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Dear Readers,

Waldorf education will soon enter its ninety-fifth year. There will be much taking stock and assessing the whence and whither of the movement over the coming months and years.

In some respects, Waldorf pedagogy arose like a force of nature seemingly out of nowhere in 1919, and few educational experts would have given it much chance of surviving for a hundred years, let alone spreading into every continent and dozens of countries. But it is this very act of spreading into cultures far removed from Germany of 1919 that is challenging Waldorf pedagogues to distinguish essential principles from non-essential, if entrenched, practices.

This is a very beneficial exercise. An educational movement that wants to draw its strength from the spiritual activities of individual teachers (as well as from circles of teachers) must allow those activities to bring new manifestations out of the spiritual wellsprings of its fundamental insights. If practices rather than principles become enshrined as "the way to do Waldorf," then creativity ceases in any deep sense, and what passes for creativity is mostly tinkering around the edges. By contrast, when fundamental principles are studied and meditative life is cultivated, what the education will look like in practice becomes surprising and unpredictable, in the best sense of those words.

In recent years several leaders within the Waldorf school movement have been advocating for a re-evaluation of practices and for the courage to make the schools more "local and organic." There is something both reassuring and distressing about visiting a Waldorf school in some location one has never visited before, and finding it so like every other Waldorf school. If you can take a school in Northern New England and essentially transplant it to Southern California (or to somewhere in the UK) without having to change much, can you claim that the creative spirit is truly present in it? Have the teachers and staff made it local enough, rooted enough in place and environs?

The next phase of Waldorf education may well need to take its direction and formulate its practices based more on the specific students and the school's locale, its "terroir." This will entail a willingness to experiment, and occasionally make mistakes, with the process of "incarnating" the principles of Waldorf education into a specific time and place. Such experimentation is already happening all over the world, as Waldorf schools open their doors in cultures where the traditional European model cannot be copied as readily as it has been in North America. Schools in other parts of the world can take heart from what Chinese, Israeli (both Jewish and Arab), Native American Indian, and other Waldorf pioneers are doing in their respective cultures, not because it is superior to what exists in "old Waldorf" settings but because it points to new possibilities.

In this issue, we bring you several articles that can help move Waldorf education toward new possibilities, while cultivating a relationship with the wellspring of the pedagogy.

Frederick Amrine's series on "The Philosophical Roots of Waldorf Education" reaches a climactic and moving conclusion with a discussion of Rudolf Steiner's philosophy-transcending philosophy, if you can excuse the appropriate oxymoron. Circling back to the original ladder of Wittgenstein, Amrine brings us full circle to an appreciation of just how profoundly the philosophical underpinnings of Waldorf education lead directly into the pedagogy.

Jost Schieren, our European colleague and Board member of the RIWE, writes about the spiritual dimensions of Waldorf education. He addresses head-on the attacks on the anthroposophical foundations of Waldorf pedagogy as an outdated spiritual philosophy, showing that anthroposophy is uniquely successful in bridging the gap between the universality of thinking and the potential freedom of the human being. Schieren pleads with us to cultivate anthroposophy rightly in our schools, rather than to abandon it or approach it as dogmatic truth.

Roberto Trostli's second article on the teaching of science picks up another important philosophical question: the oft-discussed conclusion–judgment–concept sequence from Steiner's *Study of Man*. In an exceptionally clear elucidation of this riddle, Trostli brings us to a full realization of just how profoundly the methodological principles given to the original Waldorf teachers support the healthy development of our students' cognitive and moral potential.

Craig Holdrege takes up the challenge of approaching Waldorf education with the notion that "preparation" for a later stage of education is the wrong approach, and that the curriculum is a task, an ongoing process, rather than a thing. Debunking a few "Waldorf myths"—or at least showing them to be rooted in choices made by individual teachers that somehow became enshrined as eternal principles—Holdrege challenges teachers to begin teaching students to meet life; what he calls encounter-based education is a way of cultivating resilience and confidence in young people, qualities which are, he argues, the only meaningful ways of preparing them for a future no one of us can see. What's more, this way of educating can better tease out of these young people what the world is not fully ready for, the unexpected.

My own contribution to this issue is a contemplation of the Second Teachers' Meditation as a new impulse in the history of Waldorf education, forming what I consider to be a "course-correction" brought by Rudolf Steiner after the first four years of the original Waldorf school. Taken together with the three lectures by Steiner that immediately preceded it, this meditation points towards a crucially important task in education and at the same time to a potential of profound transformation in the meditating teachers themselves.

Melissa Borden, a kindergarten teacher from Seattle, sent us a charming and informative article on animals and the young child. Bringing together deep insights into the development of children, the nature of the relationship between human beings and animals, and a wealth of practical experience born of many years of teaching, Borden describes the gestures that different animals bring to her daily work in the kindergarten, pointing the way towards much research that has yet to be done on this topic.

At the other end of the developmental spectrum, Douglas Gerwin, Executive Director of the RIWE, presents the introduction to his new book of guiding thoughts for teaching human sexuality in Waldorf schools. This book has been a project of the Research Institute for several years now, and is at last nearing publication. Gerwin describes the essential tasks and principles that should undergird this delicate subject and points toward what should, and should not, drive the curriculum decisions.

Stephen Sagarin, my predecessor at the editorial desk of our *Research Bulletin*, contributes a book review of Craig Holdrege's newly released book, *Thinking Like a Plant*. A modified chapter from this book appeared in the previous issue of the *Bulletin*, and we thought it appropriate to solicit a review of the book itself. Sagarin singles out the process-nature of the book, and describes how Holdrege attempts to lead the reader into an experience, rather than submit a sum of knowledge for the reader to enjoy and/or assess.

A brief update from the Online Waldorf Library concludes this issue.

Happy reading to all. Please remember that your reflections and suggestions are always welcome. My contact email is to be found toward the back of this issue.

From the Executive Director

Douglas Gerwin

With the incorporation of Waldorf Publications as its new publishing arm, the Research Institute for Waldorf Education has significantly enhanced the scope of its activities this year. Under the able leadership of Patrice Maynard as its newly appointed Director of Publications and Development, the Research Institute has broadened its platform of publications to include several hundred titles inherited from AWSNA Publications.

In addition to acquiring this inventory, the Research Institute has launched eight new titles into production, with the aid of a newly formed Publications Committee. A new catalog of Waldorf titles (the first in seven years) was completed in January for distribution to AWSNA member schools. It includes a comprehensive listing of Waldorf Publications available in hard-copy for teachers, parents, and children.

Meanwhile, the Research Institute has increased its production of eBooks to 175, including a growing repertoire of titles freshly translated into Spanish with the help of a translating service in Spain. Other Spanish manuscripts are being translated here in North America. We are exploring ways to promote both the eBooks and the books themselves with tools we have built during this new phase of operations.

The first new title published in hard copy this year was *The Invisible Boat* by Eric Müller, a tribute to the elemental world as well as to the world of childhood. Other titles currently in production include:

Trailing Clouds of Glory edited by Douglas Gerwin

Creating a Circle of Collaborative Spiritual Leadership edited by Roberto Trostli (a publication of the Pedagogical Section Council)

The Sun with Loving Light edited by Stephen Bloomquist

The Seven Liberal Arts by Frans Lutters

Chemistry: A Teacher's Resource Book by Robert Sonner

Physics: A Teacher's Resource Book by Robert Sonner

Recorder Ensemble: First Collection edited by Stephen Bernstein

A new title currently being translated and scheduled to be published in the next fiscal year is *Rubikon,* a book requested by the Waldorf Early Childhood Association (WECAN) to be translated and published in preparation for a conference planned for 2015 in Dornach. Addressing the significant life changes at ages nine and twelve, this book contains Rudolf Steiner's indications about these nodal moments. The hope is that this publication will be made available immediately as an eBook on the website of the Research Institute's Online Waldorf Library (OWL). A separate report on the most recent activities of the OWL appears in this issue of the *Research Bulletin.*

In the meantime, the Research Institute's own website has been enlarged with a new generation of articles and links to material related to the Institute's mission. It is our hope that these additions will help stimulate conversation and debate among those researching Waldorf education.

On other fronts, the Research Institute continued to sponsor the "Teaching Sensible Science" program with two more cycles of this popular course, one in Baltimore, MD, and the other in Seattle, WA. Already the next cycle is being planned for Toronto, Ontario,

the first time this course will be offered in Canada. Those interested in registering for this course—which meets for three weeks over the course of a year—can contact the Research Institute for details.

Finally, to those who responded to our annual giving campaign, we extend heartfelt thanks for your generosity. We are also grateful to several generous donors and philanthropic foundations that have stepped forward to support the work of the Research Institute. Those wishing to contribute to this year's appeal are invited to forward donations to Patrice Maynard's office in Chatham, NY, or give online by using the secure button of our refurbished website:

www.waldorfresearchinstitute.org.

The Philosophical Roots of Waldorf Education

Rudolf Steiner as a Philosopher[1]

Frederick Amrine

It's surprisingly difficult to write about Rudolf Steiner as a philosopher, and I'm surprised to find myself beginning this installment on that note. My view of this aspect of his work has changed in ways that are difficult to describe. And it's doubly difficult to write about Steiner as a philosopher in the context of a journal devoted to Waldorf education.

One obvious reason why it's difficult is that, if we take the term "philosophy" in the broadest sense as meaning Steiner's worldview, then the task is overwhelmingly large. So there are obvious practical reasons for restricting this essay to works we might call "philosophy proper," even though it's much more Steiner's worldview in the broader sense that informs Waldorf education. That last point is what makes the task difficult here, but neither the scope of Steiner's work nor the mismatch between topic and context is surprising.

Shifting attention to Steiner's later philosophical writings brings into sharp focus the realization that Steiner's philosophy is ultimately about transcending philosophy.

On the other hand, writing for an anthroposophical journal has an advantage on which I'm eager to seize, so as to make space for discussion of the surprises. I'm going to assume that the readership is familiar with the basic arguments of Steiner's "basic book," *The Philosophy of Freedom*.[2] Readers who do not know the book, or would like a quick refresher, are encouraged to consult Owen Barfield's miraculous synopsis "Rudolf Steiner's Concept of Mind," which was originally published as the lead article in A.C. Harwood's collection *The Faithful Thinker* and then reprinted as the final essay in *Romanticism Comes of Age*.[3] As it is fundamentally an exposition of Goethe's thinking rather than Steiner's own, and because we already did the hard work of rehearsing Goethe's revolutionary insights in an earlier installment of this series, I will refer to Steiner's little gem of a book on Goethe's epistemology only in passing.[4] As with *The Philosophy of Freedom*, the density of the argument precludes any quick summary. Ditto Steiner's doctoral dissertation on Fichte, *Truth and Science*.[5]

Instead, I want to focus on some later texts that are seldom discussed, even though they are inarguably central: the two lectures that Steiner gave at the International Philosophical Congress in Bologna in April, 1911[6]; the last chapter of Steiner's *Riddles of Philosophy* (1914)[7]; and lectures IV and VIII of the lecture cycle *The Boundaries of Natural Science* (1920).[8] By foregoing recapitulation of *The Philosophy of Freedom* and *Goethe's Theory of Knowledge*, we will also be able to take up the vexed questions of Steiner's relationships to Nietzsche and Kant. Let's begin there.

Steiner and Nietzsche

Shifting attention to Steiner's later philosophical writings brings into sharp focus something surprising that was not entirely clear in his early studies: *the realization that Steiner's philosophy is ultimately about transcending philosophy.*[9] It's what Nietzsche meant, I think, when he wrote about overcoming "Socratism"—philosophy as rational construction and discursive argument—and Steiner went through a phase of powerful attraction to Nietzsche for just that reason.[10]

Like Nietzsche, Steiner was a "philosopher of freedom" who sought to free himself from the limitations of his contemporaries' philosophical thinking. Nietzsche failed but Steiner succeeded.

The key to understanding why Steiner succeeded where Nietzsche failed is to recall Wittgenstein's paradoxical metaphor of climbing the ladder and then kicking it away, with which we began this entire series of essays. In an important letter to Rosa Mayreder of November 1894, Steiner describes what he felt he had accomplished in *The Philosophy of Freedom* with an archetypally Nietzschean metaphor followed by an archetypally Nietzschean assertion: it was like climbing a mountain, an "ascent" that attempts "to negotiate cliffs and precipices. …Perhaps the time for handing on theory in a manner like this is already over. Philosophy, except where it is real, individual experience, holds scarcely any further interest for me. …" (Palmer 6). There is no doubt that for both Steiner and Nietzsche, the ultimate goal was to transcend "philosophy proper" *as such*. Nietzsche's longing for transcendence, even initiation, shines through everywhere in his early philosophy, but perhaps nowhere more so than in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872):

> At present, however, science, spurred on by its powerful delusion, is hurrying unstoppably to its limits, where the optimism hidden in the essence of logic will founder and break up. For there is an infinite number of points on the periphery of the circle of science, and while we have no way of foreseeing how the circle could ever be completed, a noble and gifted man inevitably encounters, before the mid-point of his existence, boundary points on the periphery like this, where he stares into what cannot be illuminated. When, to his horror, he sees how logic curls up around itself at these limits and finally bites itself in the tail[11]—then a new form of knowledge breaks through, *tragic knowledge*, which, simply to be endured, needs art for protection and as medicine. (§15)

It is easy to understand why Steiner was initially drawn to this side of Nietzsche. *But the ladder must be climbed, and Nietzsche failed because he kicked away the ladder without first climbing it.* In the idiom of *The Birth of Tragedy*, we might say that he embraced the Dionysian principle without first having developed fully the Apollonian. The ladder is rigor; the ladder is method; the ladder teaches a thinking that is self-sustaining. It gives us a ground upon which we can stand outside the sense-world. Lacking that support, Nietzsche tumbled down into the crudest forms of materialistic scientism.

"Climbing the ladder" is the epistemological process Steiner describes in the first half of *The Philosophy of Freedom*.

In the aforementioned letter to Mayreder, Steiner confesses his great admiration for Nietzsche, but he also recognizes Nietzsche's limits: "I know the exact place where my book belongs in the current of present-day spiritual developments and can point out the exact spot where it carries Nietzsche's line of thinking further. I can make the calm statement that it expresses ideas that are missing in the work of Nietzsche." (Palmer 5)

"Climbing the ladder" is the epistemological process Steiner describes in the first half of *The Philosophy of Freedom*, which has been summarized with brilliant concision in Barfield's essay and rehearsed even more succinctly in a paragraph by Andrew Welburn:

> The "idealist" moment in the process of knowing, in which it seems that mind confronts the world and imposes upon it meaning, order, and intelligibility, is thus reinterpreted fundamentally. It emerges

> as part of a dynamic of knowledge, rooted in unconscious activity of the soul. What we really witness at that moment is not the "mind" confronting the world, but rather disentangling itself from it. We are defining for ourselves a position over against the world so as to experience our own being. Knowledge is the bringing to consciousness of some portion of our activity as part of the universe we inhabit; but in order to bring it under conscious control, we have to suppress or "benumb," actually bring death into, that active involvement with the world on which, nevertheless, all knowledge is based. (124)

Nietzsche felt the pain of this separation, of this death process, so he retreated down the ladder and reasserted a Dionysian vitalism, rejecting the ladder as "Socratism." Tragically, Nietzsche confused the sub-rational and the supra-rational; with grand rhetorical gestures, he leapt off the ladder—at the bottom rather than the top.

"Climbing the ladder" means starting with our modern consciousness that is inevitably split, and then engaging in the hard conceptual labor that Barfield terms "beta thinking."[12] Gradually we realize that the subject/object distinction itself, the innate "prejudice" (as Coleridge called it) that we are the authors of a private thinking that regards a world wholly independent of and unaffected by our subjective reflections on it, is not real, but rather an artifact of a particular moment within a larger evolution of consciousness. The kind of beta-thinking that Steiner undertook in the first half of *The Philosophy of Freedom* (and before him Spinoza, Kant, Goethe, and Fichte among others, all in their own ways) leads us inexorably to the realization that "onlooker consciousness" (as Steiner has so memorably labeled the prejudice) is not fundamental, but rather the inevitable result of our efforts to attain self-consciousness. "Knowledge sets us over against things, as interpreters; it is for epistemology to remind us of the hidden unity which connects us with the world, suppressed by our own act of becoming conscious." (Welburn 128)

But where does the ladder lead? To a different consciousness altogether, a completely new kind of thinking.

But where does the ladder lead? To a different consciousness altogether, a completely new kind of thinking. Nietzsche rightly saw "onlooker consciousness" as illusory and perspectival, and he intuited that the cure was to engage our wills creatively. But not having climbed the ladder, Nietzsche failed to experience the self-sustaining, independent, creative power of Imagination. He took at face value the reductive positivism of mid-century, popular scientific literature and concluded that the world was inherently meaningless. All that was left was for him to celebrate the will of the few who are brave and strong enough to stare that meaninglessness in the face without flinching.

Steiner and Kant

The other surprising aspect of Steiner's philosophy is the difficulty one has sorting out his relationship to Kant. An enormous amount has been written about this topic, and Steiner seems to refer to Kant on every other page of his philosophical texts, so one feels as though this should be an entirely straightforward issue. But it isn't at all. No matter how hard one tries, and no matter how strongly one might feel about Kant, Steiner's various statements on and employments of Kant just don't add up. I can't resolve this issue to my own satisfaction yet, let alone yours, but let me first try to persuade you of the difficulty and then sketch out my own attempts to resolve the apparent contradictions.

My way of persuading you of the difficulty might feel roundabout, and it might sound

critical, but I believe it's actually neither. To my mind, nobody has written better in English on Steiner as a philosopher than Owen Barfield and his worthy successor, Andrew Welburn. And yet *even these brilliant thinkers* cannot sort out Steiner's relationship to Kant, which proves to me beyond any reasonable doubt that there is something inherently unclear and unresolved there. The first edition of Barfield's early masterpiece *Poetic Diction: A Study in Meaning* (1927, reprinted multiple times since)[13] already contains an appendix (II) that begins with a strong critique of Kant. Although Barfield concedes up front it was Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689) that actually inaugurated the set of dire intellectual premises Steiner would eventually term "onlooker consciousness," he claims that Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) "was one of the most effective intellectual factors in finally clenching these premises upon the minds of almost the whole Western world." Barfield then notes a debt to Steiner "in detecting an unacknowledged influence far wider still." And now follows the only passage I have encountered in all of Barfield's works in which he simply loses his grip:

> How many children, I wonder, are nowadays informed at an early age by some elder brother or some guide, philosopher, and friend, that what they see and hear and smell is not "nature" but the activity of their own nerves? And though this is not Kant's doctrine, it *is* a crude physiological reflection of it. Thus, it does not require a very active fancy to see the Königsberg ghost hovering above, and intertwining itself with the ideas of minds that never even knew Kant's name…

"Though this is not Kant's doctrine" means what it says, and Barfield is right: these ideas that are ascribed carelessly to Kant, invoking the authority of Steiner, are not Kant's ideas at all. How can Kant be the ghost if we are haunted by thoughts that we never read in Kant because they simply aren't there?

So even Barfield is quick to echo what he hears as criticism of Kant in Steiner from early on. Yet when it comes time to write his masterpiece *Saving the Appearances*, Barfield constructs its whole epistemological foundation on an unacknowledged allusion to the opening chapter of Kant's *First Critique*, which is called the "Transcendental Aesthetic."[14] He borrows not just the main idea, representation, but also the specific illustration of it. (Kant B 63) Consider a rainbow, Barfield writes, and then consider a tree. The tree initially seems different, in the same way that the rainbow and the raindrops underlying it initially seemed different. But Barfield then asks us to do *exactly the same thing that Kant had done with the rainbow and the raindrops.* (16–17) What Kant and Barfield both are doing here is precisely what the essay in *The Faithful Thinker* describes Steiner as having accomplished in *The Philosophy of Freedom;* there Barfield again asserts that "[i]t is these conceptually determined percepts (he [Steiner] calls them *Vorstellungen*—representations) which make up the public world of our actual, everyday experience."[15] Steiner revealed that the "specious Given"[16] is already suffused by the activity of thinking, and distinguished it from the "net Given," which can never be experienced. What Barfield calls "the unrepresented" or "the particles" is fully equivalent to what Kant calls here the "thing in itself," and the distinction between "the specious Given" and "the net Given" that Barfield rightly ascribes to Steiner is exactly what Kant means in saying that the relation of the representation to the object "at once becomes transcendental" upon epistemological reflection. (B 63) Both the opening of *Saving*

> Where Steiner sides with Kant, as he surely does, he sides with the spirit of Kant against the letter of Kant.

the Appearances and Barfield's recapitulation of Steiner on perception in his essay are recognizably Kant's melody; Barfield has merely transposed them into another key.

Similar contradictions arise in Andrew Welburn's discussion of the relationship between Steiner and Kant. He is understandably reluctant to generalize about Steiner as a philosopher, yet he does not hold back—initially—from characterizing the whole project as anti-Kantian:

> The mesmeric effect of Kantian ideas on his [Steiner's] own time led him into a rather Wittgensteinian exercise of entering the metaphysical maze, gently disentangling from their delusion those of his contemporaries who had become so strangely convinced that reality was always there but out-of-reach, unknowable but morally incumbent upon us in inexorable duty, the more intense because inscrutable. (54)[17]

Steiner was part of the "inner revolution" within the larger Kantian revolution, and recognized that the new "architectural principle" of the Third Critique was the right foundation for further work.

But then two sentences later he concedes that "there is nothing like a detailed refutation, nor was that Steiner's aim" (55); indeed (same sentence), "the obsession with Kant obscures the real focus of Steiner's struggle—against materialism"—which was also the focus of Kant's struggle. Earlier Welburn conceded that Steiner "put his case in the (largely neo-Kantian) language of his time," (19) and later he will assert that Steiner did a better job of effecting the "Copernican revolution"—that Kant himself had of course tried to effect (241), and that his procedure is a "highly Kantian" way of disrupting Kant. (242) Steiner's Kantian anti-Kantianism is clearly a source of vexation, for Welburn sighs loudly and complains (in the sentence between pages 54 and 55 skipped above), "One sometimes feels in reading Steiner (or certain of his followers) that one almost ought first to become a Kantian in order to be liberated from his bonds." (54) By the middle of the next page, he has decided to relegate Kant to an appendix.

There we learn that history was unimpressed by Kant, and revenged itself on him by sending "many thinkers who followed Kant … as [an] intoxicating philosophical liberator." (240) And Steiner likewise followed not the letter but "the spirit" of Kant, because "Kant had indeed done the 'groundwork' for the liberation of the thinking individual, giving the philosophical issues related to it their distinctive modern form. That is why the *Philosophy of Freedom* retains so much that is Kantian." (240–241) To readers of the first three installments of this series, Welburn's hints point to an account that will sound very familiar, so I need not rehearse those earlier arguments again here.

My own ways of reconciling these contradictions adduce several points that one can also find scattered throughout Welburn's book, but I draw a different conclusion from them. The first is that Steiner does not refute the letter of Kant, because the letter is irrelevant. (I believe this is the real reason why Kant ends up as an appendix in Welburn's book.) Like all the other post-Kantians we have discussed in earlier installments, Steiner was part of the "inner revolution" within the larger Kantian revolution, and, like Kant himself at the end of his life, he recognized that the new "architectural principle" of the *Third Critique* was the right foundation for further work. Where Steiner sides with Kant, *as he surely does*, he sides with the spirit of Kant against the letter of Kant. This goes a long way towards resolving the contradictions.

The second is that Steiner does not always distinguish clearly between Kant himself and Kant as interpreted by his own contemporaries writing after the middle of the nineteenth century. Late nineteenth-century neo-Kantians asserted the letter of Kant against the spirit of Kant, which led them to misread him profoundly. They first insisted that what transcends logical thought and the bounds of sense is unknowable, and then they gradually decided that it's unknowable because it doesn't exist. They used Kant to justify a passive and reductive sensualism—precisely the Humean model that Kant had set out to defeat, and believed he had defeated once and for all. Neo-Kantianism is a hideous caricature of Kant, and where Steiner seems to criticize Kant, he is almost always attacking "Kant," the Neo-Kantian caricature of Kant's deepest insights. *Steiner is deeply sympathetic to Kant, but implacably opposed to Neo-Kantianism.*[18] This is a subtle distinction, but one that is all-important if we wish to understand the deep roots of anthroposophy, and hence of Waldorf education, within German Idealism. Owen Barfield has argued persuasively that anthroposophy is "Romanticism come of age," and it is equally true—indeed effectively the same thing—to say that anthroposophy is "German Idealism come of age."

Steiner is deeply sympathetic to Kant, but implacably opposed to Neo-Kantianism.

