passed over the threshold on November 17th, 2010 at Cotswold House Care Home, England.

Her father was a sea captain on the Union Castle line to and from South Africa, so Audrey and her parents lived in Southampton.

Audrey completed the Steiner teacher training course at Elmfield and after the war had a class at Michael Hall School in Sussex.

She then moved to Gloucestershire to care for her mother.

During this time she was asked to help a few pupils at Wynstones Steiner School who were “not doing very well”.

It was through working with these children and their problems that she came to writing : ‘Teaching Children Handwriting’ , ‘The Extra Lesson’ as well as ‘Sleep’ , ‘The Listening Ear’ and her final book ‘Reading Children’s Drawings’.

She travelled widely and gave lectures and courses on ‘The Extra Lesson’.

Many Extra Lesson training courses take place all over the world and the name ‘Extra Lesson’ is



Monica Ellis,
England, on behalf of the board and
Members of the IELA (International Extra
Lesson Association).



well recognised. Four years ago the Pedagogical Section of the Goetheanum in Dornach embraced the ‘Extra Lesson’ movement which was Audrey’s biggest wish!

As Audrey wrote: “I recognised from my knowledge and work with Anthroposophy that the basis of the difficulty these children are experiencing are due to developmental ‘hook ups’ in the first seven years. These first seven years are for the development of the physical body and this physical body provides the basis for the development of the Consciousness Soul, that soul member in which the I or Ego of the human being recognises itself as a created Spiritual Being”.

In her retirement Audrey kept in touch with how her work was developing. During the last few years she became very frail and was finally able to cross the Threshold at the age of nearly 90 years. She was an inspiration to us all! ♦

Sphere

Quarterly Journal for Anthroposophy in New Zealand

Sphere is the magazine of the Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand.

Sphere contains details of upcoming local and international events, information about new initiatives, pictures of the work in the many existing Anthroposophical endeavours in New Zealand, plus research articles and reports and more.

Sphere is produced quarterly in March, June, September and December and contributions are warmly invited.

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Van James, an experienced, international art educator based at the Honolulu Waldorf School in Hawaii. His published works include *Spirit and Art: Pictures of the Transformation of Consciousness*.

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June 2011
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Judith Clingan AM has been a professional composer, performer, conductor and music / music theatre educator for 45 years. She trained in voice, bassoon and composition at the Canberra School of Music, in Early European Music at the University of Sydney, and in conducting and music education at the Kodaly Institute in Hungary.

She has been working in Steiner schools in Australia and New Zealand for 20 years, has written and published a wide range of compositions including *Songs of the Tree of Life* volumes 1 and 2, with accompanying CD's, and *Musicianship Magic*, and currently directs *Wayfarers Australia*, an Australia-wide performing group with the core of its members being current or ex-Steiner school students, teachers and parents.



When: Monday 11th July to Friday 15th July 2011

Where: Taruna, Havelock North

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Cost: \$450

For further information or to enrol, please contact Korina at Taruna on 06 8777 174, email: info@taruna.ac.nz or check out our website: www.taruna.ac.nz

CONFERENCES/ SEMINARS 2011 - 2012

2011

April 21st-25th

Anthroposophical Society in Australia National Conference

"Australia – a living being – discovering the unique life processes of this land" Lane Cove, Sydney

Contact: <rvhillman@optusnet.com.au> (Vivien Hillman) & <nblackwood@ozemail.com.au>

April 28th-30th

Asia Pacific Anthroposophical Conference Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, India

Contact: <hmulder@xtra.co.nz>

April 30th- May 8th

Asian Waldorf teachers' conference

"Social responsibility of the Waldorf schools and kindergartens within society"

Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, India Contact: <hmulder@xtra.co.nz>

May 15 -21st and May 22-28th

The 13th Waldorf/Rudolf Steiner Education Seminar

(week 1: for beginners , week 2: for advanced group)

D.C. School, Khandala, Maharashtra, India Contact : <abanbana123@rediffmail.com>

June 6th – 17th

Art as a basis for education with Van James (Hawaii)

Week 1 – exploring the curriculum through art in the first five grades

Week 2 – classes 6-8 through workshops and guided individual initiative.

Taruna, Havelock North, New Zealand Contact: <korina@taruna.ac.nz>

July 11th - 15th

'Sing me the curriculum' – a journey through the grades in song and music

With Judy Clingan (Canberra) Taruna, Havelock North, New Zealand

Contact: <korina@taruna.ac.nz>

July 22nd- 25th

NZ Anthroposophical Society Annual Conference Michael Park School, Auckland

Contact: <suesimpson0@gmail.com>

October 12-16th

New Zealand Rudolf Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Conference

Tauranga Rudolf Steiner School, Bay of Plenty, New Zealand

Contact: Margaret McCarthy <kindergartensupervisor@rudolfsteinertga.ac.nz>

Cc: <kindergarten@rudolfsteinertga.ac.nz>

2012

February 18th -20th

Hawaii-Pacific Region Conference

The Art of Imagination, with Dennis Klocek Honolulu Waldorf School

Contact: <www.honouluwaldorf.org>

April 1 – 5, 2012

World Waldorf/ Steiner Kindergarten Conference

Goetheanum, Dornach, Switzerland

Contact: <paed.sektion@goetheanum.ch>

April 9 – 14th

World Waldorf/Steiner Teachers' Conference

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