But the most important reason takes us back to the initial surprise: Kant is integral to "philosophy proper," and hence even he must ultimately be overcome. Yet one cannot avoid the ladder, which is to say: we must begin where we are and climb out. And the dualism of the "letter" of Kant is *precisely the overriding problem that must be solved*. Not only did Kant pose the problem more fully and acutely than any other modern philosopher: he then overcame the problem in the course of his own philosophical development. Kant climbed the ladder, saw the centrality of the creative imagination, and kicked away the ladder. Why complain about Kant's ladder, when we clearly need a ladder, and Kant's is clearly the best? The young Turks whose hair was on fire didn't complain: they scaled the ladder as fast as their legs could carry them. *It was the only reaction that made sense.*

Steiner climbed fastest. Or maybe it was just that he started near the top. His mission, which he accomplished spectacularly well, was to take the next steps on a ladder that he couldn't borrow from anyone else. He had to climb up from Kantian-Goethean-Fichtean-Schillerean creative imagination to—Imagination. The sentence in his letter to Rosa Mayreder that precedes his musing about the end of "handing on theory" asserts that "only when one reaches the goal does one realize that one has actually made it." (Palmer 6) Perhaps as he composed his earlier writings, Steiner was not yet fully convinced that "philosophy proper" could be overcome entirely, which would help to explain his ambivalences about Kant. Although there are strong hints of it in the second half of *The Philosophy of Freedom*, it is only in later lectures and writings that Steiner displays full confidence and describes that second ascent in philosophical terms. Let us turn to them.

Steiner's mission was to climb up from Kantian-Goethean-Fichtean-Schillerean creative imagination to – Imagination.

Two Lectures in Bologna

The crude Positivists among Steiner's contemporaries mistook the "specious Given" for an ultimate, while the Neo-Kantians mistakenly concluded that the "net Given's" absence from immediate experience was

proof it lay outside any *possible* experience. The latter does not follow because it ignores the possibility that a meditatively intensified thinking might *render* it phenomenal. That had been precisely Fichte's experience, for which he felt he needed to coin an entirely new term, *Tathandlung*—literally a "made fact." And hence the title of Steiner's first lecture in Bologna, which refers to "Certain Psychologically Possible Facts."[19]

Climbing the first ladder is about strengthening thinking. "Thinking is—and strengthened thinking will be aware of itself as being—that factor in man 'through which he inserts himself spiritually into reality'."[20] Boldly, Steiner begins his first lecture at the Philosophical Congress in Bologna with a meta-philosophical description of the second ladder: ascent by way of meditative exercises.[21] Having climbed up and out of "onlooker consciousness," we intuit that all objects of knowledge are correlative to a consciousness, that perception is always already suffused with thinking. It follows that strengthened thinking will lead to *expanded perception*. Meditative work lifts us up to a direct experience of *objectively real potentials*.

Strengthened thinking will lead to expanded perception. Meditative work lifts us up to a direct experience of objectively real potentials.

But this must be a strengthened thinking, one that we have taken in hand and suffused with our wills. Meditative work is imaginative in that we are the artists of our own cognitional life, which allows us to intervene actively in the world as moral agents, employing the ethical counterpart to Coleridge's "primary imagination." Hence Steiner calls this expanded intuitive faculty "moral imagination." The holistic integration of thinking as an activity into every aspect of our experience of the world is so hard to see because it becomes apparent only when we cease doing it to step back to contemplate the results. It becomes apparent only in the labor of beta-thinking. But once it becomes conscious upon the ladder of inner work, the holism that had made this newly discoverable participation initially invisible becomes (as Barfield puts it with typical brilliance) "the very stamp upon its passport to utility."[22]

What is new in the Bologna lectures vis-á-vis Steiner's earlier philosophical writings is the idea that this meta-philosophy is limitless. It is a dynamic and evolutionary process: "Based on indubitable phenomena of the inner life, spiritual science considers it reasonable to assert that knowledge is not 'finished' and complete as such, but rather fluid and able to evolve." (113) As we climb ever higher on the ladder, eventually we realize that the seeming *limits* are only a horizon, and "that over the horizon of normal consciousness, there is another level of consciousness into which human beings can penetrate." (113) Over and over again, Steiner returns in the first Bologna lecture to the idea of *life* and *living thinking*—the pure vitality that Nietzsche had mistakenly sought at the foot of the first ladder. "In this process, concepts do not act as cognitional elements but as real forces" (115); "such images should not be considered for their value as facts in an ordinary sense; they should be seen in terms of their effectiveness as real forces in the soul. …A spiritual scientist does not attribute value to the *meaning* of the images used for psychological exercises, but to the soul's experience of their effects." (117)

Rather than eat the spiritual seeds by converting them into unreal signifiers, we *plant* them, and they germinate as nascent organs of cognition: "The more alive the symbol appears as an image and the more saturated with meaning, the better it is. Under these conditions, the symbol affects the mind so that, after a certain time … the inner life processes themselves are felt to be stronger, more flexible,

and mutually illuminating." (117) Through meditative practice, we become the sculptors of our own higher nature; our cognitional life itself becomes the object of a Schillerean "aesthetic education" that calls forth "living form." It is, after all, only a living organism that can grow and evolve.

Here we learn the most esoteric reason why Nietzsche necessarily failed and why climbing the ladder is unavoidable. "True spiritual research involves the whole mental apparatus of logic and self-aware contemplation when it seeks to transpose consciousness from the sensory to the supersensible sphere. It cannot be accused, therefore, of disregarding the rational element of knowledge… . [I]n passing out of the sensory world, it always carries and retains the rational element—like a skeleton of the supersensible experience—as an integrating aspect of all supersensible perception." (136) In our newly evolved cognitive bodies, there is no longer a physical organism or a realm of sensory phenomena to provide means of external support. We will need an endo-skeleton, and that function will be performed by the exo-skeleton of the ladder that we climbed, turned outside in.

The Bologna lectures end with "a few rather aphoristic observations" that underscore the differences between "spiritual science" and *all* "the various contemporary trends in epistemology," (136) which Steiner then proceeds to describe with unqualified praise as "immeasurably great" and "subtle." (137) This turn in his argument would surprise us greatly if we understood Steiner as a philosopher among philosophers, staking out his own philosophical position in opposition to incorrect views. But now he clearly feels no need to contend with these epistemologies, all of which are brilliant in their own way, *because he has climbed up and out of that whole arena.* Having climbed the ladder, Steiner has "overcome" philosophy as such, and he invites us all to do the same.

"A Brief Outline of an Approach to Anthroposophy"

Steiner begins the last chapter of *The Riddles of Philosophy* by situating the great questions of "philosophy proper" we have been pursuing within the meta-philosophical context of the evolution of consciousness. Evolution rooted out the "original participation" described by Steiner's contemporaries Durkheim and Lévy-Bruhl so that the mind could attain self-consciousness; paradoxically, only if human thinking becomes maya can it become free. Now spiritual anthropology trumps philosophy. But that same anthropological fact has an immediate and profound philosophical consequence: it follows that "the riddles of the soul" cannot be solved out of ordinary consciousness *in principle.* If "normal consciousness" in modern times is insubstantial, then the sources of normal consciousness must necessarily lie outside of normal consciousness.

Here Steiner recalls his second lecture in Bologna, specifically his concluding analogy of modern human thought to an image reflected in a mirror. The point of logical thought-structures—insubstantial, tautologous, valid, but untrue—is precisely that of a mirror image: to enable self-consciousness. Real *thinking* is like light, invisible to normal consciousness until it is reflected from a body. But real thinking remains invisible to normal conscious for an even more profound reason: it is because we are actually not separate from it. Our higher self lives entirely within this living thinking, outside of normal consciousness.[23] It remains unconscious for the same reason we cannot see our own face: it is because we are our own face; we can't stand apart from it and confront it as an object. We become conscious of our own activity—self-conscious—only by viewing it in a mirror. Except we have become so accustomed to the mirror-image that we mistake it for real.

And now we realize the point Steiner was trying to make in writing two volumes on *The Riddles of Philosophy.* The point was

not to recapitulate a history, or ultimately even to establish the idea of the "evolution of consciousness" (although the volumes are a treasure trove in that regard as well). We realize that the whole project is one long *reductio ad absurdum*. Despite their "immeasurably great" and "subtle" epistemologies (Bologna), one brilliant philosopher after another fails utterly, as fail they must. It's not that they have chosen the wrong concepts, or put them together in the wrong sequence, Steiner claims; it's that they have remained within *a consciousness that was devised for the purpose of cutting them off from reality*.[24] The unreal thought-as-reflection that Barfield calls "alpha thinking" has succeeded brilliantly in calling forth "onlooker consciousness." And "alpha thinking" cannot solve the riddles of philosophy in principle because its very nature and "mission" is to create the very problem we are trying to solve! It is only because alpha-thinking has been so thoroughly successful, and because we lack any sense of the evolution of consciousness, that we mistake our innate "prejudice" for the way things really are.

We begin to see *The Riddles of Philosophy* for what it is: a feast of paradoxes. Nobody, not even Nietzsche, has managed to escape the trap, because no one has climbed up and out of the problem. The unsolved "riddles" are meant to send a message, but they also function like Zen koans. For example, Steiner likens spiritual knowledge to "a memory of something one hasn't experienced yet." The riddles are nuts that logic just can't crack; instead, logic breaks itself upon them, and we break out of the tautologous circle of rational thought.

And come to think of it, hasn't our whole route thus far been strewn with paradoxes? In trying to capture the nature of aesthetic experience in his *Third Critique*, Kant lays out a whole smorgasbord of oxymora such as "purposefulness without purpose" and "indeterminate concept" and "free causality." Fichte's key terms "intellectual intuition" and "made-fact" are likewise oxymoronic. Schiller: "We're most fully human [i.e., most mature] when we play," and our ultimate goal is to make ourselves (i.e., determine ourselves to be) *indeterminate*. Wittgenstein: the most important things in philosophy *can't be said*. Steiner: the best objects for meditation (which should, recall, not be taken from the real world) are the *concepts of modern natural science*. While "philosophy proper" keeps searching for the highest trump card, wisdom sees that the only way to win is by changing the game, which is why Steiner concludes his account by asserting that "[f]rom one certain point of view, this last chapter no longer belongs to the history of philosophy."

Kant may have been wrong about many things, but on my reading of *The Riddles of Philosophy*, the whole point is that the same fundamental criticism can be leveled against every single thinker since the advent of Nominalism in the High Middle Ages. *Modern philosophy keeps trying to heal patients by performing surgery on the reflected images of their bodies*. No amount of training, dexterity, or inventiveness can solve this problem short of realizing that we have been trying to operate on an illusory patient.

The Limits and the Frontiers of Science[25]

Rightly understood, *The Riddles of Philosophy* leads us up to a genuine threshold experience: a seeming limit that turns into a frontier. After climbing the upper rungs of the ladder through the meditative efforts described in the Bologna lectures, eventually we generate new forces of such vitality and strength that they lift us right off the ladder: "the soul feels as though lifted out of the physical organism." (119) The deadened reflections that had been directed outward previously have now been reoriented inward, and "as a result of the exercises, the soul feels imbued by an experience of itself." (119) The result is an immediate intuition, *a spiritual viewing*, of a thinking that is substantive activity. Looking back at *The*

Philosophy of Freedom in 1920, Steiner describes this experience now not as first glimpses from the ladder, from below looking up, but now from above the ladder, looking outward: "One experiences spirit by observing, by actually observing how moral forces flow into sense-free thinking." (*Boundaries* 48) This living thinking is imbued with will, interwoven with moral impulses; we have finally achieved the real, living union of theoretical and practical philosophy that had been the Holy Grail of German Idealism.

Here the seeds of thinking are not consumed, but allowed to germinate. Here the forces of life overcome the deadening of abstract thought. Having climbed to this level, we experience a real resurrection of thinking: "One should feel that one is being lifted out of one's usual thinking into a thinking independent of the senses, in which one is fully immersed, so that one feels free of the conditions of physical existence." (*Boundaries* 107) Consciousness undergoes a sea change: "now concepts and ideas transform themselves into images, into Imagination. One discovers the higher plane of which moral imagination is only the initial projection; one discovers the cognitional level of Imagination." (*Boundaries* 52)

The Kantian ladder led us up via beta-thinking to intuitions of the faculty of creative imagination, working at the heart of all our knowing and doing within normal consciousness. But now we have stepped off that ladder into a higher consciousness, Imagination, of which lower-case "imagination," even the "moral imagination" of *The Philosophy of Freedom*—the highest faculty of normal consciousness—is but a shadow. What force enlivens this higher faculty?

A succinct answer comes in Steiner's lecture of May 1, 1918, in Munich:

> Twenty-five years ago, I applied the term "intuitive thinking" to what I am now describing as an attribute of pure thinking born of intuition and making its appearance in moral rather than in logical concepts when a person acts in accordance with moral ideas. "Moral imagination" was the term given to what such a person perceives living imaginatively within him. When one becomes aware that an unconscious inspiration lives at one pole of his being and an unconscious imagination at the other, he becomes aware of his immortal part.[26]

This "unconscious imagination" is attained by projecting our "night-self" into our waking consciousness, mustering "all the independence we have attained while sleeping." (Palmer 49) Elsewhere, Steiner refers to this as a "night-thinking," and now we recall the chapter "Sleep and Death" in *Esoteric Science*: sleep is the "little brother" of death, because in both cases we are outside the physical body.[27] When we think with our "night-self," we are thinking with our "after-death" self. We are already beyond the threshold of immortality, while still incarnate. Forces of freedom, of liberation from the body, stream in to us from the future.

At an even higher level, a different set of revelations arrives, flowing to us from the other direction. We experience these later, just as the "baby brothers" of these same instreaming forces arrive at different moments in the development of the child, first the pole of excarnation, then the pole of incarnation:

> I have told you that from birth until the change of teeth a soul-spiritual entity is at work structuring the human being and that this then emancipates itself to an extent. Later, between the change of teeth and puberty, another such soul-spiritual entity, which dips down in a way into the physical body, awakens the erotic drives and much else as well. …[W]hen, for example, we take up the sense of love between the change of teeth and puberty, this is not something originating in the physical body but rather something that the cosmos gives us through the colors,

> sounds, and streaming warmth that reach us. (*Boundaries* 111–112)

But now it is time to step back and allow Rudolf Steiner to speak in his own words:

> Now, you see, we arrive inwardly at two poles. By proceeding into the outer world we approach the pole of Inspiration; by proceeding into the inner world of consciousness we approach the pole of Imagination. Once one has grasped these Imaginations, it becomes possible to collate them, just as one collates data concerning external nature by means of experiments and conceptual thinking. In this manner one can collate inwardly something real, something that is not a physical body but an etheric body informing the human being's physical body throughout his whole life, yet in an especially intensive manner during the first seven years. At the change of teeth this etheric body takes on a somewhat different configuration, as I described to you yesterday. By having attained Imagination one is able to observe the way in which the etheric or life-body works within the physical body. (*Boundaries* 54)
>
> And thus, ladies and gentlemen, I have led you, or at least sought to lead you, to the two poles of Inspiration and Imagination. …I had to lead you to the portal, as it were, beforehand, in order to show that the existence of this portal is well founded in the normal scientific sense. For it is only upon such a foundation that we can build later the edifice of spiritual science itself, which we enter through that portal. (*Boundaries* 55)

Imagination raying in from one portal, and Inspiration raying in from the other. We have traveled far from "philosophy proper." But we have arrived at our destination, and many of you will recognize it immediately. I have delivered you to the doorstep of Steiner's foundational cycle on the profoundest aspects of Waldorf education: the opening lectures of *Study of Man*.[28] Welcome home.

Endnotes

1. See my previous discussions of Kant, Goethe, Hegel, Fichte, and Schiller.
2. GA 4; *The Philosophy of Freedom: The Basis for a Modern World Conception: Some results of introspective observation following the methods of Natural Science*, trans. Michael Wilson (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1964). (Alternative English translations are available under the titles *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity* and *Intuitive Thinking as a Spiritual Path*.) For a variety of reasons that include sheer force of habit, I find it difficult to refer to GA 4 as anything other than *The Philosophy of Freedom*.
3. A.C. Harwood, ed., *The Faithful Thinker: Centenary Essays on the Work and Thought of Rudolf Steiner, 1861–1925* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1961), pp.11–21; Owen Barfield, *Romanticism Comes of Age* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1967), pp.241–254.
4. *Goethe's Theory of Knowledge: An Outline of the Epistemology of His Worldview*, Collected Works 2 (Great Barrington, MA: SteinerBooks, 2008).
5. GA 3; *Truth and Knowledge* (Great Barrington, MA: SteinerBooks, 1981). On Fichte, see the second installment in this series.
6. These lectures have been published as part of GA 35, *Philosophie und Anthroposophie: Gesammelte Aufsätze 1904–1918*, an important collection of philosophical essays that remain largely untranslated. A problematical translation of the Bologna lectures was included in the volume *Esoteric Development* (Great Barrington: SteinerBooks, 2003).
7. "A Brief Outline of an Approach to Anthroposophy," GA 18 (Great Barrington, MA: SteinerBooks, 2009).
8. GA 322; trans. Frederick Amrine and Konrad Oberhuber; intro. Saul Bellow (Spring Valley: Anthroposophic Press, 1983). A revised translation of this volume with a new title, *The Limits and the Frontiers of Science*, has been proposed to SteinerBooks. Lectures IV and VIII were given on September 30 and October 3, 1920, respectively, and together they form one of the very best commentaries on *The Philosophy of Freedom*.
9. Steiner: "…[B]ut now philosophy has had its day. The philosophers have seen the last of their era." [GA 137; quoted in Otto Palmer, ed., *Rudolf Steiner on His Book The Philosophy of Freedom* (Spring Valley, NY:

Anthroposophic Press, 1975), p.72].

10. The clearest reflection of Steiner's early attraction to Nietzsche is his book *Friedrich Nietzsche: Fighter for Freedom* (1895; first English edition, Englewood, NJ: Rudolf Steiner Publications, 1960), which begins with a surprisingly positive exposition of Nietzsche's main philosophical development, but ends with a series of short "psycho-pathological studies" of him. Andrew Welburn's study *Rudolf Steiner's Philosophy and the Crisis of Contemporary Thought* (Edinburgh: Floris Books, 2004) offers many good insights on Nietzsche and Steiner.
11. I.e., logic becomes an ouroboros—an ancient symbol of initiation.
12. Owen Barfield, *Saving the Appearances: A Study in Idolatry* (1957; 2nd edition, Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP, 1988), p.25. Hegel underscores the difficulty of his own heroic climb, recorded in *The Phenomenology of the Spirit* (1807) by repeatedly alluding to it as a series of Herculean conceptual "labors."
13. Most recently by Wesleyan University Press in 1985; the 2nd and later editions contain an important philosophical "Introduction" that should not be missed.
14. Both these words have primary meanings in English that confuse the issue. Kant's title might be translated "The Epistemology of Perception" if the more literal rendering had not established itself already.
15. Again, Barfield rehearses Kant's argument, and even his term for "representation," without acknowledgment, strangely comparing Steiner instead to Susanne Langer. But Langer's mentor was of course the great neo-Kantian Ernst Cassirer, and her aesthetics is thoroughly imbued with the spirit of Kant.
16. Barfield coins this useful term by analogy to William James's concept of "the specious present," and then distinguishes it from "the net Given," which can only be thought but never known. "It is important to be clear that the Given is never actually experienced 'net.' Thus, the net Given is something which a philosopher is concerned with, not as knower, but as epistemologist." (*Romanticism Comes of Age*, pp.250–251).
17. Cf. my own quite different account of Kant's ethics in the third installment.
18. "One might add here that Steiner's admittedly patchy treatment of the Kantian system is basically a result of his responding not so much to the master as to the uses to which his thought was being put by the scientific neo-Kantians." (Welburn 274).
19. See note 6 above. I have silently altered the translation where necessary, and I have referenced the corresponding passages in GA 35 instead. Readers should be aware of two major errors in the English edition as they work through these important lectures. An important thinker, Anthony Ashley-Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury (1671–1713), is misidentified in the notes. More important, the Kantian term "das Transzendente" ("the transcendent") has been systematically mistranslated as "the transcendental"—a different Kantian term that means the opposite!
20. Barfield, *Romanticism Comes of Age*, p.254.
21. These include, as Steiner often insists emphatically, the all-important exercise of *anthroposophical study*.
22. *Romanticism Comes of Age*, p.250.
23. Kant distinguished in same way between our "phenomenal" and "noumenal" selves.
24. As Welburn and others have argued, Steiner might well have felt differently about philosophical developments such as Phenomenology that were still nascent at the time he wrote *The Riddles of Philosophy*. We know, for example, that Steiner felt drawn to the early phenomenologist Max Scheler.
25. See note 8 above.
26. The title of this unpublished lecture as described by Palmer (53–54) would translate, "Our Supersensible Nature and the Questions of Free Will and Immortality in the Light of Anthroposophy."
27. CW 13; *An Outline of Esoteric Science*, trans. Catherine E. Creeger (SteinerBooks, 1997). An otherwise excellent earlier translation by George Adams bore the unfortunate title *Occult Science*. At the time of writing, Steiner was the head of the Theosophical Society in Germany, and the word *Geheimwissenschaft* in his title was meant to echo Blavatsky's tome, *The Secret Doctrine*. Like *The Philosophy of Freedom*, GA 13 is now considered one of the four "basic books" of anthroposophy.
28. GA 293; London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2004. The former English major in me can't resist the many attractions of A.C. Harwood's "classic" edition, beginning with the elegant allusion to Pope's *Essay on Man* in the title.

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The Spiritual Dimension of Waldorf Education

Jost Schieren

Lecture given to the General Meeting of the Bund der Freien Waldorfschulen, 16 November 2012, in Stuttgart

The spiritual dimension of Waldorf education seems in many ways to be a touchy subject. Why should this be?

In Practice: Success

During its more than ninety-year history, Waldorf education has developed into one of the most successful forms of progressive education. It has attained worldwide recognition as a model of educational practice which—as shown in a recent survey by Heiner Barz and Dirk Randoll[1]—performs extraordinarily well, even according to the criteria of empirical educational research.

Briefly, the survey found that Waldorf pupils enjoy a schooling free of competitive pressure and grades in which they are more self-motivated, happier, and, when it comes to their final exams, do better than pupils at other kinds of school. Within this context they also develop a high degree of social responsibility and tend to value their school as a place of living community building.

> Waldorf education, as a form of schooling centered upon the developing child, commands general respect.

In terms of our practical performance, therefore, Waldorf education can claim to have earned society's stamp of approval. That is the one side of Waldorf education, its practice, which seems to go from strength to strength in its innate ability to deliver. We, of course, know just how much there is still to do before our own ideal of "good quality (Waldorf) education" can be realized. We know only too well about our own shortcomings: we know the difficulties of finding new teachers and the problems surrounding many a "conservative" college of teachers stuck in outmoded administrative forms. And when we look into the future, we know that the problems attendant upon a radical generational change are increasing rather than decreasing. Nevertheless, Waldorf education, as a form of schooling centered upon the developing child, can say with confidence that it commands general respect.

In Theory: Criticism

Notwithstanding the results of this survey, critics have homed in on the worldview behind Waldorf schools, i.e., on anthroposophy. This more theoretical side of Waldorf education does not command respect to anything like the extent of its practical side. Quite the contrary: according to presumably well-meaning critics, it would be a good idea—as was suggested a few years ago in the German magazine *Der Spiegel*—to set up "Waldorf schools without Steiner." From the actual situation found in Waldorf schools today, it would seem that this advice has been followed to a greater extent than many a critic would imagine. The available figures show that 50% of teachers in Waldorf schools have had no Waldorf training. And the most recent study (also by Dirk Randoll[2]) shows that only 30% of Waldorf teachers are actively working with anthroposophy.

However one sees it—whether Waldorf schools are considered as being purged of, or overloaded with, anthroposophy—the fact

remains that the position of anthroposophy is chief among the problems facing Waldorf education today.

Critical Aversion to Spirituality

What is the reason for this? If the widely shared prevalence of current Western values is anything to go by, we live in an anti-spiritual age. Since the time of the Enlightenment, any spiritual view of the world or of the human being has come to be regarded as obsolete. If the defenders of the Enlightenment still had to fight against the all-powerful churches and their mechanisms of political control, today it is the voices of science that, regardless of what discipline they belong to, advance the ideal of scientific empiricism against any spiritual line of thinking. (Interestingly enough, the churches unquestioningly lend their voices to this chorus, perhaps hoping that in this way they may avoid having to share with anyone the spiritual leftovers of civilization. It is also worth remembering in this connection that it was the Christian churches of old that, through political maneuvering, either abrogated to themselves or exercised sovereignty over all forms of spirituality—they held sovereignty over interpretation, opinion, and, unfortunately, processes of law as well.)

The position of anthroposophy is chief among the problems facing Waldorf education today.

We live in an anti-spiritual age. Any spiritual view of the world or of the human being has come to be regarded as obsolete.

Even though the common aversion to all forms of spirituality is founded upon their lack of conformity to scientific reason, there remains beyond this a basic cultural attitude, which has much less to do with scientific argument than with a socio-historical habit of thought. From the current spectrum of shared values there are a number of arguments that carry much more weight than any ethos of scientific objectivity. Here are some of them:

Exclusiveness: Spiritual knowledge is initiate knowledge, and as such is the property of a select few. In the history of mystery schools, there are many examples of abuse of power and oppression associated with this exclusive spiritual sovereignty. Thus spirituality is always under suspicion of being anti-democratic. It is thought to undermine the ideal of general participation in the process of knowledge acquisition. Anthroposophy, as a "one-man science," is felt to be a prime example of spirituality's basic problem of undemocratic non-transparency, regardless of Steiner's own desire for and practice of full public disclosure.

Devotion: The devotion of pupil to teacher or master, which is a feature of many spiritual paths and can sometimes involve forms of personal subjection, contradicts the modern human being's feeling of individual autonomy. It is particularly the experience of blind, fanatical devotion to the Führer during the Third Reich that has caused such general distrust of devotional attitudes.

Dogmatism: Spiritual doctrines often take the form of statements of ultimate wisdom, which—as is sometimes maintained—are not of human origin, but have merely been communicated by human beings, and as such their truth cannot be doubted. Spiritual literature is therefore not susceptible to scientific scrutiny and critical discussion.

Sectarianism: The charge of sectarianism encompasses all the previous points. Difficult as it may be to describe sectarian behavior definitively, it is widely perceived as being a sort of conglomerate of the features listed above. An essential characteristic of the behavior of a sect is the restriction of freedom, or even the complete suppression of the individual in favor of the spiritually justified aims of the group. Also particularly strong is the assumption that the main motivation

behind any sect, whatever spiritual "spin" may be put on it, is financial exploitation.

The key arguments against spirituality set out here, arising as they do more from a basic social attitude combined with negative historical associations than from any scientifically plausible argumentation, have already been trained upon many a questionable mode of action or expression in the Waldorf and anthroposophical worlds. I think, however, that today we find ourselves in a time when anthroposophists and Waldorf teachers are seeking to divest themselves of the last remnants of a rather old-fashioned, arrogant spirituality. (From among the points listed above we should, in this connection, make an exception of devotion, since in its capacity as an essential aspect of spiritual training, it cannot be equated with a denial of individual freedom.)

Be that as it may, we are still faced with the question of how to conceive of a modern form of spirituality that can provide the foundations of education without appearing "medieval." In spite of his admiration for anthroposophy in practice, the education theorist Heiner Ullrich has unceasingly drawn attention to the problematical nature of its whole philosophical basis. His diagnosis runs like this:

> In contrast to the conscious, self-restrained pluralism and open-endedness of the modern scientific method, Steiner and his disciples desire certain (dogmatic) knowledge or even direct experience of the world as a well-ordered whole, an unchanging eternal truth. …Their way of thinking is degenerate philosophy, mere worldview. …With the creation of his anthroposophical "occult science," Steiner became the victim of all the dangers inherent in such a way of thinking. In it the pre-modern, dogmatic-metaphysical speculation of neo-Platonism turned into the contrived re-mythologising of theosophy.[3]

One could hardly put it more strongly!

Thus we can be in no doubt that spirituality is key among the central issues in Waldorf education today. And when we look at the different facets of the question, we see that it relates both to basic cultural attitudes and to the need to meet modern scientific standards—these two, of course, being very closely connected. Does this mean that we must abandon all notion of a spiritually-based education? Or is it possible to develop a new and modern understanding of spirituality, one that is based not upon a pre-Enlightenment sensibility but that builds upon the insights and ideals of the Enlightenment without thereby barring the way to a spiritual view of the world?

To help us find a way forward here, we will take a look at what Rudolf Steiner meant by the term.

Steiner's Concept of Spirituality

In my experience many of those involved in anthroposophy and Waldorf education do not define the distinguishing features of Rudolf Steiner's approach to spirituality sharply enough. Because of this a misleading impression can arise that anthroposophy is a body of teaching about a separately existing spiritual world equipped with angels and demons who exert their influences upon a hapless humanity.[4] Based on this misleading impression, the concept of destiny is then taken pretty much to be the same as predestination, with the ultimate implication that, lacking individual autonomy, all that human souls have to do is simply follow to the best of their ability the injunctions of an all-wise initiate, namely Rudolf Steiner. By keeping their efforts as servants of civilization true to what he said, they thus have reliable recipes for the practical application (in agriculture, education, medicine, and so forth) of the higher knowledge they have received from him.

Accusations of this kind can all too easily be leveled at anthroposophists, and unfortunately they may not be entirely unjustified. What gets left out of account on all sides is the fact that at

the unshakable center of anthroposophy stands the principle of human freedom: freedom as an innate human capacity and as something capable of development. The compass of anthroposophical thinking points to the pole of freedom. What is special about Steiner's anthroposophy, therefore, is not its spiritual "system," for such systems have long been a part of world history. Historically spirituality is nothing new. Quite the contrary. Virtually all the cultures of past epochs were spiritually organized in one way or another. If one wished to emphasize this aspect of anthroposophy, it would appear—and it has, of course, been painted in this way[5]—to be nothing more than badly camouflaged eclecticism.

What is special about anthroposophy is, rather, that for the first time it has managed to combine the idea of human freedom with a spiritual conception of the world and the human being. Historically speaking, all cultures up to the Enlightenment were based in essence upon spiritual worldviews. The Enlightenment discovered human autonomy, in the human being's exercise of independent reason. However, the price it paid for humanity's autonomy and freedom was the loss of its spiritual orientation. Since then the stark choice has been between freedom and spirituality. In anthroposophy Steiner combined the two. How did he manage this?

Anthroposophy was the first to combine the idea of human freedom with a spiritual conception of the world and the human being.

Steiner's Epistemology

The cornerstone of Steiner's philosophy, on the basis of which he later developed anthroposophy, is his theory of knowledge. He formulated a concept of knowledge that was creative and dynamic. It involved the rejection of what he viewed as "naïve realism," the notion of reality as a form of existence completely independent of and external to human consciousness. This view assumes that the phenomena exist by and for themselves, and that the mind is simply there to form reflections of this thoroughly external world. These mental reflections are, of course, different in nature to the self-existent phenomena they reflect, but they represent a relatively close approximation. In principle, according to this view, mind and world are completely different entities.

In contrast to this, Steiner draws attention to the participation of consciousness in the formation of reality. This is surely in keeping with Enlightenment thinking, for one of the main features of Immanuel Kant's philosophy of consciousness is that it addresses cognition not only in terms of its content, but also in terms of the conditions which render its occurrence possible. This constitutes a common point of departure for Steiner's epistemology and for that of Kant's transcendental philosophy.

As things develop, however, their approaches to the concept of knowledge diverge considerably. While Kant makes a sharp distinction between ontology, i.e., the theory of being, and epistemology, the theory of knowledge, concluding that the act of knowing is, in principle, separate from the world's being (which he calls "things-in-themselves"), Steiner regards human cognition as, in principle, capable of development and therefore also of ontological concreteness. He envisions the possibility of human consciousness overcoming its initial apparently dual relationship to being and creatively uniting itself with the world and its phenomena. The reality which then arises in the mind is no mere reflection of an ontologically independent world; rather within the context of human consciousness the world's being comes to itself in a new form of existence, namely that of freedom. It could be said that a union of epistemology and ontology thus occurs, in that the act of human knowing is deeply involved in the ontological foundations of the world. This

is the aspect of Steiner's epistemology that has such far-reaching implications for education. But how does Steiner arrive at this concept of knowledge?

Thinking

In 1918, in the preface to the new edition of his basic philosophical work, *The Philosophy of Freedom* (now retranslated with the title *Intuitive Thinking as a Spiritual Path*), Steiner formulates two key questions around which his thinking turns. The first is how the modern human being, faced with a world of uncertainty and doubt, is to arrive at anything resembling knowledge. Disconnected phenomena impinge upon our consciousness willy-nilly, and our power of apprehension is incapable of finding any secure footing. Steiner now asks whether such security might have some inner basis, "whether it is possible to conceive of the human being in such a way that this conception could serve as the support for everything else which comes towards him through experience or science and which is felt to lack any support in itself."[6]

This is quite clearly a post-Enlightenment type of question, since Steiner assumes that no ultimately valid basis of truth is to be found in our conscious experience. This would be the hope of a belief system based on revelation, or indeed of any kind of conventional spirituality. The main distinguishing feature of modern consciousness is that it conceives of knowledge not as a quasi-objective event, but as something predicated upon human involvement. Thus, for instance, Karl R. Popper speaks of falsification as the criterion of human knowledge, issuing in this way a protest against the assertion of any kind of ultimate knowledge and pointing to its essentially provisional nature.[7]

When Steiner describes the human being acting as a support for conscious experience, what exactly does he mean? As *The Philosophy of Freedom* proceeds, Steiner places the special quality of thinking at the center of his deliberations. It turns out that for Steiner the central element of spirituality is his concept of thinking. Thinking leads the human being beyond himself and connects him to the content of the world. In addition to a number that follow on from them, Steiner characterizes two distinguishing features of thinking:

- Individual executive function: Thinking is, through and through, an activity carried out by single human individuals. This activity is completely under their personal control, and as such is not executed by any external agent (for instance, by the brain) but by the self as an act of pure will.
- Universality: Although thinking must be brought about by an individual, it is nevertheless not purely subjective, but in its individual execution displays an inherent lawfulness, which, in contrast to the executive subject, is universal. Upon this rests the possibility of human insight and communication.

These are the two central characteristics of thinking: for it to happen we have to do it, and it occurs according to its own inherent laws. Thus, thinking involves a dynamic interplay between the individual and the universal, a constant reciprocal interaction. Rudolf Steiner calls this reciprocal relationship Intuition. This is one of the essential spiritual experiences anthroposophy speaks of as an aspect of knowledge: we experience a universal validity and intrinsic order in our own thinking. We are thus led to something beyond ourselves. In thinking we touch the source of universal truth. As Rudolf Steiner puts it: "Our theory of knowledge leads to the realization that thought is the essence of the world, and that individual human thinking is the only direct manifestation of this essence."[8]

But …

Now, it can be objected that this way of looking at things and this concept of thought are precisely what give anthroposophy its

mystical, pre-Enlightenment profile. From the perspective of empirical science, to speak of a source of universal truth is an obsolete idea. In answer to this objection, it should be pointed out that although Rudolf Steiner assigned to thinking the qualities of correctness, accuracy, and veracity in principle, this in no way implies that we can designate any individual thought as valid and true. In his view of thinking, Steiner's whole focus was on its fundamental trustworthiness, for even the most cutting argument against the inherent veracity of thought rests upon statements produced by thinking and, as such, go unquestioned. Popper himself also acts in principle upon the possibility of thought being lawful when he says: "We are flawed, and tend to be mistaken; but we can learn from our mistakes."[9]

Steiner's concern was not to assert the veracity of every product of individual thinking, but to establish a healthy and justifiable trust in thinking itself. This, of course—in keeping with the spirit of the Enlightenment—would not preclude subjecting individual thinking to critical appraisal, nor would it imply relinquishing the possibility of error. Without such a healthy trust in thinking, however, we would have little chance of coping with our everyday lives. We would never get into a car or use a cell phone if we could not rely on the assumption that the thinking behind such technologies is in principle correct, even though it is always in need of improvement.

Consequences for Waldorf Education

In what follows we will turn our attention to the consequences for Waldorf education of this concept of thinking. Rudolf Steiner introduces his lectures on *The Foundations of Human Experience*[10] (which form the basis of his ideas on education) by pointing to the special challenges any modern approach to education must face. He distinguishes a so-called "fourth post-Atlantean epoch" from one that has existed since the 15th century, namely, the "fifth post-Atlantean epoch." With the Renaissance, according to Steiner—and in this modern historians concur with him—a new form of consciousness took hold of European culture that placed a much higher value on the autonomy of individual human thinking. For education this meant, for instance, that its content could no longer be conveyed to the students in a purely top-down fashion. In 1919, when the first Waldorf school was founded, "cram" schools were still very much in vogue. Waldorf education rejected this pedagogical culture, as did the whole educational reform movement. To Rudolf Steiner's critical eye, it was evident—from the lack of allowance made for the individual student's thinking capacities—that the change of consciousness that had come in with the new epoch in the 15th century had not yet found its way into the school system. Waldorf education would set about to change this. Autonomy in thinking and individual processes of understanding would be resolutely exercised.

Today such demands are likely to be seen as having been met long ago and thus may seem outdated, for contemporary teaching methods are quite clearly aimed at the students' self-motivation. Among the most popular methods are "discovery learning," "action-centered education," and approaches to teaching arising from the results of brain research. But unfortunately these methodological innovations are all solely concerned with delivering more or less fixed bodies of information more cleverly and easily, and rendering them reproducible for the purpose of examinations. Similarly, the focus on competences—the latest object of educational adulation—cannot disguise the fact that even now education is ultimately geared to performance (measured in terms of surveys of learning standards and graduation results) on exams involving the regurgitation of fixed blocks of knowledge. The self-motivated activity of students favored by these teaching methods is thus merely the means to an end, namely, the processing of prescribed teaching content more quickly and efficiently.

In Waldorf education the reverse is the case: the self-activating quality of the power of human thinking and understanding constitutes the fundamental inner dynamic around which both teaching methods and content turn. How does this way of looking at things translate into actual classroom practice? The following are a few special examples:

Sense/experience-based teaching: A salient feature of the Waldorf approach, particularly in the kindergarten and early primary school, is its care of the senses and integration of sensory experience into the pedagogical process. In subsequent school years the focus on primary sense-experience gives way to more generally experiential, phenomenological teaching. This approach is based on a conviction that attains its full significance within the context of phenomenological philosophy. It is the conviction that in every sensory experience, in every phenomenon, something of its intrinsic quality, its idiosyncratic nature can be experienced, but not necessarily put into words. What we are encountering here is the impassivity of things. In her phenomenologically-oriented writings on education, Käte Meyer-Drawe refers to this as "the tendency of objects to object."[11] This theme is also very pronounced in the writings of Martin Wagenschein.[12] Following Goethe's lead[13] on the nature of experience, Waldorf education works with the idea that in every genuine sensory experience, we divine something of the being of things. We feel our way towards the true reality of the world. Through our quest for knowledge, we open up this path more and more, but in doing so we always begin from what we sensed originally and not from some arbitrary abstraction or pet theory that takes us off track.

Form drawing: Form drawing is an essential aspect of our whole approach to teaching and is "genuinely Waldorf." It demonstrates very concretely how the individual effort involved in performing a set task and the experience arising from its achievement are two aspects of the same, self-validating order and merge in the doing.

Nature study: The teaching of nature study, particularly as it applies to animals, is conducted in such a way that the single creature and its ecological surroundings are treated as one whole. The animal cannot be thought of as existing apart from its ecological niche. The students develop an inner sense for the fact that the single animal always stands in relation to a holistic context.

Imaginative teaching: In his pedagogical lectures Rudolf Steiner repeatedly drew attention to the fact that Waldorf teaching, particularly in the primary school, should involve the use of images and what he called "living concepts." He warned against too high a level of abstraction. His point is that only through an appeal to the students' feelings—such that they are warmly engaged with the material—can they form a personal attachment to the lesson content.

Nurturing of skills: A key aspect of Waldorf education is that it attaches a high value to the development of skills. Skills, if they are applied, give concrete expression to the direct connection between individual performance and a set of self-validating rules. Every acquired skill is characterized by the fact that its individual application occurs in full accord with the laws governing that particular skill. For instance, if someone wishes to play the violin, spending a year reading books on the subject and subsequently being able to talk about the instrument will be of no help. A skill can be acquired only by practice. When we practice something, we notice how our actions accommodate themselves with ever more smoothness and fluidity to the particular nature of the object (for instance the violin, but it could equally well be a foreign language, and so forth) and the rules inherent in it, and how their execution correspondingly improves. In every skill there is a perfect overlap between individual performance and a self-validating order of some kind.

Concept of Selfhood

Besides the importance of thinking and its various features for arriving at an understanding of the spiritual dimension of Waldorf education, there is a further spiritual element to which we will now turn our attention. This is Waldorf education's concept of the nature of selfhood. In Rudolf Steiner's *Philosophy of Freedom,* the so-called second key question has to do with this subject. It asks: "Is the human being, endowed as he is with will, right in claiming freedom for himself?"[14] In other words: Is there some aspect of the human make-up which can be said to be completely autonomous, self-justified, and not determined by anything else? According to Steiner (but also, for instance, Johann Gottlieb Fichte) there is such an aspect, and it can be designated the "I."

Waldorf education is the only form of education based upon and designed around a definitive concept of the self.

In the academic discourse of Europe today, such a concept of the self has been abandoned. As a rule, the human personality is thought of as being compounded of disparate elements. It may contain inherited features, but it is said to be constituted almost entirely of experiences from its upbringing and influences from its environment, especially those associated with a peer group. According to this view, then, the human being is more or less a conglomerate of socialization experiences. [In North America the perspective leans heavily toward inherited and other material, DNA-based identity. –ed.]

The single most important aim of Waldorf education is to provide a pedagogical framework within which children have the chance to become acquainted with their own selfhood.

As far as I am aware, Waldorf education is currently, and also historically, the only form of education based upon and designed around a definitive concept of the self. As such it can be termed the pedagogy of the self, because it accords such importance to the unfettered development of the human "I." In this connection Rudolf Steiner says: "The greatest preparatory gift that can be given to the developing human being, to the child, is that at the right moment, through the understanding of his or her own selfhood, he or she may awaken to the experience of freedom. True freedom is an inner experience."[15]

This statement in no way implies that Waldorf education brings about the formation of the self or that it culminates in some definite outcome. Education has only a preparatory character. It prepares the ground for something that is likely to occur only much later, namely, at the right moment. The single most important aim of Waldorf education is to provide a pedagogical framework within which children have the chance to become acquainted with their own selfhood. This means the educational process approaches each one as a person, an individual I-being.

Here I would like to present two further examples of what this implies in practice:

Class community: As far as I know, the Waldorf school is the only form of school worldwide which gives children the chance to be part of a single learning group all the way from the first through the twelfth or thirteenth grade. This is a central, systematic component of Waldorf education. What is the thinking behind it? If we work on the assumption that Waldorf education is the pedagogy of the self, then the question arises as to how the education of the self occurs. In a somewhat simplified and abbreviated, but nonetheless accurate, form, we can say: the self is educated through encountering selfhood. Or, to put it in Martin Buber's terms: I is schooled by encountering Thou.[16]

A form of education wishing to be effective as a pedagogy of the self would need to create for its students an appropriate framework in which this education of the self could take place.

Here it is worth pointing out, by way of contrast, that the three-tiered educational system in Germany simply tramples the self underfoot. Other countries have indeed criticized this state of affairs as unjust, pointing out that in this regard the German system is extraordinarily backward. This three-tiered system works by sorting children into an intellectual hierarchy by means of rigid selection mechanisms. The only thing this process pays heed to is intellectual performance.

By contrast, the Waldorf school's class community, lasting for at least twelve years, creates a framework in which everyone—including the less intellectually gifted pupil—can feel respected and valued. Individual achievements in all areas (not just in intellectual pursuits) are honored equally, and individual rates of development are accommodated. It goes without saying that other problems and challenges arise in association with the decision to do things this way. For instance, there are the questions of how to meet the needs of intellectually gifted pupils, and how the school's educational expectations can avoid being levelled to a common average. But the crucial thing remains that the students see and experience themselves as a learning community in which all have a place by virtue of the unique self dwelling in each one of them.

Class teacher principle: The principle of the class teacher's staying with a class for a number of years points in the same direction. The idea is that through long-standing contact with a trusted figure of educational authority, the pupils will develop the powers of their own personality. This is true because in a certain sense one can say that every "I" is an authority unto itself.

Two Aspects of Spirituality

In what has gone before, two aspects of the spiritual dimension of Waldorf education have been described. One is thinking. It can be regarded as the more stable of the two, and as having a stabilizing effect, because it provides our connection to the orderliness of the world. For the students, to feel a healthy trust in their individual power of thinking is to place their whole school life on a secure footing.

By contrast the other aspect, that of the human "I," is a more open, indeterminate and even, in a certain way, more confusing notion. It takes us into the inner realms of the human mind. In the words of the Romantic poet Novalis: "Inwards leads the mysterious way. …"[17] Precisely because the self is not pre-determined (although anthroposophy is sometimes mistakenly thought to maintain that it is) but is by nature fully open to development, it presents us with one of the major challenges of human existence. Education helps us along the way towards meeting this challenge, which is to take hold of our inner life as the standard of our own biographical development.

These two aspects of spirituality, thinking and the "I," form the two pillars of Waldorf education.

These two aspects of spirituality form the two pillars of Waldorf education. The one, through the activity of thinking, provides children with confidence in their connection to a meaningful world order. The other bestows upon them the freedom to be the architects of their own self-development.

What, we may now be wondering, does an education which does not recognize such a spiritual dimension take as its ground? Ultimately, the watchwords of an anti-spiritual education must be chance-based evolution and determinism. If it is assumed that human thinking is incapable of participating in the

lawful order of the surrounding world and that this order is consequently denied, then the world appears as the product of a blind and random evolution which has somehow brought forth a conscious being, who in turn is a product of entirely materialistic determinism. Waldorf education creates an alternative to this picture of the world. It would thus be tragic if it were to lose track of its own spiritual intentions.

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Process Thinking

To finish, let us take a look at one more important feature of spirituality. In their philosophical writings, both Rudolf Steiner and Johann Gottlieb Fichte draw attention to the fact that the self does not enter conscious experience in the form of reflection, but only as an executive function, as a deed. In Waldorf schools this fact figures large in the teaching of artistic subjects, especially eurythmy.

Let us consider this more closely. During my time as a Waldorf teacher, I recall that we often—for instance, in connection with public exams or approval procedures—had guest colleagues from state schools present, and on such occasions they had the chance to experience our students. These colleagues seemed unanimously to be very impressed by them, remarking upon their open, confident self-assurance. This is exactly what we are after—that our students go out into the world with a confident, strong, and positive attitude to life. Although they noticed this, our state-school colleagues did not necessarily associate this with our pedagogical approach. But this is just the connection I would like to attempt to sketch here.

It is becoming ever more apparent that we are living in a culture of approval ratings. It is not so much what we do that counts, but how aware we are of how our actions have been received. How much access do we have to what has been said about us in various media: this is what counts! Parents and grandparents, aunts and uncles cannot seem to refrain from carelessly speaking about children in their presence, listing everything they can or can't do, things they have said, and so forth. In my opinion, this foists upon the young child's mind an over-developed faculty of self-reflection. This is then perpetuated in school. Once again, what the child says and does is not what counts; rather, how he or she is evaluated by a teacher is the only thing that matters. Only by means of external evaluation do the child's achievements attain significance, and if a child happens to receive a poor grade, he may lose all desire to exert further effort. The media of photography and film further reinforce this experience of value as being something external and valid only if it has been documented. Our current popular media culture takes this to extremes by inculcating the feeling that media presentation is the sole test of something's value. As is well known, this leads to an eventual lowering of standards.

From the point of view of Waldorf education, it is extremely important that both younger and older children are not constantly being forced to look at themselves in an evaluative mirror through which the value of what they have said or done is retrospectively determined from outside. If they are to develop healthy self-confidence, it is important that they experience for themselves, while in the process of doing it, whether something is good or bad or whether it works well. Playing music is a good example of what is meant here. A wrong note can be perceived and corrected as part of the process of playing, and need not be pointed out later as a mistake.

As a subject, eurythmy has a special function here. Unlike ballet, it does not work with mirrors, nor, as in sport, with prescribed indicators of achievement (goals, duels, measurements of speed or distance, and so forth). Rather, it works in such a way that, through a deepening of perception and

attention, a continuous process-awareness (as opposed to a discontinuous, reflective awareness) is maintained. This is reminiscent of the well-known myth of Orpheus and Eurydice which recounts how, following the death of his beloved Eurydice, Orpheus is so smitten with grief that he finds in himself the courage to descend into the underworld, release her from death, and bring her back to the land of the living. Hades, the god of the underworld, gives his consent to this unreasonable request only on condition that Orpheus walk before her and not look round to make sure she is really following him. As we know, Orpheus does not fulfill this condition, and so loses Eurydice a second time.

Thus it is also with the human "I." To approach it we must be prepared to descend into the depths of our inner being. But we can draw it into our consciousness only by carrying on with the act of doing so. But in bringing something to mind with a reflective, backward look, our "I" is no longer accessible to us. It withdraws from us. We run the risk, as today's media culture starkly demonstrates, of losing it altogether. The "I" appears as the subtle awareness of our selfhood inherent in every activation of our thinking, and we learn, in the act, to grasp it with increasing confidence.

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Endnotes

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9. Rudolf Steiner, *Grundlinien einer Erkenntnistheorie der goetheschen Weltanschauung.* (CW 2) (Dornach, 1979), p.79.
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11. Cf. Käte Meyer-Drawe, *Diskurse des Lernens.* (München: Fink, 2008).
12. Cf. Martin Wagenschein, *Verstehen lehren: Genetisch - Sokratisch - Exemplarisch.* (Weinheim, 1999).
13. In Goethe's words: "You may trust your senses; they will not let you see anything false."
14. See note 7 above.
15. Rudolf Steiner, *Die Methodik des Lehrens und die Lebensbedingungen des Erziehens.* (CW 308) (Dornach, 1974), pp.72–73.
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Education and the Presence of the Unknown

Craig Holdrege

This article was originally published in In Context *(#28, Fall 2012). It grew out of a talk, "What Is Education For?" that the author gave at the fourth International Refresher Week in March 2012 at the Kassel Teacher Training College in Germany. This course was attended primarily by teachers, as well as those training to become teachers, in Waldorf high schools. Participants from over 20 different countries were in attendance.*

Most parents are deeply concerned about the education of their children. They want their children to become capable individuals who live satisfied lives and who are productive in their chosen professions. They feel that school education should facilitate this development: it should give students the knowledge and skills to master life and to find and thrive in a good job.

Nevertheless, parental thinking about "what is education for?" tends to shrink into the short term. Are you preparing my teenager for college? This direction of thought often manifests itself when the students are in seventh or eighth grade and leads the parents in Waldorf schools to wonder whether they should send their students to a different high school, which they sometimes do.

In such a frame of mind, thinking about education becomes narrow. Each stage of the educational process becomes the preparation for the next: kindergarten prepares for first grade, which prepares for the elementary school years, which prepares for high school, which prepares for college, which prepares for a profession. When curricula are developed out of this perspective, the tendency is to bring what is perceived as needed at a later stage into an earlier one. A public school teacher in the U.S. may now receive training to teach her students how to use PowerPoint in the second grade! Why? Well, they will need to accompany their school reports during the upper elementary grades with a PowerPoint presentation, so they need to be prepared. And why should they use PowerPoint during the latter years of elementary school? They need it for high school. …

Or, in public high schools there are advanced placement courses so that the students are better prepared for college and can even skip some college courses. In reality, it is often the case that students nonetheless learn the same subject matter again in college courses. Or even worse, as a university chemistry professor once told me: I need to help students who have taken advanced placement courses unlearn what they think they know so that they can actually learn to think like chemists!

U.S. President Barack Obama's education webpage offers a clear message about the goals of education:

> A world-class education is the single most important factor in determining not just whether our kids can compete for the best jobs, but whether America can out-compete countries around the world. America's business leaders understand that when it comes to education, we need to up our game. …The President will reform America's public schools to deliver a 21st century education that will prepare all children for success in the new global workplace. President Obama's [plan] fosters critical thinking, problem solving, and the innovative use of knowledge to prepare students for college and career,

> helping America win the future by out-educating our competitors. (http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/education; downloaded May 3, 2012)

Here the goals of education are framed solely in terms of economic success and national interests: students must serve the economic engine that drives the U.S. in its efforts to out-compete the rest of the world. This is a crass perspective, but it also indicates a trend in our times, when educational policies focus increasingly on specific outcomes.

When education is mainly viewed as preparation for a next stage of education, for a particular professional outcome, or for furthering national interests, then the student is to be molded to fit a particular system. We make the future—as the goal to be reached—into something specific and bounded that we can have a grip on. I will call this the abstract future.

When education is mainly viewed as preparation for a next stage of education, for a particular professional outcome, or for furthering national interests, then the student is to be molded to fit a particular system.

The Unknown Future

But the abstract future is not the real future. The future is something unknown, it is full of surprises. If you reflect on some of the most important events in your life—ones that evoked growth and development, that allowed something new to happen—they were probably not events that school explicitly prepared you for. Were you taught how to find your life's partner in school or prepared for that moment when your first child is born and your life radically changes? Even if someone had told you about the transforming effects of such an event, the actual experience is something wholly other than hearing about it.

Or think of cultural change. Who would have imagined fifty years ago that the book of an unassuming scientist would help ignite a new kind of environmental awareness? I am referring to Rachel Carson and her book *Silent Spring*. Which educational institutions in the late 1950s and early 1960s were preparing students to be receptive to what Rachel Carson presented? The reception of her book was a surprise, unexpected and exceedingly important.

The future is not an extension of the past; new things do happen. If we are educators (and I include here parents as educators) who are thinking mainly about preparing students for later life viewed as an extension of the status quo, then we are ignoring some of the most vital aspects of human life.

Moreover, who could possibly want the future to be a continuation of the present? Who wants environmental degradation, poverty, or war to continue?

In other words, as educators we are faced with a conundrum. It is fairly straightforward, at least superficially, to help prepare students for an exam, to teach them content they might need to know. They can learn to perform a sequence of actions to make something, or become reasonably skilled in a particular discipline (auto mechanics, an academic field with its particular forms and methods, disease diagnosis, and so on). We know that this kind of preparation has its place.

But what about preparing for an unknown future, for the future we cannot imagine? How might we craft educational programs that help students develop capacities for creating a future we can't see? That is hardly easy, and may even seem impossible. However, it's what I want to focus on here.

A few years ago I gave a talk at a high school graduation ceremony in a Waldorf school. In considering what I would say in this

brief talk, I knew that I didn't want to say, "I hope the school has prepared you well for college or for life." Since you have just read what I wrote, you know why. In one moment it came to me: no, the goal is different. I need to say: "My hope is not that the school has prepared you for present-day culture and its existing forms and processes. Rather, my hope is that you have been educated in such a way that the world is not prepared for you. I hope you have not been hindered and that you may even have been nurtured and encouraged to develop ideas and to do things that no one expects—not in order to be different, but because you sense what needs to happen." I added, "Don't listen to people who tell you, when you are following a yearning or birthing an idea, that 'it can't be done.' "

In a similar vein Rudolf Steiner wrote about the goals of education in an essay published shortly before the founding of the first Waldorf school in 1919:

> What we teach and how we educate should be derived only from our knowledge of the becoming human being and his or her individual potentials. A true science of the human being should be the basis of education and instruction. We shouldn't ask: What does a human being need to know and to master for society as it exists? Rather: What are a human being's predispositions and potentials for development? Then it will be possible for each generation to infuse ever-new impulses into society. Then what flows out of these full human beings can live in society rather than a new generation becoming a result of what existing society wants to make out of it. (4 August, 1919, p.26; translation by C. Holdrege)

How might we craft educational programs that help students develop capacities for creating a future we can't yet see?

I cannot possibly unpack all that is implicit in these few sentences. How do we teach without imagining a finished product or clear-cut goal? How do we work with a potential neither realized as yet nor fully known? Here I will focus on high school education, although much of what I bring is relevant to learning more generally.

Who Are You?

As an educator, I believe that the fundamental question about the student becomes: Who are you? I am working with you on a daily basis and yet I don't know you. What is it that you want to realize in your life? Neither I nor the student can answer these questions. If we could, it would mean there was no development. Everything would be clear. Through an ever-renewed effort to engage in this questioning, searching attitude of mind and to work with the students out of it, something new and essential arises in the learning community. What happens is that the students become "large"—that is, I don't just see them as adolescents now with their quirks, gifts, and difficulties, but as participants within a developmental stream of human life. Second, I acknowledge in the students a dimension of inner depth—a realm out of which their individual questions and strivings arise. This realm remains hidden for me if I get caught up in the outer trappings of adolescence. I know that in each student something wants to grow like the growing point of a plant—vulnerable, tender,

I know that in each student something wants to grow like the growing point of a plant – vulnerable, tender, and full of life. I don't want to crush that!

and full of life. I don't want to crush that! I'm dealing with a kind of "holy of holies" in each student that warrants deep respect. It needs to be protected, and it needs soul space and biographical time to develop.

In this attitude of mind I become a listener. Can I hear what it is that you are really asking—and listen through the pointed question or the cold logic with which you argue? I'm trying to hear the meaning or intent that arises out of the deeper, hidden source that speaks "between the lines" in word, gesture, and action. And inasmuch as I do hear something, my inner response is: How can I serve what you are saying through my work with you? This is, to state the relation differently, the attitude of the teacher who works as a midwife, helping to give birth to that which wants to come into the world.

In my experience, students notice whether you are working out of such an attitude—which is not explicit but implicit in all the smaller and bigger interactions that occur. It provides a kind of fertile ground out of which manifold learning experiences arise.

I remember quite vividly an interaction with a student at the beginning of my teaching career. He asked a few questions which were leading off topic—which can be fine. But then I noticed that there was more going on—he was trying to get me off topic. At that moment I abruptly shifted back to my chosen theme and we moved on. I reflected on this experience and realized that in a sense the student was testing me, and in so doing he was implicitly asking: Who are you? Do you know what you are doing? I never said a word about what had happened. After this class our relation shifted. He had been distant and present in class with a fairly distinct attitude of disinterest and, on the surface, a look of: Who are you to be teaching me? In that class we had met each other below the surface—closer to the source—and from then on we could interact in more human ways.

The Curriculum – A Task Not a Thing

Every school has a curriculum consisting of guidelines for what is to be taught in the different disciplines and grades. Unlike a walnut that falls on your head when you pass under a tree in autumn, the curriculum is not an act of God or Nature. It is something human beings create. In Waldorf education the curriculum goes back to lectures by Rudolf Steiner and to Steiner's conversations with the teachers of the first Waldorf school. Before I started teaching in Germany I heard, for example, that in the ninth grade one (the ominous "one" who is both everyone and no one) teaches human biology with a focus on the senses, muscles, and skeleton. I was referred to Karl Stockmeyer's book on the curriculum. A teacher in the first school, Stockmeyer took on the monumental task of pulling together Rudolf Steiner's remarks about what could be taught in the different grades and subjects.

To my surprise, I found for the ninth grade in Stockmeyer only one quotation and no commentary. Steiner had said nothing about the senses, muscles, and skeleton in this grade. What he said was:

> Continue the study of the human being so that the students receive a proper grounding in human biology [*Anthropologie*]. This should be done in concentric circles, expanding from class to class, and the other sciences should be added. (September 22, 1920)

Steiner does mention teaching the senses, muscles, and skeleton in the eighth grade. And, in fact, many eighth grade teachers continue to do so around the globe. I don't how or when the tradition began to teach these topics also in ninth grade. Experienced teachers who have done this can tell you much about the pedagogical value and about shifts in emphasis from the eighth grade to ninth grade.

Interestingly, this tradition has not taken hold in the United States, where another

tradition has developed: namely, to teach internal organs and systems (circulation, nervous system, digestion, metabolism, and so forth) in the ninth grade, a topic that is often covered in Germany during the tenth grade. And in the United States embryology is usually taught in the tenth grade while in Germany it is taught in the eleventh grade. I have heard good arguments for both traditions.

I'm not interested here in arguing whether one tradition is right or wrong, better or worse. The Waldorf curriculum is not a "given" that a teacher simply has to accept and implement. It is not some lasting edifice that stands on its own for as long as possible, to which perhaps we occasionally make additions or subtractions. It has developed—and needs to continue to develop to stay alive. In a living organism even the bones, the most architectural parts of our body, are continually being built up and broken down, and adapting to new activities and to stresses and strains that life puts upon the body. They are permeated by life. I believe that we can view the curriculum as something alive that does not exist by itself but is being continually shaped and re-shaped out of the activity of all those involved in the educational process.

We can view the curriculum as something alive that does not exist by itself but is being continually shaped and re-shaped out of the activity of all those involved in the educational process.

From the teacher's perspective the curriculum then becomes a search, a question, a matter of research. When, for example, we take the "indications" in the so-called curriculum and follow them back to their source in Steiner's lectures or the meetings with teachers, we begin to see them in their respective contexts. They cease being isolated instructions. Moreover, most of the "indications" are anything but straightforward. What might it mean to teach about the organs and their functions in relation to the soul and spirit in the tenth grade? What did Steiner mean by emphasizing "mutual causation" ("*Wechselursachenverhältnis*") in eleventh grade biology? These and many more indications are challenges and questions, not contents to be implemented. We could also say: the curriculum points in a direction; it is food for thought, and the essential thing is that we become active in crafting the curriculum out of our inner efforts, the work with the students, the conversations with colleagues, interactions with parents, and so on.

Engaged Learning

When, as a young teacher, we enter a school, we enter a particular context. We may well be told that in a particular class this or that subject matter is usually taught, and we can take that as our starting point. We can study Stockmeyer or newer books on the curriculum such as the one by Richter and Rawson (2000). We can go back to Steiner's writings and study them. We can talk with our colleagues and experienced teachers from other schools and ask what they teach. We can collect main lesson books from students who have been taught by different teachers. All this can provide orientation and help us on our way. It's the time of apprenticeship as a teacher.

But what is essential during this time is that the recommendations we receive from the outside are not simply taken up and implemented. We need to be inspired by what we teach. The inspiration comes when an idea or recommendation resonates with what each of us as a human being and educator feels to be important and essential. When teachers feel compelled to teach something based on outer authority, the teaching can hardly be authentic and in consequence it will bear little fruit.

Once a new teacher I was mentoring tried some of the things he knew I had done. He told

me afterward that the classes weren't going well. I sensed that he was trying to imitate what I was doing, but wasn't really all that moved by it. When a next block was about to begin, I didn't tell him what I had done. I said, "Teach something you are interested in and passionate about, that you feel the students might take interest in." He took up a content area that he knew well and that he found significant and interesting. He began teaching out of himself, and the content was permeated with his being. This, I believe, is what the students perceive and acknowledge. The classes went much better. The students were more involved and interested.

Of course, being inspired about a topic is not enough. After a year or so of teaching, I was asked to teach geology in the ninth grade. I prepared, spent time in the Alps, scouted out areas nearer my school for field trips, and so on. After all this I had the feeling: this may interest you, but it's not going to interest the students. I had a horrible feeling that the block would be at best a minor disaster. Luckily, I was able to arrange a conversation with Günther Zickwolff, an experienced teacher. We sat together for an hour. He did not focus on what to teach, but described how he brought geology to life in the classroom. After that hour I knew what was missing in my preparation. Zickwolff had described riddle after riddle that geologists had faced when confronting the world of rocks, mountains, glaciers, and so forth.

I realized, for example, that my task was not to tell the students that rock layers have different ages. Rather, I could let them follow William Smith's wandering through England examining rock layers, collecting and comparing fossils from different layers. What did it mean that some fossils were only in distinct layers and that he could find these "index fossils," as he called them, in various parts of England? How could we understand that the fossils resembled aquatic organisms? How might we describe how the layers of fossil-containing rock came about? What might our musings lead us to think about the difference between upper and lower layers?

After trying to craft learning encounters in this way with the students, it became increasingly clear to me that they were learning to experience their surroundings as a world to be explored rather than as a set of facts to be learned, and also that they were participating in the way living science unfolds. I tried to become more aware of and to avoid the teacher's tendency to provide de-contextualized answers to questions that the students never asked ("There are three fundamental types of rocks…"). We explored together, often guided by the work of great scientists who had explored before us and who had shown by example what it means to be a careful observer, to be persistent, to ask questions, to learn from mistakes, and to recognize relations that at first are not readily apparent.

We explored together, often guided by the work of great scientists who had shown by example what it means to be a careful observer, to be persistent, to ask questions, to learn from mistakes, and to recognize relations that at first are not readily apparent.

The effort revolves around letting a process unfold in which the students can participate and take interest. Interest is strongly awakened through riddles, for when riddles arise in us, we become active and engaged in a search. We don't begin with answers to questions the students never had; we provide a context that leaves space and time for the students to explore, to formulate ideas themselves, and to consider how their ideas relate to the phenomena. Riddles are an opening into the unknown future.

What's important is that we have entered a process of inquiry that does not stop for as long as we teach and learn. We have left behind the curriculum as an authority that says: "This is what must be done." The individual in us needs to be active and striving, questioning the courses we develop. In this effort (and it is the ongoing effort that matters) as a developing, searching being, I meet the students as developing, searching beings. In other words, we meet as beings of activity, as beings therefore not limited by what is and has been; we are open to the potential we call future, a potential that as a source of life can work into the present at any moment.

Teachers and students together are open to the potential we call future, a potential that as a source of life can work into the present at any moment.

The Presence of the Unknown

I often taught a botany block in the twelfth grade near the end of the school year—right before the students were to present their individual year-long projects and before their stage play. In other words, not exactly an ideal situation for classroom learning. I developed the block as a field course, and the plants themselves taught most of the content. We would go outside nearly every day and observe, describe, and identify wildflowers growing in the different environments around the school. By entering into a dialogue with the plants through their work, the students recognized that plants are quite remarkable creatures. And in observing many different plants, they began to get a sense for different growth forms, flowering patterns, and the relations of specific species to specific environments.

In one class, toward the end of the block, we were sitting at the top of a wooded hill studying the wild columbine, a plant that grows on rocky outcrops. It was hard not to be drawn to its remarkable hanging and highly structured scarlet-red and bright-yellow flowers. While the students were observing, writing, or drawing, one of them asked, "Mr. Holdrege, where do all these plants come from?" Out of the whole situation, it was clear to me that this was not a question to be answered. Every answer would have fallen flat in light of the reality which, for a moment, this student had inwardly touched. I think I just looked at her and nodded in the inner acknowledgment that I have the same unanswered question. This was a golden educational moment that I cherish to this day.

Something of the normally un-manifest and deep nature of plants had become present in this student's soul, and her response to this meeting was wonder and a question. The experience of such a presence is not clearly outlined and definable because it is an opening into a reality that can still become, that has depth and potential. For this reason it is experienced as alive and vital; we touch a common source of becoming in ourselves and in the world.

Every time wonder arises in the encounter with the world, when questions spring up, when the students see riddles that ignite inner movement, when answers not only bring satisfaction but are an opening into even deeper questions, when the students are experiencing a teacher who is also searching and learning—in all of these ways the unknown becomes present in education.

Education as Encounter

What I have been describing is education as personal encounter. For teachers, there is so much that we can bring into contact with the students. We have to be selective—especially since encounters don't just happen, they grow out of engagement and dwelling with things. So the question arises: What learning situations do I want to facilitate for the students—which processes do I want to help get started—so that I prepare the ground for these kinds

of encounters? What is worthwhile for the students to engage in and learn from? At the beginning of a block or course, I asked myself such questions. They helped me to think more about why and what I was doing and also to become more attentive to those times when I felt that encounters were actually taking place. Over time you can begin to develop a kind of sense organ for the quality of these encounters. You can't make encounters happen, but you can become aware of them when they do happen and reflect on the processes that facilitate their happening.

The philosopher Albert Borgmann speaks of " 'reality' taken in the sense of genuineness, seriousness, or commanding presence, the sense we have in mind when we speak of real gold as opposed to things that merely glitter and of a real person, a mensch, as opposed to a dude." (1995, p.38) He goes on to say:

> What is eminently real has a commanding presence and a telling and strong continuity with its world. … Whatever engages our attention due to its own dignity does so in important part as an embodiment and disclosure of the world it has emerged from. (pp.39–40)

We can encounter many presences: a biographical story, a rock formation, a plant, wood or stone in carving, a great novel, the images of a poem, serious conversation in the classroom, a campfire, a myth, carrots waiting to be harvested, or questions of an inquiring scientist. All these "things" and many more are genuine presences that the students can meet. They all are rooted in larger contexts—they aren't glitter and surface, but have depths to reveal, each in its own way. Meeting them allows us to glimpse or touch the deeper unknowns of the world and ourselves.

In such encounter-based learning, education becomes life. It is not merely preparation for what comes later, in a linear sense. This is an insight and a practice that inspires: education is about real encounters! It can move us to review and assess our current practices so as to consider how much encounter-based learning is actually occurring. This, in turn, may lead us to seriously question some forms and practices that schools and education have assumed. Should we strip school of some of its artificiality to make room for the dynamics and explorations that are needed to breathe more life into education? What might we need to do to de-school school so that we can more adequately serve young people? What would we do if we could move beyond the mental pictures of "school" and beyond habits that limit our imaginations?

Through encounters with genuine presences students have experienced depths and meaning and becoming. We have reason to hope that the world will not be prepared for what they can bring to it.

As with anything real, these questions cannot be addressed abstractly and generally. They need to be addressed concretely, on the ground, in ways possible and appropriate for groups of educators and students working in different cultures and countries.

In such encounter-based learning, education becomes life. It is not merely preparation for what comes later, in a linear sense.

Wherever in the world students are engaging in some form of exploratory, encounter-based learning, something important is happening. These young people are plunging into processes, experiencing challenges, grappling with difficulties, raising questions, and working with nascent insights. Through encounters

with genuine presences, they have experienced depths and meaning and becoming. They are not separate from these creative sources. We have reason to hope that the world will not be prepared for what they can bring to it.

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Science Teaching – Part II
Methods and Approaches

Roberto Trostli

Editor's note: This article is taken from a lecture delivered to teachers in Hungary in June 2013. Some of the examples refer to the physical presence of the speaker in front of the audience. They have been retained along with the informal spoken-word style of the presentation.

To educate youth
Means to foster and tend
In matter the spirit,
In today the tomorrow,
In earthly life,
The spirit's existence.
– *Rudolf Steiner*

In the previous article (*Research Bulletin,* Vol. XVIII No. 2), we looked at science teaching in terms of the grand rhythms of child development. In this article we will look at the same subject in terms of the rhythm of day and night.

Our teaching can utilize four rhythms that correspond to the four members of the human being. The rhythm of the year is the rhythm of the physical body. As the year cycles through the seasons, so does our body slowly grow and respond to the world around us. The rhythm of the month is the rhythm of the etheric body. That is why it works so well to have main lessons blocks of four—rather than three—weeks, for it takes a month truly to integrate one's experience. The rhythm of the week is the rhythm of the astral body. We utilize it to give each day of the week its character. And the rhythm of the night is the rhythm of the ego. This rhythm is captured by the phrase that we considered: "In today the tomorrow." Like a little death, the night is a time when our soul and spirit excarnate from our body. That process plays a profound part in the process of digesting our earthly experiences and uniting them with our spiritual essence.

Methods of science teaching

Waldorf education does not provide formulas for teachers to follow; rather, it demands that teachers develop pedagogical practices out of an anthroposophical understanding of the human being. The foundations for this understanding were laid by Rudolf Steiner, but teachers must work to make them their own. Through study, practice, and reflection upon our experiences, we can derive a method that truly addresses the whole human being.

Waldorf education does not provide formulas for teachers to follow; rather, it demands that teachers develop pedagogical practices out of an anthroposophical understanding of the human being.

Because in this article we are going to examine the topic of science teaching in depth and detail, it may feel dense—perhaps even indigestible—to those who are unfamiliar with these ideas. It is important, however, to penetrate these ideas if we want to understand the process of thinking. For thinking is the means by which we penetrate and grasp the world of matter with our spiritual forces. Heaven is brought down to earth whenever we think. For this reason we need to understand how to teach the children to think in a living way.

The philosophical background

Of all the subjects in the Waldorf curriculum, science and math most directly address the students' thinking. They give us the opportunity to help students become logical and flexible in their thinking and to develop confidence in their own powers of thought. Today we will examine in detail how we can approach this task, so that we can help our students come to recognize that "the world is true."

Rudolf Steiner stressed the importance of teaching students to learn to think, and he gave specific instruction for how to school their thinking in Lecture VIII of *The Foundations of Human Experience,* and in Lectures II and III of *Education for Adolescents.* According to Steiner, thinking occurs in three stages. These stages are interwoven and occur, to some extent, simultaneously. He called these three stages drawing conclusions, forming judgments, and arriving at concepts. The first two of these stages can happen almost simultaneously, or they can be more widely separated. The third is a lifelong endeavor.

Rudolf Steiner stressed the importance of teaching students to learn to think, and he gave specific instruction for how to school their thinking.

In my work through the years, I have found that the clearer I am about such basic ideas, the better I am able to penetrate my teaching so that it becomes more effective. So, if this is a review for you, I hope that you will enjoy juxtaposing your understanding with mine and seeing whether we agree or not. And if this is new to you, then I welcome you to the years-long task of penetrating this important set of anthroposophical ideas.

Conclusions: Conclusions are perceptions brought to consciousness. Any sense impression can become a conclusion, but only if we become aware of the impression. When you look at me, for instance, you are forming conclusions. You are aware of my body—its size and form; you are aware of my features and my clothes, and you may take note of other details of my appearance. At the same time you may be having impressions of which you are not conscious.

While you are straining to understand my words, you may not catch the expression on my face, or if you start taking note of my expressions, you may miss some of my words. We often have impressions of which we are not aware, because the world is full of possible percepts. For instance, we might hear, but not listen to, a sound. Hearing consists of receiving the sensations of the sounds around us, while listening requires the active involvement of the person. We have all experienced being in a crowded room and hearing many conversations, but if someone mentions our name, we hear that word emerge from the cacophony of sound. In order to draw conclusions we must, so to speak, listen to what we hear. It is possible to draw conclusions about only some of our perceptions.

Let's try this: Hold a pencil vertically at arm's length in front of your face. Focus your gaze on the pencil and notice what happens to everything in the distance. Now focus your gaze at something in the distance and notice what happens to the pencil.

While you are drawing conclusions about the pencil, you are not really taking in the scene in the distance; while you are drawing conclusions about the distance, you are not really able to take in the pencil. This is not just a matter of focus; it's also a matter of attention.

We live in the realm of continual conclusions. When we speak, we express conclusions; when we listen, we draw conclusions; when we read, we draw conclusions; when we use any of our senses

consciously, we draw conclusions. One of the main tasks of the teacher is to present the students with conclusions that are rich and varied, and that engage the students' interest.

According to Rudolf Steiner, conclusions can live only in the fully waking soul. They are a result of the working of the ego, which is why the act of drawing conclusions works so powerfully on the students. This is why we have to be careful not to stuff our students so full of conclusions that they suffer a form of soul or spiritual indigestion.

The way our students learn to draw conclusions affects the way they will think for the rest of their lives.

The way our students learn to draw conclusions affects the way they will think for the rest of their lives. What does this mean? On the most foundational level, it means that the very environment in which our students learn and work forms their thinking. Our colleagues in early childhood know this well. They know that the order and beauty of the classroom work powerfully on their children's growth and engender well-being. In our classrooms, order and beauty foster clear thinking. On the etheric level it means that rhythmical and hygienic lessons will support the development of living thinking, while working in a more disorganized or capricious manner will make it harder for students' thoughts to grow and thrive. Although we may not always recognize it or accept it, we have a great responsibility towards our students, because what we do will affect them for the rest of their lives.

Judgments: When we become conscious of our perceptions, we begin to form judgments. This process arises out of the human being's desire to transform the process of perception into knowledge. A conclusion consists of the awareness of our perceptions, but a judgment allows us to know those perceptions more fully. While conclusions live more in our sense impressions, our judgments allow us to "make sense of" our impressions.

We do this by bringing our percept into relationship with our prior percepts from the past. We are continually forming judgments, and it's rare that we become aware of them. When we see or hear or taste or feel something we've never sensed before, there is a moment when we are fully in the judgment realm as we try to understand what we're sensing.

For instance, as you listen to me speaking in English, you are aware of the sounds and perhaps some of the meanings of the words. But what if I said:

Wodon þa wælwulfas for wætere ne
murnon,
wicinga werod, west ofer Pantan,
ofer scir wæter scyldas wegon,
lidmen to lande linde bæron.

I imagine that almost no one understood any of that but you tried to make sense of the sounds. That is the stage of forming judgments. It happens more quickly when we are familiar with whatever we encounter and much more slowly when we encounter the unfamiliar.

We form judgments by bringing our percept into relationship with our prior percepts from the past.

According to Steiner, judgments live in the dreaming soul, so we are not fully aware of them. They are a result of the working of the astral body.

While the manner in which our students learn to draw conclusions affects their thinking, the way they learn to form judgments affects their life of habits, their very character. Thus the teacher has a special responsibility to help students form judgments in a way that supports healthy soul and moral development. What does this mean? It means that if we present students with rich and varied

experiences, especially with opportunities that awaken interest and awe, they will develop a love of life, which can express itself in a sense of optimism. An example of this that bears reflection is Steiner's suggestion that the best way to help students develop a healthy relationship to their bodies and their sexuality is to make sure that they experience the majesty of nature and the beauty of art. Try explaining that to parents!

Conclusions and judgments are inextricably linked. There is a constant interplay between our awareness of a percept and the process of comparing it with our prior experience. A conclusion is complete as soon as we become aware of it. The finality of a conclusion is well expressed by the German word for it: *Schluss*. *Schluss* means "finished" or "done," or "the end." While the process of drawing conclusions is finished quickly, the process of forming judgments is not over so quickly. One can continue to dwell on one's impressions for a while, but at some point this process also comes to an end.

Concepts: The process of drawing conclusions and forming judgments sets the stage for concepts to germinate, grow, and develop. Concept development is more complicated, for it involves not only the thinker but the thought, not only the thought, but the archetype of the thought.

What is a concept? I like to think of it as a seed, for a seed expresses the essence of a plant, the potential of all that the plant will become. But I also think of it as being like a fruit that contains the seed, for a concept both embraces and expresses a thought.

For instance, you are all sitting on chairs, but the chair you are sitting on is not synonymous with your concept of *chair*. This morning you might have sat in a chair while eating breakfast. That chair was different from this chair, but it was still a chair. Think of a stool. Think of a bench. Are they chairs?

Your concept of *chair* embraces all the chairs you've experienced, seen, read, or heard about. That concept expresses itself in all the chairs that have ever or will ever be created. And each chair, no matter how different it is from other chairs, contains some of the essence of that concept.

Because concepts are large and varied, they grow gradually in the human being, and so they should. Ideally they should never be fixed or finished but should always remain capable of growing, of becoming. It is our task as teachers to help students cultivate the process of forming concepts in such a way that the concepts can grow and become increasingly developed and refined. If that happens, the concepts can serve the students for the rest of their lives and even their lives beyond the threshold of death.

I like to think of a concept as a seed, for a seed expresses the essence of a plant, but I also think of it as being like the fruit that contains the seed, for a concept both embraces and expresses a thought.

While conclusions develop awareness, and judgments result in knowledge formed by relationship, concepts form the basis for wisdom, allowing us to understand ourselves and the world around us. Concepts live in the sleeping soul and are a result of the working of the etheric body. According to Steiner, the concepts that we form have an effect on the physical body. Our very features and bearing reveal the types of concepts that we formed in our early lives. This places a very special responsibility on the teacher to strive always to engender living concepts in her students.

While fixed or dead concepts result in the hardening of the soul, living concepts allow a person to remain mobile and flexible in his thinking, and they provide the basis for inner freedom. Just in case all this sounds too abstract, let's examine how a concept might be developed throughout the grades.

Let's take one of the most important concepts in a human being's life: the concept of light. In the earliest school years, children just experience the light and the darkness. Their experiences are not brought to consciousness, but we know that these experiences have a deep impact on the child's soul. In the early grades children will recite poems and sing songs that describe or express the light. They will say the morning verse that begins, "The sun with loving light… ." They will hear stories and legends involving light and darkness. They may begin to associate light with goodness and truth, beauty and love, and darkness with evil and falsehood, ugliness and hatred. These associations remain rooted deep in the soul.

In the third, fourth, and fifth grades, students will hear about the creation of light in the stories from the Old Testament and various mythologies. They will also hear about light in their studies of the animals and plants. In their studies of farming and in geography classes, they will come to understand the effect of light on crops, animals, and people. In the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade study of physics, students will now begin to study light in all of its manifestations. They will learn the characteristics of light, its behavior, its laws. Now the concepts they form can be expressed in concise and concrete terms.

Throughout the high school years, students will return again and again to the study of light. In astronomy and meteorology, in physics and chemistry, in economics and philosophy, they will come to understand and express the many aspects of light. Through these years the concept of light grows ever more complex and also ever more refined. Let us hope that this process will continue for many years and that the light will serve as an inspiration and a consolation throughout their lives, that the "common light of day" will always evoke a hint of the "clouds of glory"[1] that we trail as we come to our lives on earth.

Let's summarize what we have covered so far in this table:

Logical Process	*Aspect of Person*	*What it affects*
Conclusion	ego	thinking
Judgment	astral body	habits/character
Concept	etheric body	physical body

The structure of a main lesson

All this sounds so theoretical, and so it is. But just as Waldorf education is the application of anthroposophy to the task of education, so too the way we structure our lessons and the methods we use are the application of anthroposophy to the task of teaching. So how do we put all this theoretical knowledge into practice?

In Lecture III of *Education for Adolescents,* Steiner indicated how physics lessons can be scheduled on a two-day rhythm to engage the whole human being. Such a schedule consists of a demonstration and a recapitulation on the first day and a review on the second day. This process allows students to draw conclusions, form judgments, and arrive at concepts in a living way. Although there is much talk in North America about the "three-day rhythm," I know of no indications by Steiner concerning such a rhythm. While one is welcome to extend the two-day rhythm so that it encompasses more than two days, I think it is important to recognize that we are essentially working with a two-day rhythm in our teaching.

The two-day rhythm harnesses the power of the night, expressing the phrase "in today the tomorrow" in our pedagogical work.

The two-day rhythm consists of presenting a topic to the students on the first day and following the presentation by a recapitulation on the same day, then reviewing the topic on the following day. This rhythm harnesses the

power of the night, expressing the phrase "in today the tomorrow" in our pedagogical work. Since we are speaking about science teaching, let us see how this rhythm applies to the parts of the science main lesson, but we could just as easily apply it to a subject such as history, geography, or literature.

The demonstration: The first part of the lesson I will describe is the demonstration, even though it does not come first in the lesson. It can occur after the review of the previous day's work, or it may come at the end of the lesson after the students have completed their main lesson book-work.

When the demonstration is performed, students draw a series of conclusions from their observations and impressions. The demonstration acts powerfully, affecting the whole being of the student, and it requires the strength of the ego to bring perceptions to consciousness. According to Steiner, the ego has its basis in the legs and feet. It is no surprise that when we reach maturity, we are ready to "stand on our own two feet."

Just as we try to organize our school day so that we don't tire the students by excessive physical activity, we also need to limit the amount of time that they spend drawing conclusions because they work so powerfully on the students. Here is an example that happened recently in my class.

During our chemistry block, I presented a series of demonstrations with oxygen. I showed the students how oxygen can be generated with hydrogen peroxide and baker's yeast, and then I had them generate some oxygen in their own test tubes and test for it with a glowing splint. Next I showed them how to gather a larger amount of oxygen in jars through the water displacement method and demonstrated how various substances burn in oxygen. We started out with a candle burning in a jar of oxygen. It took almost two minutes for the candle to burn out. Then we burned sulfur in oxygen, and it burned with an intense blue flame. Next came steel wool, which burned like a sparkler, shedding bright sparks. Finally I burned a strip of magnesium in a jar of oxygen, and it was even brighter (if that is possible) than the magnesium we had burned in the air.

When we reviewed all of this during the next main lesson, the students remembered almost nothing of what we had done. Almost nothing! "How is that possible?" I thought. "Weren't the experiences dramatic and memorable?"

This is what can happen when we perform too many demonstrations and tax the students' souls too strongly. The students must have been overwhelmed and overloaded with impressions. As a result, they were not able to lift their perceptions into their imaginations during the recapitulation. They were not able to take them healthfully into sleep and retrieve them again upon waking. While the oxygen demonstrations may have been entertaining, they did not educate the students. The students did not learn from them. We have to work to avoid this kind of experience.

The recapitulation: Rudolf Steiner said that right after the demonstration, the teacher should verbally recapitulate it for the students, briefly stating what was done and what occurred. Here is a typical recapitulation:

> Today we observed what happens when a candle burns in a closed jar. When the jar was first put over the candle, the candle continued to burn brightly. In a few moments, the inside of the jar became a little bit murky, and we saw very fine droplets forming on the inside of the glass. Then the candle began to burn less brightly, and its flame diminished in size and brightness. After about half a minute, the flame became very small and eventually went out. A long wisp of grey smoke rose from the wick, which continued to glow red for a little while longer. Tomorrow we will explore some of

the gases involved in combustion." (Note how one can lay the seeds of anticipation for what is to come by mentioning it at the very end of the recapitulation.)

Such a recapitulation allows the students to re-experience in their imagination the events they have observed with their senses. The experiences that took hold of the whole body are now lifted into the rhythmic system, and as the students form imaginative pictures, the astral body becomes involved. The recapitulation allows the students to continue to form the judgments that were engendered by their sense impressions. This process of hearing the recapitulation and forming imaginative pictures will aid the students during sleep to begin the process of arriving at living concepts.

After the recapitulation, no further conscious work is done that day with these phenomena. That part of our teaching is done for the day, but perhaps the most important part of the students' learning occurs during the night. Although this part may be invisible to those of us who are not clairvoyant, that doesn't mean that we shouldn't take it into account. Sometimes what lies just beyond our consciousness is what is most important.

During sleep, the ego and astral body leave the physical and etheric bodies and enter the spirit realm. By this process, the sense impressions of the demonstration and the imaginative pictures that the students formed during the recapitulation are lifted into higher realms. What happens there? What might the students encounter in the spiritual world?

I think that as the students spend time in the spiritual world during sleep, they encounter the archetypes of the forces that they have experienced in the material world. I don't know this to be true, but I suspect that these archetypes are the beings that embody these forces and that are expressed by earthly phenomena. So if students have been studying the relationship between the length of the strings and the consonance of a musical interval, they might experience the archetype of consonance when they enter the spiritual world. They might sit at the knee of Euterpe, the muse of music, and learn from her. When the students wake up the next morning, the impressions and pictures they formed the previous day live in their etheric body as memory pictures and as the germs of living concepts. Steiner referred to these memory pictures as spiritual photographs. I wonder what simile he would have used if he were surrounded by today's technology.

I think that as the students spend time in the spiritual world during sleep, they encounter the archetypes of the forces that they have experienced in the material world.

The review: When the students return to school, the first part of the lesson includes a review and discussion of the previous day's work. Now the students are asked to summarize their observations and articulate their judgments. New judgments may be formed at this time as students listen to each other's experiences and hear about aspects of the demonstration that they may not have observed or remembered. During the review students will consider questions and grapple with aspects of the phenomenon that they didn't fully grasp. Ideally, the review in the upper grades—and certainly in the high school—will contain three kinds of questions: questions to which the students know the answers; questions to which they don't know the answers; and questions that the students never thought to ask.

During the discussion, as students begin to come to a deeper understanding of what they have experienced, the concept begins to emerge. Because the concept is usually still in a germinal form, we should not be concerned if it

is phrased in general terms. If we are too quick to settle on the wording for a concept, we fix it in the students' minds and deprive the concept of the opportunity to grow and develop.

Once the concept has been stated, perhaps tentatively or provisionally, the students will be able to build upon or develop the concept further by new demonstrations or activities. They also have opportunities to express the concept in their written and artistic work, and through further work they will begin to recognize the concept's manifestations and applications in their daily lives. Although I won't spend any time today describing what the students might do during this work time, I want to stress that the time they spend working individually is one of the most important activities in the main lesson.

This approach will give students the confidence that through their thinking they can address the many problems and circumstances that life will present them.

The three parts of the main lesson correspond to the three processes of thought and address the threefold human being. During the demonstration students primarily draw conclusions about the phenomena. The process of drawing conclusions takes hold of the whole human being and calls strongly upon the student's ego and strengthens the will. During the recapitulation, students primarily form judgments. The recapitulation helps the students take the content of the demonstration into their sleep life. The recapitulation lifts the experience of the demonstration into the rhythmic system and engages the astral body, nourishing the students' feelings. During the review on the next day students begin to arrive at the concept. Calling on the forces of memory, the review engages the etheric body, developing the students' thinking. This can be summarized in the following table:

Part of the lesson	*Thought process*	*Aspect of person*	*Soul faculty*
Demonstration	Conclusion	Ego	Will
Recapitulation	Judgment	Astral body	Feeling
Review	Concept	Etheric body	Thinking

I think that it is important to understand the process of thought and the process by which we teach children to think. Even if you don't remember the details, I hope that you recognize how important it is to structure our teaching so that we engage the whole human being and that you realize that it is possible to use the rhythms of learning to help the students develop concepts that can continue to grow throughout their lives.

If we use this form of applied anthroposophy, we will give our students a foundation that will allow them to think true thoughts. They will be able to reach the spirit through their thinking. This will give them the confidence that through their thinking they can address the many problems and circumstances that life will present them.

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Endnotes

1. William Wordsworth, "Ode on Intimations of Immortality." A section of this poem formed the basis for the description of the science curriculum in the previous lecture.

When Animals Speak

Melissa Borden

There is a silent language that emanates from Nature and speaks to the human soul. It has been considered by poets, scientists, and philosophers alike. The ancient notion of "archetypes" or "gestures" within plants and animals was explored by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in the 18th century.[1] Later, Steiner considered this idea from a spiritual perspective, speaking of "etheric realities" and of an esoteric partnership between human beings and animals. He suggested that "cosmic forces streaming through the zodiac" unfold in the form and gesture of each of the animals.[2] In this way, Goethean "archetypes" or "gestures," he believed, may be perceived in the human soul. Young children, for whom the animal kingdom is so compelling, listen to the language of Nature with a freshness and openness that allows them to receive benevolent impressions favoring their healthy development. Each of the animals has a unique gift to bestow on the developing human being. This was perceived by the ancients, understood by both Goethe and Steiner, and is harkened to by young children with wise and deep understanding.

Young children listen to the language of Nature with a freshness and openness that allows them to receive benevolent impressions favoring their healthy development.

Archetypes in Nature

The medieval alchemist and physician Paracelsus wrote of an inner "signature" or "essence" in plants.[3] Goethe later developed these notions through his scientific and poetic studies of the natural world. Goethe's "leaf sequence" was followed by a study of animal morphology. He wrote: "Phenomena in Nature possess an 'inner life' or integrity that is not easily summed up or explained."[4] Steiner explored these ideas, concluding that Nature resonates in the human soul and inspires deep understandings of the cosmos and of human destiny.[5] Homeopathic approaches to supporting human health integrate Goethean concepts and acknowledge the etheric realities described by Steiner. Dr. Edward Bach (1885–1936) drew a direct connection between plant essences and human health with his Bach Flower Remedies.[6] More recently, Dr. Temple Grandin has written and lectured extensively on her own journey with autism, describing the healing path revealed to her through her work with animals.[7]

Young Children and Animals

Children's long-standing love affair with the animals of the earth is well documented in song, poetry, and story. Fairytales reveal ancient traditions replete with the charms and alarms of characters from the animal world. An essential quality of each animal strives to speak powerfully through these stories. Modern children's literature likewise explores the relationship between children and animals with compelling themes of healing, self discovery, and the coming of age. Further, parents and teachers know well the delight young children take in the movement life of the animal kingdom as their little "horses" gallop, their "bunnies" hop, and their "puppies" wrestle in children's play. Observing growing babies, it has long been said that the child takes a lightning trip through the stages of animal life, swimming like a fish in utero, rocking on the belly like a snake, crawling as a four-

legged animal, crouching to free the hands like a primate and, finally, standing in human uprightness.[8]

Wolfgang Schad, in his seminal book exploring embryology and animal morphology, writes that human development is "continually recaptivated in creative play as the young child explores gesture and movement." He adds that "the adult's experience of nature is quite different from the child's… [who] has an almost dream-like awareness of the deep relationships uniting all things."[9] For young children, this dream-like capacity to take in the world around them is almost meditative, as the child lives in a mood of religious devotion to the world and, for them, etheric realities are palpable. The inner archetype or gesture of the bird that alights upon a branch or the bee that buries itself in the pollen of a flower is experienced by the young child with openness and sympathy.

Children live in a mood of religious devotion to the world and etheric realities are for them palpable.

In her book *How Children Play*, Ingeborg Haller notes that when "young children are dealing with animals, it can be seen in their eyes that they have compassion for the animals who are so narrowly constrained by their own one-sidedness. It is as if the children can feel the longing of the animals to be freed from their own constraints."[10] The human capacity to overcome what Steiner described as "one-sidedness" when speaking of the animal kingdom is surely the basis for inner transformation.[11] Our animal brothers and sisters of the earth are linked in some mysterious and profound way to the unfolding of our humanity. Karl König, the founder of the Camphill movement in Britain, wrote: "They are so similar to us that this can hardly be denied. We know we belong together."[12] When Noah set forth on the Ark, the animals accompanied him in a unity of destiny and in service to humanity.

Our animal brothers and sisters of the earth are linked in some mysterious and profound way to the unfolding of our humanity.

Providing Healthy Soul Impressions

An anthroposophical understanding of human incarnation leads us to understand that whereas the baby in utero swims, so to speak, in etheric substance formed by cosmic realities, the growing child begins to unite with the earth and the physical body. It is through sense impressions of the world that the nutrition or "food" for this process of incarnation is found. In his celebrated book *Last Child in the Woods*, Richard Louv describes a modern-day sensory environment increasingly divorced from the natural world. He refers to a growing concern about a generation of children whose sense impressions are significantly formed by electronic experiences and whose relationships to the outdoors and nature are limited. "Nature Deficit" is seen by a growing number of child advocates to be a real concern. Louv and others suggest that nature experiences—that is, access to natural environments where children may play freely—can be seen as therapeutic for many children today. He is an advocate of outdoor classrooms and of bringing Nature into the city.[13]

However, it is not a dynamic between city children and country children that forms the discussion. Rather, it is the drift of cultural attitudes and habits in relation to societal changes and technological advances that is at issue. Sadly, the lives of children reared in rural settings grow more and more like those of urban children with less time spent outdoors and more time indoors with computer screens. As the realities of modern life press upon the lives of children, it becomes

more urgent for parents and teachers to create educational and therapeutic environments that offer children the opportunity to receive healthful soul impressions that the natural world has so long provided.

Waldorf schools have long striven to meet this growing reality with a curriculum that explicitly addresses children's need for tangible experiences of the natural world. Steiner's understanding of the healthful symbiosis between human beings and the natural world can inspire teachers to create school environments that incorporate gardens and nature spaces accessible to the children in their care. It may be asked, though, how teachers understand the role of animals in this work. How are children's hungry souls fed with healthful impressions?

Pets and Young Children

There are many children today who have never gathered eggs from a hen house, carried a bucket of fresh milk, or ridden a pony bareback. Yet there is no lack of pets in the modern home. Rats, rodents of all sorts, fish, insects, toads, snakes, dogs, and cats abound. The pet industry is booming. For the most part, these animals live in cages, kennels, or glass boxes. They take their pleasures under heat lamps and on spinning wire wheels. These are the animals of the earth that seem to actually fit with some convenience into modern life. On the one hand, they require little care and minimal involvement, and they are fairly inexpensive to maintain. On the other hand, they are creatures who have been completely removed from their natural environment and have no capacity to serve in the role nature has allotted them. They can offer little to the family; in this sense they live strictly, so to speak, on the dole. They can be seen to represent a certain idle hopelessness, being held captive in a cage as they run madly on their wire wheels. If, as Goethe suggests, there is an inner archetype within all plants and animals that echoes in the human soul, what does the child experience from these captive pets?

Certainly, the human capacity for love is boundless, and the young child may stream sympathy and love towards both snake and rat. But can these pets stand before the children as healthy representatives of their species where a true knowing can unfold? Perhaps they may have something powerful to communicate to their young owners, and yet, how do we understand this? Steiner asks us to consider "the voice" of each animal which may help us as human beings to understand ourselves and the "riddles of the universe."[14]

If there is an inner archetype within all plants and animals that echoes in the human soul, what does the child experience from these captive pets?

A Silent Language at Work

In a series of lectures given in October 1923, Steiner discussed the threefold nature of the animal kingdom with the forms and natures of the lion, the eagle, and the cow embodying the respiratory, nerve, and metabolic systems. He suggests that the animals of the earth work in an esoteric partnership with human beings in the unfolding of "cosmic lawfulness."[15] Thus, the form and nature of each animal manifests itself profoundly and significantly. It is perhaps no surprise that young children still fresh from the spiritual world may have an innate understanding of these realities. Developmentally speaking, the young child still dwells in an Eden of sorts—that is, in an unspoken brotherhood with mineral, plant, and animal kingdoms. When observing young children, one cannot help but see that they naturally delight in this fellowship with the animals.

Most significantly, children readily understand the constraints under which the animals live, the confines of what Steiner calls their "one-sidedness."[16] Perhaps this

understanding quickens within children a knowing of their own human potential. Even very young children seem to grasp that while an animal is bound by its own nature, a human being, even a child, can transform and overstep such one-sidedness. Understanding the significance of this, we may deepen our respect for the role animals have long played in a wide range of healing therapies. The silent communication of the soul between human beings and animals may be an education of sorts that leads the child towards a path of self healing. If, as Steiner suggests, the inner archetype of each animal bestows its own wisdom, how can we as educators best draw upon it in our work with young children?

The silent communication of the soul between human beings and animals may be an education of sorts that leads the child towards a path of self healing.

From the Kindergarten

As a teacher, I have long wondered why it is that certain children are particularly, if not urgently, drawn towards the animals we care for in the kindergarten. Further, I have marveled at the seeming therapeutic role the animals play in supporting the healthy development of many children. Of special interest have been those children with recognizable struggles such as a tendency toward hyperactivity, deep emotional issues, and expressed behaviors somewhere on the autistic spectrum. While most children in the kindergarten take an easy delight in the animals, these particular children are often more powerfully compelled. Indeed, they are most often drawn towards the very animals that in some way mirror a familiar one-sidedness with which these children are struggling.

Fairytales adumbrate this theme in stories about enchanted animals struggling to free themselves and to thereby reveal their true human nature. There are children in the kindergarten who surely feel themselves to be under a spell of sorts that constrains their own natural development. The inner archetype of each animal, so perfectly expressed in form and movement, may offer some recognizable quality that unfolds in a silent language of healing. Caroline von Heydebrand, an early colleague of Steiner's, wrote of young children that they "are no mere guests or onlookers" in Nature. "Everything is absorbed by those creative forces which work upon the child's body for the good or detriment of his future life."[17]

Thus it is that the silent language emanating from the natural world is wisely understood by young children for whom the physical and etheric world is such an education. With this natural affinity in mind, the following impressions are offered, based upon years of teaching in the kindergarten and on a lifetime interest in understanding the relationship between children and the animals they so love.

Young Children and the Kindergarten Animals

Chickens

Pecking their way around the kindergarten yard, chickens are surely the embodiment of nursery rhyme charm. Their little musical clucks and coos give voice to a mood of homely contentment. Each morning in the kindergarten, their eggs are discovered by the children with wonder and even reverence. From Steiner's understanding of the bird kingdom, chickens may be seen as one of the most earthly of birds, given their limited capacity for flight and eons of domestication.[18] Chickens have long been the comfortable barnyard companion of human beings.

However, the ease and contentment in chickens can be easily disturbed and their

excitable nature readily aroused. An alarmed chicken quickly becomes a picture of hysteria and heedless impulse as it runs around in hectic panic at the slightest provocation. One only needs to invoke the image of Henny Penny running witlessly in circles as "the sky is falling" to picture the excitable nature of a chicken. A clutch of kindergarten children often has an excitable child or two in its ranks. These are the children who startle easily and are often inclined towards impulsive, hyperactive movement and, sometimes, emotional hysteria. It is one of the enduring wonders of teaching to observe a child with these tendencies in relation to the kindergarten chickens.

Naturally, that child's first impulse is to make a wild dash after the chickens in the yard. Not surprisingly, the chickens are not readily captured, as child and animal are an even match for one another. Yet somehow, there seems to be an invisible bond that draws the child towards this animal. One could say, perhaps, that the child recognizes something of his or her self in the one-sided nature of the chicken. If the child is allowed to return each day to the chickens, a profound sympathy for the animals' plight may begin to stir. In addition to the initial impulse to pursue them, there develops in the child a sense of longing and, one might say, a wish to be united with them. Perhaps, too, an archetype speaks to the soul, and the child experiences inwardly what is perceived outwardly. A homeopathy may be at work in which the very qualities the child senses in the animal play a part in forwarding a natural gestalt of healing. Indeed, there seems to be a turning point in which the heart awakens and becomes a guide. The child can begin to discover a new way of moving, a way of breathing and, perhaps, a beating of the heart that ceases to alarm the chickens and thereby allows the child to approach them.

If the child is allowed to return each day to the chickens, a profound sympathy for the animals' plight may begin to stir.

While an animal cannot conquer its own nature, a human being can. It is both moving and inspiring to observe a child who has struggled for months to catch and hold one of the chickens and who at last succeeds. A sense of peace and satisfaction is perceivable in both child and chicken. It is not the animal that has undergone a change but, rather, it is the child who has taken a step towards conquering and transforming an unsettling inner tendency. Having mastered something within, this child will never again struggle to catch the chicken. An archetypal quality in the animal has, thus, become the servant of the child's imperative towards balance, health, and wholeness. This is, surely, an education.

Rabbits

A rabbit, with its quick bright eyes and its soft warm fur, represents one of the animal kingdom's most lovable ambassadors. It is small wonder that *Peter Rabbit* is among the most cherished of children's stories.[19] The kindergarten rabbit is universally loved by all of the children and grows fat on gifts of dandelions and sweet grass. However, when one thinks of a rabbit's place in nature, one realizes that this darling creature, along with mice, provides a primary food source for much of the carnivorous world. Rabbits burrow and nest underground where they escape danger and avoid their many predators. A rabbit in the wild must be ever watchful and ready for quick escape. Even when somewhat tame, rabbits project a sense of shy wariness, as their little noses twitch nervously and their little hearts beat wildly when roused in fear.

Children naturally, and with little reminder, tend to speak quietly around the kindergarten bunny. It is, perhaps, no real surprise to observe in the kindergarten that the children who are inclined to be shy, guarded, and nervous are

especially drawn to the bunny whom they love to hold and comfort. These are the children with a gift for calming and settling a rabbit whose little, beating heart can actually be felt through its soft fur. By offering sympathy and care, the anxious children may find a way of calming and assuring themselves. Sympathizing with the animal's instinct to run away and hide, these children rarely chase, but wait patiently for the rabbit to trust enough for an approach. They seem to take special delight in the rabbit's antics as it clicks its hind legs together and leaps wildly about the yard. It is as if the child senses the rabbit's liberation from fear and nervousness. Often, the shy, nervous, or emotionally unsettled child begins the day with the rabbit. Again, it may be said that sympathy for the inescapable one-sidedness of this animal has stirred the human heart and conquered, at least for a moment, a soul struggle.

Children who are inclined to be shy, guarded, and nervous are especially drawn to the bunny whom they love to hold and comfort.

Dogs

Which of the many animals of the earth has more entirely entwined its destiny with that of human beings than the dog? This partner in work, this guardian of the home, this companion of the heart has accompanied us through the ages. Naturally a pack animal, the domesticated dog has a wide range of attributes that gives it fine-tuned social capacities. Further, it has been acknowledged that dogs, perhaps more than most animals, project a sense of emotion or feeling that is understandable to human beings. Dogs can telegraph their enthusiasm, happiness, fear, and loneliness to their human owners. There is a wide range of inspiring stories that bear witness to the remarkable link between human beings and the dogs they love.

Thus, it is little wonder that the dog is, perhaps, the most cherished animal in the kindergarten. Each morning, the class takes the dog for a walk. While some of the children may take issue with setting off in the pouring rain, there is never any real mutiny because it is understood that the dog needs its walk. (Who, then, really walks whom?) So, the dog's job in the kindergarten begins first thing in the morning. Ever vigilant about his "pack," the dog keeps a close eye on the children, showing evident restlessness when one strays.

Ever vigilant about his 'pack,' the dog keeps close eye on the children, showing evident restlessness when one strays.

Once back from the walk, it is the dog's job to put the chickens back in their pen and then is allowed to indulge in a well-deserved nap. For the children, it is a great privilege to be allowed to walk, feed, and groom the kindergarten dog. Though every child in the kindergarten takes great delight in the dog, there are certain children for whom this particular animal assumes a very important role. These very special children often struggle with sensory integration, being alternately loud- and noise-sensitive. They are often restless, easily distressed. They may be unable to read social signals and can find themselves to be at a loss socially. These children manifest some of the characteristics associated with autism, often finding school settings overwhelming and distressful. There are a growing number of organizations that train service dogs to be the companions of children with more acute symptoms of autism.[20] In her book *Thinking in Pictures,* Temple Grandin describes her own autism and the frustrating limitations she experienced as a child and later, particularly with regard to

understanding language and the processing of social information appropriately.[21] Dr. Grandin has followed a path of self- understanding that began with a passionate attachment to animals. This led to her career as an animal biologist and a spokesperson for animal therapy.

Penetrating the mystery of the relationship between the dog and the human being is surely a life's work. In the kindergarten, we can see that children who manifest characteristics associated with what may be considered high-functioning autism often connect readily with the animals—and particularly with the dog. Perhaps the soulful expression in the eyes of the dog stirs a sense of sympathy in these children. A dog may project emotions to a child who can understand that, because this companion is unable to speak, communication does not rely upon the burdensome complexities of human language. A different, perhaps more innately understood language between child and animal will serve this relationship, as sympathy and love from the child and trust and devotion from the dog unfold. The child may settle into a mutually comfortable relationship with this kindergarten companion who offers much-needed solace and steadfast loyalty.

In time, the child may begin to interpret the dog's behavior to the other children and to the teachers with comments such as, "He must be sad" or "I think he is wondering why everybody is being so loud." Giving language and order to feelings is something with which these children struggle. Through love and sympathy for the dog's limitations, its one-sidedness, the child may find healing. Again, the animal cannot conquer its own nature and the child comes to know this. A child who feels imprisoned in his or her own one-sidedness can experience a profound loneliness; the companionship of a dog can be solace to the lonely heart. A child who may be considered on the autistic spectrum can take an important step towards inner balance and wholeness. As we watch service dogs at their work, we know that the dog has linked its destiny with that of the human being and that the journey towards healing is one that the dog will walk with us.

The companionship of a dog is solace to the lonely heart.

Future Research

Rudolf Steiner tells us that each animal has its own voice.[22] While this may be understood most naturally by young children, it is through Goethean observation that we adults can hearken to this silent language. My own work with animals has suggested to me that there is surely a deeper and broader understanding yet to be granted to those who seek to penetrate these realities. The chickens, rabbits, and dog already help support the educational objectives of our work as teachers; however, we may yet profit from expanding our research as we consider a broader range of animals with whom today's children may have limited exposure.

Conclusion

As we are inspired by Goethean observation and seek to understand etheric realities which may unfold quietly but profoundly, it may be valuable to deepen our consciousness as teachers around the relationship between young children and animals. We may observe a homeopathy of sorts at work in which the young child strives to achieve inner balance and to loosen the spell of one-sidedness that so confines. The mysterious doors separating the kingdoms in nature from adult awareness may be opened more readily by the young child who lives in natural sympathy with the surrounding world. It may be observed that there is an inner imperative calling the child towards health and wholeness and that, instead of turning away from the challenge of transformation, the young child only too readily engages.

Perhaps this is why children are so charmed by the animal kingdom and why some are so

particularly drawn to certain animals. However this may be, each child and every human being is born into an unfolding earthly destiny. Steiner tells us that the natural world is deeply entwined in the narrative of human life, which is "born out of nature" and also "bears nature within."[23] From time out of reckoning, the human imagination has striven to encompass this reality, and the animal kingdom has united itself to our endeavors. The beauty and mystery of the Neolithic cave paintings at Altamira, Spain attest to a long and profound relationship between human beings and the animals of the earth. Stretching through the ages, these evocative images bear witness to an ancient brotherhood and speak so eloquently in a language understood by the human soul:

> Come forth into the light.
> Let Nature be your teacher."
> –William Wordsworth, 1798

Endnotes

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20. *Beginnings: A Publication of the American Holistic Nurses Assoc.,* vol. 29, no. 3, Summer 2007.
21. Op. cit., Grandin, *Thinking in Pictures.*
22. Rudolf Steiner, *Man as Symphony of the Creative Word.*
23. Ibid.

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Being Fully Human: An Introduction

Douglas Gerwin

Editor's note: The following article is taken from the introduction to a new collection of essays on teaching human sexuality entitled Trailing Clouds of Glory: Essays on Human Sexuality and the Education of Youth in Waldorf Schools.

As a young boy I used to stand outside my grandmother's home on the sidewalk of a busy thoroughfare in Acton, a suburb of London, scribbling down the license plates of cars and trucks as they whizzed by. For hours at a time, I eagerly recorded pages and pages of letters and numbers, with never a thought as to the sheer insignificance of this exercise.

On some days a neighbor's daughter, about my age, would join me at the curbside, and together we would track the roaring traffic. She, however, preferred to spot the *shapes* of the cars rather than transcribe their identifying numbers.

Years later, as a university and then high school teacher, I learned from empirical studies that, in the pursuit of mathematics, boys are often more readily drawn to algebra, girls to geometry. This is but one of many examples illustrating the differences between the ways girls and boys learn. These studies have been used to bolster the case that, at least in their pubescent and adolescent years, the two genders should be educated in separate schools, and there is some evidence to suggest that boys and girls learn certain skills faster if they are taught in single-sex institutions. Indeed, well into the twentieth century, sexual segregation was the norm in education—as in many other cultural institutions and practices.

All the more radical, therefore, was Rudolf Steiner when, in creating the first Waldorf school out of the ashes of World War I, he suggested that girls and boys should share classes for all 12 or 13 years of their elementary and high school education. More radical still was his insistence that both genders learn the same skills: boys would learn to knit and weave, girls to build engines and survey plots of land. Both genders would receive instruction in first aid and hygiene. Far from learning more effectively by being separated, he argued, boys and girls could actually teach each other through example, especially during the teenage years.

This insight underlies a central tenet of Waldorf education: though as human beings we are essentially whole, as we grow and develop we have the tendency to become one-sided. Education helps redress this imbalance.

Steiner's deeper motive for promoting coeducation, though, was to help the two genders achieve a measure of balance by modifying in each other the excesses of what he called the boys' adolescent "loutishness" and the girls' teenage "coquetry."[1] This motive hints at one of Rudolf Steiner's key insights into the mysteries of human sexuality and underlies a central tenet of Waldorf education: though as human beings we are essentially whole, as we grow and develop we have the tendency to become one-sided. Education helps redress this imbalance.

In the earliest beginnings of prenatal embryological unfolding, we do indeed develop the rudiments of both genders, despite our

genetic configuration, and thereby we preserve a certain wholeness for at least a few weeks. At some point, however—usually around the seventh week—it is as though a decision is made, and in each of us the sexual organs of the one gender typically continue to be developed while those of the other remain arrested. And though our sexual organs are of course present from before birth, it is still hard to tell the gender of young children for quite some years, especially if they are dressed in gender-neutral clothing.

That situation changes, rapidly, with the advent of puberty. In fact, at no time of life are the two genders more different—physically but also psychologically—than during the years of adolescence and early adulthood, even if almost all of them don the familiar costume of T-shirts and jeans.[2] Rudolf Steiner describes the virtual explosion of the girl, the implosion of the boy at this age as being extreme outer expressions of profound inner changes. It will be some years before these extremes begin to moderate themselves.

Indeed, one might say that as adults it is only in our twilight years that we begin to reorient ourselves to the more androgynous state from which we originated. Just walk behind an old couple shuffling down the street and ask yourself: Who is the woman, who the man? The one, it seems, has lost the angular outline of his youth and is becoming less muscular, more rounded, with softer and more piping voice; the other has lost the more curvaceous outlines of her youthful figure and is becoming more grizzled, perhaps sprouting tufts of hair above her lip or chin and dropping the pitch of her voice.

For all of Steiner's careful and detailed attention to the needs of boys and girls as they grow towards puberty, a threshold he calls *Erdenreife* (literally "earth-ripening"), it is striking how little attention, at least until recently, Waldorf schools have devoted specifically to the subject of human sexuality. This was glaringly evident at a workshop of Waldorf teachers and physicians held during the Kolisko Conference of 2002, a world congress for educators and medical professionals named after Eugen Kolisko, the school doctor at the first Waldorf school in Stuttgart. Those participants who did report a course specifically on human sexuality at their school were in the distinct minority, and the curriculum they outlined was drawn largely from public school programs.

It is striking how little attention, at least until recently, Waldorf schools have devoted specifically to the subject of human sexuality.

Out of this workshop, therefore, a resolve went forth to raise awareness concerning this lack and to pull together shared resources on teaching human sexuality informed by an anthroposophical image of the whole human being. A first result was a collection of articles, compiled by Bart Maris, a homeopathic gynecologist, and Michael Zech, a Waldorf high school teacher, under the title *Sexualkunde in der Waldorfpädagogik* (Stuttgart: Edition Waldorf, 2006). An English-language version of this book, drawing partly on the German edition and partly on new material, is currently in production.

Lest there be any false expectations, it should be stated clearly at the outset that neither the German nor the English collection of essays was compiled with the intention of offering a single curriculum—far less individual lesson plans—for the classroom. Rather, the intention was to pull together material from a wide range of anthroposophically-inspired educators and health professionals that would stimulate teachers to develop their own curriculum based on an anthroposophical understanding of this subject.

Though the Waldorf schools may have been slow to formulate specific curricula on human sexuality, arguing that much of the

existing curriculum achieves this end by other means, Rudolf Steiner himself was remarkably outspoken for his time about sex and the teaching of human sexuality. On the one hand, he was dismissive of the conventional approach to sex education, which he felt ignored the deeper import of this subject. "The talk prevalent today about sex instruction," he told the first group of Waldorf class teachers shortly before the first Waldorf school opened in September of 1919, "is mostly meaningless."[3] Instead, he sought to embed the subject of sexuality in a broader context of nature studies, starting with the mineral and plant kingdoms, then over the years moving through the animal kingdom, and culminating in seventh grade with human physiology. In other words, right from the beginning he saw the need to place this subject in the widest possible context of growth and development.[4]

In describing the conundrums of sexuality, Steiner points to the deepest mystery of all: namely, that the most physical and bodily aspects of our nature conceal our most lofty and spiritual capacities.

But more than that, in remarks scattered throughout his lectures, Steiner sets out a radical picture of sexuality and its mission for the physical, psychological, and spiritual development of the human being.[5] This picture embraces, as does so much of his cosmology, very ancient images in which human beings enjoyed a primordial androgyny still recapitulated today in the earliest days and weeks of embryonic gestation. These ancient hermaphroditic beginnings may be glimpsed, for instance, in representations of the oldest Greek and Egyptian mythological figures. In Ancient Egypt, the very oldest of the primordial gods—for instance the river god Hapi, who holds two vases from which gush the twin sources of the Nile—are depicted as being both male and female. The oldest of the Ancient Greek gods likewise appear as male-and-female; even the mighty Zeus is pictured as being bi-gendered in some of the more ancient renderings.

In describing the conundrums of sexuality, Steiner points to the deepest mystery of all: namely, that the most physical and bodily aspects of our nature conceal our most lofty and spiritual capacities. And what are these capacities? They are essentially two. On the one hand is the *capacity to metamorphose.* We witness this capacity most immediately—though indirectly, for the most part—in our organs of digestion and metabolism, which not only break down what we have eaten but also actually annihilate it so that we can build up our own substance. As one of my teachers was fond of saying, "You are not what you eat; you are what you have *destroyed* in what you have eaten!" What you cannot destroy you excrete or, in special cases, store in the hidden recesses of the body, usually in the fat cells (for instance radiation or the active chemical ingredients of mind-altering drugs, such as the THC in marijuana). Inasmuch as the sexual organs belong to the metabolic functions of the human body, we exercise these capacities of metamorphosis in the creation of every new infant. Though it receives its genetic inheritance from a long line of parental ancestors, in no way is the child simply the combination of its parents. Especially today we witness in youngsters—and feel powerfully in ourselves—the conviction: I am my own person!

The other capacity linking our most lofty spiritual aspects of consciousness with our sexual nature is the *capacity to conceive.* As in any creative act, both contain the potential to create anew, whether physically in the act of sexual union or metaphysically in the act of thinking.

In short, any curriculum concerning sexuality needs to take into account not only physical but also metaphysical—that is, psychological and spiritual—levels of the human being. If it ignores or dismisses any one of these levels, education of human sexuality is likely to exacerbate the very one-sidedness it is singularly equipped to heal. In the potent powers of *metamorphosis* and of *conception,* physical and metaphysical realms—initially sundered in the human being starting with birth and reaching a point of crisis in adolescence—find the possibility of reunion.

In this light, there are two simple yet crucial questions which any comprehensive program concerning human sexuality needs to ask, but I would suggest that these two questions need to be asked at three levels of human nature—physical, psychological, and spiritual. For at each level the answer to these questions will be different. In other words, the following two overarching questions can provide the foundation for planning and assessing any program on the teaching of human sexuality:

a) What is the *purpose* or *desired outcome* of a program on the teaching of human sexuality?
b) What shall be the *method* or *approach* to fulfill this purpose?

Let us pose these two questions at the levels of physical, psychological, and spiritual development of the human being.

Any curriculum concerning sexuality needs to take into account not only physical but also metaphysical—that is, psychological and spiritual—levels of the human being.

I. The physical or mortal body perspective

a) From the physical point of view, the *purpose* or *desired outcome* of a program on the teaching of human sexuality, to put it simply, is twofold:

- *prevent pregnancy*
- *avoid sexual disease*

At the bodily level, the purpose of such a program is, in effect, a negative one: that is, the *absence* of change or metamorphosis and the *absence* of conception. Put positively, one could say that the purpose of this program is *sexual health*, but in the context of Western medicine sexual health means little more than the absence of illness.[6] On this view, we can say that a program on the teaching of human sexuality will be deemed "successful" to the extent that young people do not contract sexual diseases and young women do not contract unwanted pregnancies. Indeed, this is how many sex education programs are evaluated: the lower the incidence of sexual disease and number of unwanted pregnancies, the more the program is regarded as having achieved its purpose or desired outcome.

b) As to *method* or *approach*, a quick survey of published sex education curricula suggests that the most common approaches combine

- *information*, including texts and charts
- *practical advice*, including the provision of contraceptives

The former method is intended to heighten a young person's awareness (capacities of consciousness or thinking), the latter the young person's behavior (capacities of action or willing).

It should come as no surprise to learn that these courses, taken on their own, have at best only limited effect. For one thing, sexual behavior lies deeply rooted in our life of feelings, desires, and habits, and we all know that these levels of our being are barely reached, far less changed, merely by exposure to information, and that they can be impervious even to the most persuasive practical advice. We engage in all manner of activities driven by a host of desires (not just sexual ones), even though we may be very well informed about their consequences and may

have been given (or, as some teenagers might say, been subjected to) all manner of practical advice. Something more, much more, is needed.

Put differently, what is evidently missing in an approach to sex education based on information and practical advice is attention to the young person's capacities of emotion or feeling. And this may be why so many schools find their sex education programs to be inadequate, perhaps even ineffective. At least this is what students tell us. Either they wish to be left alone or they hunger for something more. They yearn for a program on the teaching of human sexuality that addresses them not simply at the bodily but more at the psychological and spiritual levels. To these levels we must now turn.

II. The psychological or soul body perspective

Some public schools report that their sex education courses seem to be more successful (based on the evaluative yardstick previously described) if students who are enrolled in such programs also take part in courses on social and emotional wellbeing. If one thinks of sexual development from a more all-embracing perspective, this observation should make good sense.

Though the answers will be different, the questions posed at the physical level remain the same at the psychological level, namely:

a) What is the *purpose* or *desired outcome* of a program on the teaching of human sexuality?
b) What shall be the *method* or *approach* to fulfill this purpose?

Saelde: This term may be used to describe the purpose or desired outcome of a program on the teaching of human sexuality, seen from the perspective of the soul.

a) In response to the first question, I would suggest that, to be successful from the perspective of social and emotional health, the purpose or desired outcome of a program on the teaching of human sexuality needs to cultivate in students a sense of self-worth, confidence, security, empathy for others, reliability, trustworthiness, and freedom from fear and anxiety. We know that a lack of any one of these can translate into risk-taking behavior, including risky sexual activity. Recklessness, likewise aggression, can be the outer sign of deep fear or self-loathing. The class bully at recess may very well be the most deeply scared kid on the playground.

Briefly put, then, the purpose of a program on the teaching of human sexuality, seen from the psychological perspective or from the needs of the soul, is to develop a sense of *self-esteem.* Because this term is grossly overused, I prefer to call it something else, drawing upon a celebrated conversation between Saint Francis and one of his fellow Franciscans, Brother Leo. These two holy monks, it is said, struggled to come up with a word to capture the emotional state of "enduring humiliation and [yet] keeping one's countenance, in accepting and bearing the tasks that life provided. To keep one's dignity, equanimity, and patience and to preserve tranquility in the face of attacks from the outside… ."[7] This condition, they determined, deserved to be called *Saelde,* a term hard to render in English but sometimes translated as "joy" or "bliss" or "blessedness." It is the condition Parzival achieves at the end of his quest for the Holy Grail. It is the moment when, in full modesty and quiet certitude, one feels one's own steadfastness, even in the face of threat or danger. It is the moment when one feels, not out of any inner compulsion or external coercion but purely out of one's own free initiative, "Yes, I can do this!" Emerson might call it "self reliance."

Saelde: This, I suggest, may be used as a term to describe the purpose or desired outcome of a program on the teaching of human sexuality, seen from the perspective

of the soul. It is important to realize—as the example of Parzival attests—that this condition, far from entailing the absence of change or metamorphosis, actually *requires* an effort of inner metamorphosis. Like Parzival, we may come into the world filled with the innocent joy of childhood, "not knowing better." Like Parzival, this naïve innocence needs to be brought low, destroyed—catabolized, one might say—so that it may emerge transformed as self-esteem, self-confidence, or *Saelde.* This entails a metamorphic process of self-transformation.

b) And what could be the method or approach by which this search, this quest resulting in *Saelde,* would be undertaken? In programs concerning the development of self-esteem, the value of drama and role-playing is well known. In a broader sense, the disciplined practice of any of the arts will help to bring about this confident state of soul. Class teachers attest to the quantum leap in maturity that children will manifest after they have prepared and performed a class play. A ballet dancer or gymnast knows the feeling of "Yes, I can do this!" that may arise from an exceptional performance or a perfect score. A painter or sculptor knows the feeling of achieving a certain communion with paint or clay in that moment when the particular genius of the medium is released and put at the service of a skilled hand.

For all of their talk about independence and rebellion, teenagers feel immense social and emotional pressures to conform to the expectations of their peer group. Like any skill, the ability to resist peer pressure, to act instead out of one's own convictions, has to be learned, and learning requires practice. The arts offer perhaps the most potent way for a student to practice this skill of self reliance without bearing the full brunt of its consequences: to act in a play, after all, is to pretend, and no actors will be punished for carrying out their scripted words and deeds onstage. To fail at drawing a landscape or to fall off a horse while learning to ride does not constitute failure or disgrace. One can always turn the page, remount the horse. Start again.

Though it may sound strange to put it this way, I can think of no better program for the teaching of human sexuality at the level of the soul than the regular and disciplined practice of the arts. We know that engaging in the arts helps to calm aggression and prevent violence (for instance, among prison communities). This is because the practice of the arts builds confidence in oneself, and self-confidence dissipates the urge to violent aggression or desperate recklessness. The same applies to sexual activity. We need to remember that the aggressive "stud" or promiscuous "slut" is as likely, at a deep level, to be as unself-confident as the most awkward "nerd" or timid "wallflower." To the degree teenagers develop, not the swagger of conceit but the quiet ballast of self-assurance, they will find in themselves the strength to stand in and act out of their own convictions.

> We teach students, not subjects, and students are beings, and beings embody spiritual values. To the degree we truly educate, we are working with true spiritual values.

But herein lies the problem. What *are* these convictions? And are they clear or consistent or tested against experience? Probably not. In other words, it is not enough to develop a measure of self-confidence. At the same time one needs to work at getting clear what one is self-confident *about.* Put differently, whereas a course that develops self-confidence, ultimately *Saelde,* constitutes a necessary aspect of any program concerning human sexuality, it is not a sufficient condition. Something more, something to do with questions of meaning and life's purpose is needed.

And that is why I believe it is necessary to come at the question of a program on the teaching of human sexuality, not simply from the perspectives of the healthy physical life and of self-confident psychological life but also from a third perspective: namely, that of the student's spiritual life. This takes us beyond questions of behavior and questions of feelings to questions of guiding ideals; from what we *do* and *like*—perhaps fleetingly—to what we lastingly *value*.

III. The spiritual or immortal being perspective

Back in the 1960s, it was fashionable for educators to speak of "value-free education," perhaps because they wished to instruct children and teenagers without inculcating into them the values and customs of older generations. By now, we have generally come to recognize that education, by its very nature, is laden with spoken and unspoken values and cannot simply be sanitized of them any more than air can be cleansed of oxygen. Education without values is simply no longer education.

The reason for this is simple. In the end we teach *students*, not subjects, and students are beings, and beings embody spiritual values. That is why it's a crime to kill, assault, threaten, or discriminate against them. To the degree we truly educate, we are working with true spiritual values.

When it comes to the education of human sexuality in a Waldorf school, we need to be clear which values—not to confuse values with ethical norms or codes of conduct—we employ in our understanding of what constitutes a human being. Here we come to a third formulation of guidelines concerning a program on the teaching of human sexuality, seen now from the perspective of humanity as spiritual—that is, as immortal—beings.

And so we pose our two questions one last time, now from the viewpoint of the spirit or self or eternal "I":

a) What is the *purpose* or *desired outcome* of a program on the teaching of human sexuality?
b) What shall be the *method* or *approach* to fulfill this purpose?

Being whole, with regard to sexuality, means knowing oneself to be a full human being of body, soul, and spirit that embraces all human traits including those of both the masculine and the feminine.

a) As in the previous responses to this question, the purpose of a program on the teaching of human sexuality remains health, but what is health from a spiritual perspective? In their original meaning, the terms "health" and "wholeness" share the same ancestry (Old English *hal*), which already hints at a deeper meaning of health than simply the absence of disease or a feeling of wellbeing. What does it mean, then, to be whole? With regard to sexuality, it means knowing oneself to be a full human being of body, soul, and spirit that embraces all human traits including those of both the masculine and the feminine. In this sense we transcend the one-sidedness of sex, which even in the very origins of the word "sex" means "to sever or divide" (from Latin *secare*, "to cut" or "to split").

This is precisely the archetype of the human being that Rudolf Steiner describes in his account of human development, if one includes both its physical and metaphysical aspects. As already mentioned, even in our earliest physiological beginnings we are both female and male, and as one gender develops in the physical or material body, the other gender develops in what he calls the life or etheric body. From the perspective of our sexual nature, then, we are—and remain—"whole" human beings to the degree we think of ourselves as being endowed with both physical

and etheric bodies. Only when we focus on one body at the expense of the other do we arrive at a one-sided picture of male or female. Indeed, once we get beyond physical and etheric bodies and speak of the human soul (or astral body) and self (or eternal "I"), according to Steiner, we are dealing with aspects of the human being that transcend gender altogether, even though they inhabit gender-specific physical and etheric bodies and hence are influenced by them.

In other words, the purpose or desired outcome of a program on the teaching of human sexuality, seen from a spiritual perspective, is to arrive at an understanding of the human being as a whole human being. This goes well beyond merely embracing both genders in oneself to considering the much larger question of the human being as a microcosm of the entire macrocosm.

The relation between this image of wholeness and a state of health has been documented by the Israeli physician Aaron Antonowsky, who in studying survivors of the Holocaust noticed significant differences among his patients, even though they had endured similar hardships before they had emigrated to the Middle East. Briefly stated, those patients who were unable to integrate into some kind of cohesive worldview the horrors they had experienced in Nazi Germany during wartime were much more likely to suffer an endless string of physical and psychological ailments than those who had found a way to accept into their universe, into their *Weltanschauung,* all the events that had befallen them.

Antonowsky singled out "coherence" as the key difference between these two groups of patients: the latter were able to formulate a coherent world view in which each one of their experiences, however grim and tragic, was integrated into a sense of wholeness, whereas patients in the former group were unable to achieve this sense of life's coherence. In brief, to the degree we embrace our circumstances with a sense of wholeness, or coherence, we enjoy a greater measure of all-embracing health. To be healthy in body requires being whole in spirit.

This entails a lofty act of spiritual conceptualizing in which we attempt to give birth to the idea that we are agents, co-creators—not victims—of our circumstances and that in so doing we act out of utter freedom.

To the degree we embrace our circumstances with a sense of wholeness, or coherence, we enjoy a greater measure of all-embracing health.

b) As to the method by which this sense of wholeness can be cultivated, we come to what is perhaps one of the more subtle yet potent remedies that Waldorf education has to offer. It has to do with developing the capacity to discern the meaningfulness of the cosmos and of one's rightful place in that cosmos. It involves a sort of spiritual seeing, or intuition. It begins with the cultivation of a phenomenological approach in the study of science or a symptomatological approach in the study of the humanities: these two approaches share the ability to see in any one part a whole—in the words of the poet, to perceive "a world in a grain of sand… ."

This way of knowing goes by many names: living or etheric thinking, ecological or morphological thinking, emblematic or metaphorical thinking. In each case the attempt is made to stretch cognitive powers beyond the limitations of fixed spatial constructs to a more flowing context. In its essence, it is a form of metamorphic thinking, in which our thoughts grow with what we see rather than trying to set or fix it. This was the intention of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who viewed precisely his scientific studies as having more lasting value than even his greatest works of literature because, he said, in his studies of

nature (especially of plants) he had not merely discovered new facts and events but had exercised a new way of perceiving them.

When asked what he considered to be his most valuable and creative work, he set aside thick volumes of his poems and mighty dramas—including the 12,000 lines of his life's magnum opus, *Faust*—and pointed instead to a slender volume with an unprepossessing title, *The Metamorphosis of Plants.*

A way of perceiving phenomena and conceiving thoughts that is metamorphic in nature: this is the method by which we can begin to experience the human being as a whole human being.

A way of perceiving phenomena and conceiving thoughts that is metamorphic in nature: this is the method by which we can begin to experience the human being as a whole human being.

Summary Outline

In considering a three-layered approach to a program on the teaching of human sexuality, it will become apparent that the first level, having to do with health of the physical body, is focused primarily on *volition, deeds.* Not surprising, then, that the appeal at this level is pitched to the human will in terms of instructions: *what to do.* This builds physical *strength.* The objective at this level is *care of one's own self.*

At the second level, having to do with the well-being of the soul, the focus shifts from deeds to *emotion*—ultimately the sublime sense of *Saelde.* Here the appeal will be aimed more to the life of the human heart through artistic experiences that inspire: *how to feel.* This builds psychological strength, or *courage.* The objective here is *care of oneself in relationship to one's social surroundings.*

Finally, at the third level, having to do with the wholeness of the spirit, the focus shifts once again from feelings, however lofty or blessed, to the world of *cognition.* Here the appeal will be aimed more to the discipline of ecological consciousness: *how to think in whole images.* This builds powers of spiritual insight, or *wisdom.* The objective at this level is *care of the other.*

We can summarize these layers in the following way:

At the physical level, the purpose of a program on the teaching of human sexuality is: to offer protection and prevention for the purpose of physical health, promoted through information and practical advice for habits of will. This builds **volitional strength**. Desired outcome: to care for *one's self.* Sign of success: stable, predictable growth, with no conceptual or metamorphic activity.

At the psychological level, the purpose of a program on the teaching of human sexuality is: to build a sense of well being or Saelde, promoted through the practice of the arts to enhance the life of feeling. This develops **emotional courage**. Desired outcome: to care for *one's relationships to others.* Sign of success: unexpected quantum leaps in development, with movement towards metamorphosis and conceptual activity.

At the spiritual level, the purpose of a program on the teaching of human sexuality is: to develop a sense of wholeness, promoted through the practice of living or morphological thinking. This cultivates **cognitive wisdom**. Desired outcome: to care for *the other.* Sign of success: unpredictable maturing, rich in conceptual and metamorphic activity.

To be sure, in designing a program on the teaching of human sexuality, it is important to incorporate all three levels while still keeping them distinct. For the teacher, it comes down to three basic questions: What do my students need in order to train sound habits of volition? What do they need to develop

artistic expressions of emotion? What do they need to open in themselves windows to higher cognition?

Two Final Questions

In matters of sexuality, most young children have only two basic questions of their adult guardians:

"Where did I come from?"
"How did I get here?"

As teachers and parents, we need to know at which of the three levels—physical, psychological, or spiritual—our children are posing these questions. As adults we may hear them more easily as arising at the material or physical level, but the younger the child, the more likely she or he is to be posing these questions at the spiritual or metaphysical level.

More precisely, the first of these questions—"Where did I come from?"—may be heard as a question concerning our spiritual conception: that is, of our far distant spiritual origins. The second—"How did I get here?" —may be heard as a question concerning spiritual metamorphosis: that is, of a long prenatal journey of metaphysical transformation.

As one youngster said, in a moment of inspired frustration with a basic lesson in gynecology: "I don't want to know how I came out of there, I want to know how I got *in* there!"

As one youngster said, in a moment of inspired frustration when his parents began to answer the second question with a basic lesson in gynecology: "I don't want to know how I came out of there, I want to know how I got *in* there!" Clearly a question of metaphysical ontogeny, not of physical anatomy!

As children mature, so do their questions become more particular and our answers need to become more specific. But there is no need to rush. After all, we have to remember that in olden times these mysteries were guarded in strictest secrecy and revealed only in disguised images or fables. As recently as the last century the secrets of embryology were still not openly discussed, indeed not even widely known.

With the wonders of modern technology, we are able to peer into worlds previously reserved for the very few and the very wise. To the degree we approach these realms with a clear mind and open heart, we may discern through our modern methods of research an empirical endorsement of a timeless wisdom previously masked in legend and metaphor. For instance, when we now observe under the electron microscope the swirling interaction of male and female gametes during the hours leading up to fertilization—in what the language of empirical language calls the "preconceptual attraction complex" or PCAC, what in the language of mythology might be called the "dance of angels"—it is no longer empirically defensible to speak of the sperm "penetrating" the ovum. Rather we can see, in magnified picture form, what ancient wisdom depicted in veiled image: namely, that conception is no random victory of male seed over some hapless female egg, but rather it is a conversation, a collaboration, a resolve of two polar opposite living beings to create—or not to create—a uniquely new organism, which we call the zygote.[8] Here physical events are elevated to the level of metaphysical parable; eternal truth, ideal reality, is made manifest through the transient processes, the physical reality, of a material organism.

In bringing our students gently, gradually—yet confidently and without apology—to appreciate and understand these material events and transcendent truths, we provide an education that can satisfy both their need to know about their sexuality and their yearning to know themselves as whole—and

hence healthy—human beings. In the words of a verse that Rudolf Steiner circulated among young medical doctors he was training, in most ancient times education served as

> …a healing process,
> Bringing to the child, as it mature[s],
> Health
> For life as a whole, fully human being.[9]

One should expect, then, that the education of youth on questions of human sexuality will be similarly healing, to the degree that it cultivates in them a sense of human wholeness.

Endnotes

1. Cf. Rudolf Steiner, *Education for Adolescents*, CW 302, Hudson, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1996, Lecture V, Stuttgart, 16 June 1921.
2. Even in their shared costume, differences are evident: the girls generally in v-necked tops and tightly fitted bottoms; the boys generally in round-necked tops and baggy bottoms so loose as to be in danger of succumbing to the force of gravity.
3. Rudolf Steiner, *Study of Man,* London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1975, Lecture XIV, 5 September 1919, p.186.
4. For a bulleted summary of Steiner's ideas concerning sexuality, see the Afterword at the end of the collection of essays from which this article is taken: *Trailing Clouds of Glory: Essays on Human Sexuality and the Education of Youth in Waldorf Schools* (in production).
5. Many of these references have been skillfully compiled by Margaret Jonas in a new collection of Steiner's comments on sexuality entitled *Sexuality, Love and Partnership: From the Perspective of Spiritual Science,* Forest Row, Sussex: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2011.
6. At least in contemporary Western cultures, managing pregnancy is typically treated in ways comparable to fighting disease: we conduct diagnostic tests, administer drugs to suppress symptoms and discomfort, sterilize the environment, give preference to surgical procedures (such as the increasing number of caesarian births). The most obvious exception to this approach to pregnancy is the "home birth" movement, which falls back on the "disease" paradigm only in cases of acute or life-threatening pathology.
7. Cf. letter of 1 September 2009 from Hartwig Schiller to the Bund der Freien Waldorfschulen on the occasion of the 90th anniversary of Waldorf education. Reprinted in *The Journal of the Pedagogical Section,* Number 37 (Christmas 2009).
8. For a fascinating description of this complex, see Jaap van der Wal's essay, "Human Conception: How to Overcome Reproduction," in the collection of essays from which this article is extracted.
9. Rudolf Steiner, "Circular Letter for the Young Doctors", 11 March 1924 [translation by the author of this article]. In the original German: "…Und Erziehen ward angesehen / Gleich dem Heilprozess, /Der dem Kinde mit dem Reifen / Die Gesundheit zugleich erbrachte / Für des Lebens vollendetes Menschensein."

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The New Impulse of the Second Teachers' Meditation

Elan Leibner

Introduction

The aim of this article is to demonstrate that the Second Teachers' Meditation represents an essential, new dimension in Rudolf Steiner's guidance to teachers, and that this new dimension adds a crucial layer to what had already been given in the First Teachers' Meditation. It builds from basic concepts of anthroposophy, through the First Teachers' Meditation, to the lectures Steiner gave the teachers in 1923, and concludes with a profound mystery implied in the Second Meditation. I am convinced that this mystery lies at the heart of both the challenges and the opportunities facing the Waldorf movement as it nears the 100th anniversary of its founding.

Background

When the first Waldorf school opened in 1919, after the initial lectures and seminar that constituted the original teacher preparation course, Rudolf Steiner gave the teachers a professional meditation (here called the First Teachers' Meditation). During the years that followed, as he came to visit the teachers in the classrooms and offered them further instructions and guidance during faculty meetings, he sometimes gave them images and short verses, but not a second full-length meditation.

In October of 1923, after visiting the classes in the new academic year, Steiner gave the teachers three lectures and on the following morning brought them a new professional meditation, referring to it as a condensed form of what he had brought in the preceding lectures. When pondered in light of those three lectures, the Second Meditation reveals a profound dimension that might go unnoticed.

I begin by introducing two familiar anthroposophical terms, "threefold" and "fourfold," and proceed to use those as navigational guides, so to speak, throughout the article.

Threefold and Fourfold

The entire foundational text of Waldorf education, *The Foundations of Human Experience*[1] (also published as *Study of Man*), is a meditation on the idea of the human being as a threefold being. This threefold-ness is composed of two contrasting gestures, with an active, dynamic mediating region between them. We see threefold-ness first in the life of the soul (thinking and willing as contrasts, and feeling as the mediating region), then in physiological terms (nerves and blood as contrasts, and the places where they meet as the mediating regions), in spiritual terms (waking and sleeping poles, with dreaming as the middle), and finally in the very shapes of the skeletal system (the round head and linear limbs as contrasting poles, and the ribcage as the middle). Throughout the lectures, and in innumerable lectures on other topics from sociology to medicine to cosmology, Steiner again and again presented pictures of threefold-ness as a fundamental principle in the universe, specifically in the realm of sentient and "I" beings. The Foundation Stone Meditation is the quintessential meditative treatment of the threefold human being. In it, human physiology, soul forces, and the

The entire text of *The Foundations of Human Experience* is a meditation on the idea of the human being as a threefold being.

spiritual Trinity are presented as an interrelated triad.

When I speak of a threefold gesture in this article, it is in this sense of two contrasting tendencies and a dynamic middle element. While being principally its own gesture, each of the three elements in a threefold structure contains aspects of the other two. For example, Steiner describes the head as being principally head (round, contained) while having a lower area (the jaw) that resembles a limb in its action and a middle area that has a rhythmic quality (two symmetrical eyes, ears, nostrils), resembling the rhythmic quality of the ribcage.

In the interplay between the three regions, and particularly in the middle realm, new possibilities arise.

In the interplay between the three regions, and particularly in the middle realm, new possibilities arise. Towards the end of the Foundation Stone Meditation this is pointed out:

> That good may become
> What from our hearts we found
> And from our heads
> Guide with steadfast willing.

The meditative path yields new possibilities arising out of the inmost heart forces, and the roles of the head and the will are to guide and execute what arises in the heart. In this sense, when we consider the threefold gesture in meditation, it is an inward gesture. It directs the meditative effort towards the transformation of the soul forces of the meditant.

A characteristic feature of the fourfold is that it is composed of a pair of opposites that together form a balance.

When the initial training course for the first Waldorf teachers moved from the spiritual fundamentals to the application of principles in classroom situations (*Discussions with Teachers*[2]), Steiner introduced a new, fourfold element: the temperaments. He related them to the four elements, to the fourfold human being (physical, etheric, astral, and ego), and concurred with a teacher who related them to musical instruments and to the four gospels (Discussion 2). Steiner instructed the teachers to design their lessons in such a way that each lesson appealed to the four temperaments, and he gave examples for how this could be done. A characteristic feature of the fourfold is that it is composed of a pair of opposites that together form a balance. We can think of fire (warm, dry) as the opposite of water (cold, moist) and earth (cold, dry) as the opposite of air (warm, moist). Similarly, the temperaments can be seen as two pairs of opposites (sanguine-melancholic and choleric-phlegmatic).

As with the threefold gesture, the fourfold is not unique to the pedagogical lectures. In the four elements, the four seasons, the festivals, the four compass directions, and in numerous other connections, fourfold-ness is a principle that is also fundamental in the universe, specifically to the world around the human being (rather than to the soul). When I speak of the fourfold gesture in this article, it is in the sense of a balancing pair of opposites.

From a spiritual-development perspective, the threefold and fourfold gestures direct the soul either inward or outward. Historically, the spiritual streams originating in India tended towards the inner life of thought and meditation. Buddhism, for example, is a path of inner refinement that, while also manifesting in outer conduct, is not focused on knowledge of the outer world. There is nothing of the outer world mentioned in Buddha's Four Noble Truths or the Eightfold Path. By contrast, the spiritual streams of the Middle East (Persia, Egypt, Babylon) focused on knowledge of the starry and earthly worlds, while creating systems of laws to regulate conduct (rather

than leaving conduct to be refined by each striving soul). Those cultures created outer edifices that still stand thousands of years later, and we are rightly awe-struck by the precision with which the Egyptians designed a pyramid so that the internal chambers would facilitate observations of specific stars at night, to say nothing of the fact that they (the pyramids) have proved to be so durable.

These two gestures—the threefold and the fourfold—appear in many aspects of anthroposophy. For brevity's sake, I will limit my discussion here to what is most pertinent to the Teachers' Meditations. We will see how the two gestures find expression in them and in what way the second meditation brings a new element not present in the first.

The First Teachers' Meditation encourages making one's spiritual (inner) life and professional (outer) life one life.

The First Teachers' Meditation

In shine of sense being
There lives the spirit's will
As wisdom's light outpouring
And inner power concealing.

In the I of my own being
There shines the human will
As thinking's revelation
By its own power supported.

And my own power
With light of cosmic wisdom
Mightfully united
To selfhood shapes me
Who turn myself to high divinity
Seeking powers of illumination.
(translation by Arvia M. Ege)

In this meditation we see a threefold gesture come strongly to the fore, while within this gesture, knowledge of the fourfold world is also present. First there is a turning outward and a striving to see the *manifestation* of the world of the senses (the German *Schein*, variously translated as "shine," "glory," "appearance," and "semblance") as a revelation of divine will. Then there is a turning inward to seek the mystery of one's own "I" and will. This denotes a center-and-periphery relationship. In the third stanza the two powers unite to form a new selfhood, rooted in spiritual striving.

This meditation is a powerful inspiration for connecting one's work (or will) with the striving for true knowledge. The Self, in a higher sense, arises out of joining together outer and inner striving. Each part of the meditation (and all of them together) can be remarkably fruitful as one prepares to teach a block or contemplate a child. This meditation can strengthen one's imagination of the teacher as a spiritual striver for whom the horizontal centripetal (striving for self-knowledge) and centrifugal (striving for knowledge of the world) join with the vertical (spiritual practice as a search for higher knowledge) to form a cross of "true north." It encourages making one's spiritual (inner) life and professional (outer) life *one life*.

Lectures of October 1923

In October of 1923, Rudolf Steiner once again came to visit the first Waldorf school. After observing the classes, he gave the teachers three lectures. Those have been published in English as *Deeper Insights into Education: The Waldorf Approach* and more recently as the last three lectures in the new edition of *Balance in Teaching*.[3] The lectures are rather startling in the directness of the criticism leveled at the teachers.

Lecture 1: In the first lecture, Steiner surveyed the history of education from Greece (the gymnast and gymnastics) through Rome (the rhetorician and oratory) to modern times (the professor and abstract science), and he proceeded to demonstrate to the teachers how

events in nature need to be taught in order to overcome the deadening effects of modern intellectualism. He talked about the life cycle of the butterfly, connecting the stages of egg, larva, chrysalis, and butterfly with earth, water, air, and fire. He likewise discussed the life cycle of frogs. Steiner demonstrated the need to connect and weave concepts so that a broad context is given to each individual phenomenon.

It is clear that he was not telling them to continue to do what they had been doing. He was telling them, in effect, that their teaching had become overly intellectual. He demanded that the new pedagogue be a union of the gymnast (educating through the will), the rhetorician (working through the feeling), and the professor, so that the full human being, not just the head, would be addressed by education.

Steiner demonstrated the need to connect and weave concepts so that a broad context is given to each individual phenomenon. He was telling the teachers, in effect, that their teaching had become overly intellectual.

Lecture 2: In the second lecture the criticism became more direct. Steiner flat-out talked of a heavy, depressed mood in the classroom, hinted at artificial enthusiasm, and threw down the gauntlet by speaking of the absolutely crucial need to develop the "Waldorf teacher's consciousness … which, however, is only possible when, in the field of education, we come to *an actual experience of the spiritual*." (Emphasis mine.) He then proceeded to say that genuine enthusiasm, the most potent force in education, develops only when the teacher acquires an understanding of the healing potential of education.

The fact that Steiner chose to bring those particular themes (and to add a second teachers' meditation) tells us that he clearly saw a need to bring something new.

Again, we must consider that, had the teachers been properly enthusiastic, spiritually insightful, or cognizant of the healing potential of education, there would not have been a need to speak about those topics. The fact that Steiner chose to bring those particular themes (and to add a second teachers' meditation) tells us that, however potent their inner work had been, he clearly saw a need to bring something new.

Faculty meetings from the same period, as well as teachers' recollections, point out that Steiner saw significant problems at the school.[4]

Next came a discussion of the fourfold complexes of forces in the human being: movement, nourishment, breathing, and perceiving. It is a fascinating study, but for our purposes we have to leave most of it out. Important for this discussion is the fact that Steiner presented the four complexes of forces as two pairs, with breathing tasked with healing the illnesses brought about by nourishment, and perceiving having to heal the more subtle illnesses brought about by movement. Steiner specifically discussed the ways in which carbon, entering the body through breathing, can unite with various substances in its movement downwards towards the metabolism or upwards towards the head and thinking. These relationships that carbon forms in the body can lead to either health or illness in the human being. He discussed with the teachers how pedagogy could enhance or undermine the health-giving potential of carbon.

It is very interesting to compare this lecture with a lecture given a week earlier in Dornach at the conclusion of a cycle known in English as "The Four Seasons and the Archangels"[5] (lecture titled "The Working Together of the Four Archangels").

Steiner describes how during each season there is one archangel working cosmically on one half of the earth, while from below, through the earth, the partner archangel works directly into the human being. For example, during the summer Uriel works from above, bringing a sifting, discerning judgment to bear on what human beings have been doing on earth. At the same time, Gabriel works through the earth into the human being's digestive system. The four archangels rotate around the earth through the seasons, taking turns working from above and from below.

Altogether, both lectures bring a forceful fourfold-ness to the fore. The balancing and healing of the earth and the human being are presented as processes of opposite pairs of forces. In a subtle way, however, Steiner brings a combination of the fourfold and the threefold to bear in both instances, since a healthy, balanced condition is an active, dynamic balance of contrasting forces.

Lecture 3: The third lecture to the teachers was given on the evening after the second one. In it Rudolf Steiner once again took up the theme of carbon's "behavior" in the body and in nature, but with a startling, new twist. He told the teachers that proper pedagogy sows seeds of health and truth that can bear fruit many years later, even if outer circumstances offer great resistance. He went so far as to say that, even under tyranny, a teacher working with the right thoughts and the proper enthusiasm can sow the seeds of future health for the child. He ended by calling this health-giving pedagogy a union of the teacher with the task of the archangel Michael, and contrasting it with the dry, intellectual scientific knowledge that is practiced under the auspices of Ahriman.

We know that Michael, as the countenance of the Christ, is not merely opposed to Ahriman but stands between Ahriman and Lucifer. We will come to the pedagogical aspects of the Luciferic danger later. In this lecture, however, Steiner contrasted the Michaelic education for which he was advocating with the intellectual, Ahrimanic tendencies he had witnessed in the classrooms.

Intellectualism can be overcome by pedagogical enthusiasm; enthusiasm is born of an understanding of education's healing potential; the healing consists of helping to balance opposing forces within the human constitution.

On the following morning, Steiner gave the teachers their new professional meditation. We should bear in mind the thread: intellectualism can be overcome by pedagogical enthusiasm; enthusiasm is born of an understanding of education's healing potential; the healing consists of helping to balance opposing forces within the human constitution.

The Second Teachers' Meditation

Spirit beholding
Turn deeply seeing within.
Heart-warm touching
Touch upon tender soul being.
In expectant spirit beholding,
In strong-hearted, fine soul touching,
There, weaving, is consciousness-being.
Consciousness-being,
Which from the above and the below
Of the human being
Binds cosmic brightness
To earthly darkness.

Spirit beholding
Heart-warm touching
Behold and touch
In Man's inner being,
Weaving cosmic brightness
In reigning earthly darkness
My own

Human formative force
Engendering
Power creating
Will sustaining
Self.

The gesture presented in the first part of this meditation is similar to the one in the first teachers' meditation. Two contrasting gestures—spirit beholding (though the German word *blicken* means something closer to "glancing" or "glimpsing" than to "beholding") and heart-warm touching—allow for a third (uniquely human) element: consciousness-being, to bind cosmic brightness and earthly darkness. It is actually two threefold gestures, one of human effort and one of cosmic-earthly relationships, with consciousness-being common to both.

With the second part of this meditation, however, an essentially new element is introduced: the two activities—beholding (or glancing) and touching—are again invoked, then intensified,[6] and now directed in a wholly surprising direction (Man's inner being) in order to find "my own … Self." The sentence there would read:

Behold and touch [both on the intensified level]
In Man's inner being…
My own
Self.

In between "My own" and "Self" are three effects that the meditant's activities can generate, thereby "weaving cosmic brightness in reigning earthly darkness," engender human formative forces, create power, and sustain the will. A critical question is: generate in whom?

When we consider what Steiner said about the healing potential of education in the context of the four complexes of forces, this sentence assumes a remarkable meaning:

The "ordinary" spiritual striving of the human being brings about the birth of a higher Self; when that Self is sought in the inner being of the other, it generates *in the other* (the child, in this case, or perhaps one's colleague) those three healing effects, and weaves cosmic brightness in earthly darkness in a whole new way. This healing dimension is not present in the First Meditation, and I would argue that it is an essential, new quality in the Second Meditation. It is a manifestation, within pedagogy, of the central task of humanity.

This healing dimension is a manifestation, within pedagogy, of the central task of humanity.

The True Self

At this point it would be helpful to introduce a differentiation of the three selves in Rudolf Steiner's work: the lower self, the higher Self, and the True Self.[7]

The lower self is the familiar "me-consciousness" that is based on our identification with our physical body. It is the self that has to be transformed, the aspect susceptible to temptations of all kinds.

The higher Self is the source of our capacity for creativity (the "I"). It can be thought of as an opening rather than a "thing," the psycho-spiritual vortex, so to speak, that allows us to bring something new into the world. In inner development this vortex is cultivated consciously, while in other situations it can beget new creations spontaneously. (Not all creative people are spiritual students.)

The higher Self is the source of our capacity for creativity (the "I"). It can be thought of as an opening rather than a "thing."

The True Self is the archetypal capacity for love, referred to in Steiner's work as The Christ. Steiner describes how the Christ event

brought together the Buddha stream (which is connected with what we have called the inward, threefold soul gesture) with the Zarathustra stream (which is connected with what we have called the outward, know-the-world-in-its-fourfold-ness gesture). Before Christ, a human being could undergo initiation in one of those paths, but not in both during one lifetime. The Christ event united the two streams, and since that time it has been possible to find the higher Self through both paths in one lifetime. When that is done, when the world's wisdom and the essence of the Self are both reached so that the human being is in its inmost Self and at the same time in the depths of world being, the True Self can also be reached if, in that moment, what the higher Self brings into the world is love. The capacity to actuate love through the innermost uniting with the depths of the outer is the moment when "Not I, but Christ in me" is realized.

Here my higher Self is found in the depths of the inner being of the other. The innermost and the depths of the outer are one. Creativity practiced as Love. The True Self.

If we look at the Second Teachers' Meditation with this perspective in mind, we see in it two gestures coming together: on the one side, the threefold inner path, uniting above and below through transformed human consciousness; on the other, an intensification of the initiation efforts leading to a new gesture: the enhanced beholding-touching effort joining with the self-higher Self union to meet the fourfold reality of the other human being.

By turning towards the other (the child, with his need for healing, in this case, or perhaps the colleague) and seeking my Self in his inner being (not, crucially, in *my* inner being), the possibility arises that my creative capacity, my Self, can be brought into service of the needs and being of the other. Any creative activity that is generated out of *that* Self is the healing, redemptive activity that Steiner exhorted the teachers to practice as the source of genuine pedagogical enthusiasm. Here my Self is found in the depths of the inner being of the other. The innermost and the depths of the outer are one. Creativity practiced as Love. The True Self.

Historical Anecdote

In his book *Rudolf Steiner: A Biography*,[8] Christoph Lindenberg relates that in 1922 a government inspector came to visit the first Waldorf school in Stuttgart. The inspector's report was quite critical of the school, pointing to several deficiencies. The teachers reacted bitterly, but Rudolf Steiner would have none of their complaints. He said that the state inspector clearly wanted to avoid harming the school, but that what he (the inspector) had seen could not be ignored. Steiner further stated that he was in agreement with much of what the inspector had written. He brought up the notion that what is good (the curriculum) also has to be applied well, and that this application required a certain enthusiasm, an inner engagement that had disappeared from the school little by little. We can note that in the lectures delivered the following year, and described above, the theme of pedagogical enthusiasm is taken up vigorously.

Steiner died in March of 1925. In the late fall of that year, the state once again came to inspect the Waldorf school. This time, the report (as quoted in Lindenberg, p.528) stated:

> Anyone who comes in contact with the Waldorf school recognizes immediately that a unique group of teachers is leading this school. Their connection to one another appears to be exemplary. They serve each other in love; each radiates energy and receives energy in return; there is no indication of trivial in-fighting,

> jealousy, or envy. . . .The students sincerely love their teachers, who, rejecting all forms of physical punishment, work to form the body, soul, and spirit of each child entrusted to them through love, goodness, and wisdom, and their own exemplary actions.

The fact that the two reports, so different in what they describe, came before and after the giving of the Second Teachers' Meditation is, of course, not in itself proof of anything. But we can take the second report as a description of what we should all strive to create in Waldorf schools. And we can approach the Second Teachers' Meditation knowing that it played at least a part in moving the first Waldorf school from the impression it made in 1922 to the one made in 1925.

Practical Considerations

Many Waldorf teachers practice creativity. It is common to find teachers writing poetry, music, or pedagogical stories; making beautiful chalkboard drawings and paintings; creating new games; designing projects of various kinds; and so forth. This tradition is commendable and certainly preferable to stale and set-in-their-ways teachers who only repeat what they themselves (or others) have done previously. Creativity, as discussed earlier, is often a manifestation of the higher Self. (There are darker sources of creativity as well, but what may inspire a heavy metal band is not what Waldorf teachers draw upon.)

Teachers who create are more apt to look forward to seeing their students; they yearn to share what they have done, and one senses in their whole demeanor freshness and youthful vigor. If there is a shadow to this creative effort, it is that it can supersede pedagogical considerations because the teacher is caught up in the joy and satisfaction of his/her creation. The act of "birthing," which is selfless, is followed by a sense of ownership, which is not.

An example is a teacher who is so keen to produce a play (he has written) exactly according to his artistic imagination that rehearsals become either tyrannical or ecstatic in mood. The outcome may look wonderful to the audience, but the process did not serve the students as well as it might have. The students became secondary to the play; this may be justified in a professional theater production, but it is not a pedagogically sound process. We see here how a creative impulse is marred by the egotistical shadow that can often accompany such efforts. Similar situations (in which students become secondary) can be seen whenever the teacher becomes personally invested in the outcome of the children's artistic endeavor rather than focusing on the children themselves. This can be true of the beauty in the lesson books, the sound of the class' choral singing and/or recitation, especially when preparing for a performance, or even the way in which the children are led through the hall during an assembly.

Whenever the teacher's self (as opposed to Self) guides the action, the me-consciousness of the teacher overcomes the good intentions that his/her (self-less) inner pedagogue had in the first place.

Whenever the teacher's self (as opposed to Self) guides the action, the me-consciousness of the teacher overcomes the good intentions that his/her (self-less) inner pedagogue had in the first place. What begins as an exciting creative process veers away from service and towards egotism. I believe that if heaviness and depression are the results of excessively intellectual teaching, then euphoric, ecstatic, and/or tyrannical moods, even if they appear only in subtle ways, are the results of creative efforts placed too much at the service of the teacher's own need for self-fulfillment.

American Waldorf schools, at least the grade schools, do not often suffer from the depressive, overly intellectual mood described in Steiner's lectures of October 1923; the opposing danger to which I refer above is a more common phenomenon. I leave it to my high school colleagues to assess the situation in their domain. However, if we consider these depressive-ecstatic dangers as being two poles of a threefold picture, then the two types of un-pedagogical modes are not as far apart as they might seem, at least not when what we are after is a healing education. As Steiner says in the second of these lectures, healthy or unhealthy should replace true or false as the quintessential question in education. Unhealthy in one mode can have a hidden partner in the other unhealthy mode, and the finger that points at the overly intellectual may belong to the excessively ecstatic artist. Health-giving does not point fingers, but rather draws the necessary contributions from either pole—"necessary" for the child, that is.

When the teachers' meditation itself includes turning towards the inner being of the other as the source of one's creative potential, Michael, the countenance of the True Self, is at hand.

The Second Teachers' Meditation provides the counter impulse to both the first (depressive) and second (ecstatic) modes. When the inner life of the teacher is divorced from the needs for healing of his/her students, the twin dangers (and others besides) have an easier access to both his inner life and his outward conduct. When the teachers' meditation itself includes turning towards the inner being of the other as the source of one's creative potential, Michael, the countenance of the True Self, is at hand. If we place the child's need for healing at the mainspring of our creative action, what comes thereof may well be the water of life. It is in this sense that we can come to an actual experience of the spiritual in our pedagogical work, finding the genuine, healing enthusiasm of which we and the world stand in such great need.

Endnotes

1. Rudolf Steiner, *The Foundations of Human Experience*, Great Barrington, MA: Anthroposophic Press, 1996.
2. Rudolf Steiner, *Discussions with Teachers*, Great Barrington, MA: Anthroposophic Press, 1997.
3. Rudolf Steiner, *Balance in Teaching*, Great Barrington, MA: Anthroposophic Press, 2007.
4. Rudolf Steiner, *Faculty Meetings with Rudolf Steiner*, Hudson, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1998.
5. Rudolf Steiner, *The Four Seasons and the Archangels*, Forest Row, UK: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1996.
6. There is no English equivalent to the difference between *blicken* and *erblicke* or the similar difference between *tasten* and *ertaste*, but the "er" points to an intensification of the activity, usually from within outwards.
7. For this distinction I owe Sergei Prokofieff gratitude. He presents a thorough description of this theme in his book *The First Class of the Michael School and Its Christological Foundations*. This book is available only to members of the First Class of the School for Spiritual Science through the author's secretary: sekretariatSP@goetheanum.ch. The description of the three selves in this article is my own; Prokofieff's treatment of this important topic is far deeper and more thorough than what is presented here.
8. Christoph Lindenberg, *Rudolf Steiner: A Biography*, Great Barrington, MA: SteinerBooks, 2012.

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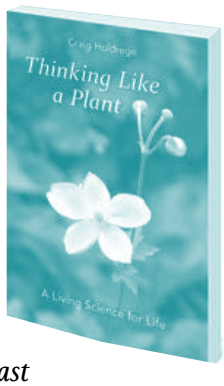
Stephen Sagarin

Thinking Like a Plant: A Living Science for Life by Craig Holdrege

Let's say there are two kinds of books—products and processes. Authors of products write, in essence, "Here. I've spent the last several years investigating something and here's what I've found." The "something" may be the story of Jay Gatsby or a history of World War I, but, as a product, the author is done with it. Now it's the reader's turn.



Books that are processes, on the other hand, say, "Come with me on a journey. I'm not sure where we're going or even when it will end, but I will try to entertain and inform you as we go." *Don Quixote* is a book like this, and so is Daniel Kahneman's *Thinking Fast & Slow*. Books like this are not meant to be ingested in one sitting. They are trail mix for a trek.

Plants can be seen as products—I had some for dinner this evening—or as living processes. In his latest book, *Thinking Like a Plant: A Living Science for Life*, Craig Holdrege focuses on the latter as, at least, a metaphor for thinking.

Products are objects, or object-like. They can be bought and sold, weighed and measured. We have spent the past few hundred years developing to a high degree what Holdrege calls "object thinking." We have developed it to the point at which we objectify things that are not objects, things like "intelligence," measured by an IQ. That the concept of IQ has been largely demolished in the past few decades serves to show that we have also begun to question and to move away from the worst of our object thinking.

Holdrege's book aims to aid us in understanding and developing "living thinking," thinking that does not objectify the world. Object thinking distances us from the world, and distances us from ourselves, in that we eventually come to see even ourselves as objects in a world of objects. Living thinking encourages us to participate in the world, to experience our own existence and our own thinking as part of the world in which we live.

The book is written in six chapters. In the first chapter, Holdrege lays out the often unacknowledged challenges of object thinking, its replacement of the world in which we live, the world of our human experience, with a "disqualified" world of mental models, for example. And he introduces the concept of living thinking, thinking that is based in experience, participates in the world in which we live, and recognizes true holism.

In the second chapter he begins the process of transforming our experience from an object-based experience to one that is more participatory. He links the activities of observation and perception with the activity of thinking.

In the third chapter, "The Plant as Teacher of Transformation," the author uses the growth and transformation of a plant—from seed to shoot to stem and leaves, to calyx and corolla, to flower—as a resonant metaphor for the transformation in thinking that a truly participatory consciousness requires. (To return to Chapter 2: If we observe and think with old habits only, without an openness to

transformation, we are in danger of extending object thinking into our own interiors; and we are certainly only entertaining what Barfield called, pejoratively, "common sense.")

In chapter four Holdrege extends his description of plant existence to examine how the life of a plant necessarily demonstrates the context, the whole world, in which the plant exists. This is a genuine movement toward wholeness and engagement with the world. Against this, Holdrege sets "theory," which he finds "always limited."

Chapter five is the oddest, and it's also my favorite. It's about common milkweed, a plant I remember marveling over as a boy, but not one I ever expected to read about in a book about the transformation of human experience in the world. I won't give away too much, except to say that Holdrege's investigation yields this insight: "Milkweed invites life, but also holds it back. There is a fascinating tension in this plant." For Holdrege, this investigation and its results are not simply pabulum about the "balance of nature," for they have real ethical implications. As Holdrege says, "Transformational experience works beyond the moment into the future."

In the last chapter Holdrege summarizes the previous material and extends it to a consideration of education. He takes on our common notion of "preparation" in education, pointing out that postponing real, meaningful experience in the vain hope of "preparing" for some future—a job, sustainability, all worthy goals—undermines the value of education itself. The future is unpredictable, and only an education based in meaningful, transformative experiences can prepare students for the insight and creativity they will need to meet the future healthfully.

The author means us to see thinking as a living, growing process of transformation. We may begin by seeing this as a metaphor but, by the end of the book, he would probably say that it's not just a metaphor, that thinking is literally an invisible or immaterial plant-like process within each of us. Holdrege wants us to see plants as processes and their living growth as a movement or unfolding that is like that of thinking. He uses the phrase "living thinking" throughout the book, and, it seems to me, we could call this "real thinking."

Thinking Like a Plant refuses to fall into a category—philosophy? nature study? ecology? education? botany? By turns it is each of these, but it aims at an interdisciplinary wholeness that transcends these. In this, it is truly an anthroposophical work.

I don't mean that it fits into the historical stream of esoteric books that are footnotes to Rudolf Steiner's work, a stream that will flash before many readers' eyes at the mention of the word "anthroposophical."

What I mean is that it lays bare, we could say, what is usually hidden beneath the shiny hood of science writing. And what are usually hidden are the fits and starts, the frustrations of an actual scientist at work. This book shows not the product, polished for presentation, but the process. As such it is more accessible and potentially more valuable to readers, who are invited at every turn to take up this creative work for themselves.

Further, it aims at a genuine wholeness, what Henri Bortoft calls "upstream thinking," the reunification of disciplines and subjects that have become separated and fragmented over the past centuries. These characteristics—demystification (not in the sense of debunking, but in the sense of seeing through what is otherwise unseen) and reunification—are, I believe, characteristics of actual anthroposophical endeavor.

Michael Pollan's "How Smart Are Plants?" appeared recently in *The New Yorker*. As smart as Pollan's scientists may be, they're on a reductive track; their thinking is still object thinking. Holdrege's isn't, and he is struggling mightily and with great value to escape the prison of object thinking and, just as importantly, to show us how to do this for ourselves.

Lindisfarne Books, 2013
217pp., $25.00 (paper)

Report on the Online Waldorf Library

Marianne Alsop

The Online Waldorf Library continues to expand its selection of eBooks, Spanish translations, and overall catalog of books currently in print, as well as free-to-download articles on Waldorf education.

The OWL now offers over 175 eBooks, mostly drawn from Waldorf Publications (formerly known as AWSNA Publications). Among the new eBooks added in the first few months of 2014 are: *An English Grammar* by Rudolf Schmid; *A School as a Living Entity* by Rea Taylor Gill; *Developmental Insights*, edited by David Mitchell; *Earth Science* by Hans-Ulrich Schmutz; *Eurythmy for the Elementary Grades* by Francine Adams; *First Steps in Natural Dyeing* (a WECAN title) by Joan Almon; *Geron and Virtus, Saint Odelia,* and *Three Knight Tales* by Jakob Streit; *Life Lessons* by David Sloan; *The Living World of Plants* by Gerbert Grohmann; *Spiritual Insights from the Work of Rudolf Steiner* (a WECAN title) by Helmut Von Kügelgen; *To Grow and Become* by Rudolf Copple; *Traditions* by Erica Jayasuriya, and *Working with Anxious, Depressed and Nervous Children* by Henning Köhler.

Our Spanish eBook translations continue to expand with *Developing the Observing Eye: Teacher Observation and Assessment in Early Childhood Education* by Cynthia Murphy-Lang; *Home Away from Home: LifeWays Care at Home and in School* (a LifeWays title) by Cynthia Aldinger and Mary O'Connell, and a number of titles expected to be completed by this summer and fall. Translating books and other material into Spanish has become a top priority for the Online Waldorf Library.

With the number and quality of Waldorf educational resources offered on the OWL, it is not surprising to know that on average 10,000 people visit the site every month. However, it is a very exciting yet humbling reality that the work we do in the world is so valued and needed. I thank you for your ongoing support, questions, and interest.

Readers are invited to contact us with comments, suggestions, or questions regarding the OWL.

www.waldorflibrary.org

About the Research Institute for Waldorf Education

The Research Institute for Waldorf Education (RIWE), founded in 1996 in order to deepen and enhance the quality of Waldorf education, engages in sustained dialogue with the wider educational-cultural community and supports research to serve a wide range of educators in their work with children and adolescents.

The Research Institute supports projects dealing with essential contemporary educational issues such as attention-related disorders, trends in adolescent development and innovations in the high school curriculum, learning expectations and assessment, computers in education, the role of art in education, and new ways to identify and address different learning styles.

As a sponsor of colloquia and conferences, the Research Institute brings together educators, psychologists, doctors, and social scientists for discussions on current issues related to education. We publish the *Research Bulletin* twice a year and prepare and distribute educational resources, including a growing collection of eBooks and articles to help teachers in all aspects of their work. These are all available without charge at the Online Waldorf Library (OWL), which is overseen by the Research Institute.

As an initiative working on behalf of the Waldorf movement, the Research Institute receives support and guidance from the Pedagogical Section of the School for Spiritual Science and financial support through the Waldorf Schools Fund, the Waldorf Curriculum Fund, the Waldorf Educational Foundation, the Rudolf Steiner Charitable Trust, the Foundation for Rudolf Steiner Books, the Sprout Foundation, and the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA), of which the Research Institute is a daughter organization. The Research Institute is a tax-exempt organization and accepts contributions through its annual giving campaign and special appeals.

Summary of Activities Supported by the Research Institute

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Human Sexuality K–12
Survey of Waldorf Seniors
Waldorf High School Research Projects

BOOKS and PAPERS

The following books and papers were printed by the Research Institute and are available from Waldorf Publications:

- *Topics in Mathematics for the 11th Grade*
- *Tapping the Wellsprings of Health in Adolescence*
- *New Approaches to Teaching Grammar*
- *Developmental Signatures: Core Values and Practices in Waldorf Education for Children Ages 3–9*
- *Education, Teaching, and Practical Life* by Rudolf Steiner
- *Survey of Waldorf Graduates, Phase I, Phase II, Phase III*
- *Effects of High-Stakes Testing on Children*

Subject-Specific Colloquia, 2000–2010:

Chemistry
Mathematics
Computer and Information Technology
English
United States History
Life Science and Environmental Studies
World History – Symptomatology
Physics

Proceedings for all of the above are available from Waldorf Publications at: www.whywaldorfworks.org.

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Online Waldorf Library, a website of resources for Waldorf education
Themes in Waldorf Education, compilation of Rudolf Steiner's indications on teaching language arts and mathematics
Education, Teaching, and Practical Life by Rudolf Steiner
Over 200 articles placed on OWL from Steiner Library
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