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# From the Editor

### Elan Leibner

Dear Readers,

My previous editorial (Volume 19, Number 1) elicited an unusual number of comments. The themes of renewing and making Waldorf education more localized seemed to touch a nerve. Thank you to those who responded. These themes are continued in this issue; several articles describe and advocate new approaches, and we are sending out a request for papers that document innovation in schools. At the same time, we continue to publish research that describes the physiological and theoretical foundations of sound practices already familiar to most of our readers. These two directions—the one "deep-ward" that seeks to renew and inspire practicing teachers, the other "out-ward" that provides supporting evidence through contemporary scientific research and language for what Waldorf education is already doing—have been signature gestures of the Research Institute for Waldorf Education (RIWE) since its inception. During an Institute Board retreat in May of this year, Susan Howard described the history of the Institute, and those of us newer to RIWE's work came to appreciate how presciently the founders saw the need for both of these gestures.

Joan Almon is a founding member of the Alliance for Childhood, an organization whose first great deed was to help restore play as an acceptable component of early childhood education. Now she is setting her sights on another "four-letter word"—risk. In a persuasive (and in places surprising) piece, she details the benefits and debunks the myths concerning risk on the playground. Many years of tracking playgrounds of different kinds have shown that appropriately designed, risk-encouraging settings are as secure as the so-called "safe" playgrounds and offer many more benefits for the children who use them. If Almon and her colleagues have their way, a new generation of capable and responsible risk-takers will rise from the ranks of today's toddlers. We can only hope that many adults will read and follow her suggestions.

Thomas Fuchs is a university researcher working in Germany. In a thoughtful and comprehensively researched article, he describes how the entirety of a child's learning process is based on relationships with others. For human beings, every cognitive development from birth onwards is a social process, and the cognitive epicenter of our physiology, the brain, can develop as the instrument of cognition only through relationships with other people. He concludes with a useful section on what contemporary cognitive research can and cannot offer educators, and shows that what we do know about brain development suggests pedagogical practices that will seem rather familiar to Waldorf educators.

Kristin Agudelo is a humanities teacher at the Merriconeag Waldorf School in Maine. Her contribution makes a persuasive case for the need in Waldorf schools to enhance our awareness of women in the study of history. Drawing from an important lecture by Rudolf Steiner and from contemporary educators' thinking on the subject, as well as her own historical examples, she gives compelling reasons for introducing transformational figures from the most remote past to more modern times, who can be, but rarely are, included in the curriculum. Agudelo is a new voice in these pages, but judging from the passion and fullness of her inaugural contribution, it seems safe to assume that we will hear from her again.

Another first contribution comes from Paula Sager, an early childhood educator working in Rhode Island. She discusses the role of imagination in developing healthy and insightful cognitive relationships with nature and with children. Readers who followed Frederick Amrine's series on the philosophical roots of Waldorf education will not be surprised by her tribute to Amrine for inspiring her in the writing of this piece. She is well grounded in the work of the European philosophers and poets discussed in that series.

Yet another teacher writing for the first time in our *Bulletin* is Erhard Dahl, a language teacher working in Germany. His article describes some of the subtle but crucially important aspects of language teaching in a Waldorf school, especially the opportunity to develop flexibility of thinking and appreciation of cultural perspectives through discussion of linguistic differences among languages. Dahl reminds us that, like other subjects in the curriculum, foreign language is a tool for cultivating suppleness and liveliness in the minds of our students.

The final contributions to this issue come from members of the Pedagogical Section Council (PSC). A few years ago, in a brief document titled "Core Principles of Waldorf Education," the Council tried to distill the core thoughts that guide the work of Waldorf pedagogues. The resulting document, which is included as part of this issue, was widely disseminated to Waldorf teachers in independent Waldorf schools and in public charter schools working with Waldorf principles. Several of the recipients asked for additional content to enhance the study of this document. Various PSC members agreed to write short contributions in support of such a study, and the first two (one by Holly Koteen-Soulé and one by me) appear in this issue. Further contributions will appear in future issues of the *Research Bulletin.*

A Call for Papers arises as a direct follow-up to the aforementioned editorial of the last *Bulletin.* In a process that I named "Responsible Innovation," teachers are encouraged to follow a protocol of study, discussion, experimentation, and then review of new possibilities in the curriculum. We hope to publish the reports of their work.

The Online Waldorf Library and Waldorf Publications—two branches of the Research Institute dealing with virtual and actual putting-the-word-out efforts—round out this issue with brief reports on their extensive and fruitful work.

Finally, an index of past issues is included for your convenience.

Happy Readings!

Authors who wish to have articles considered for publication in the *Research Bulletin* should submit them directly to the Editor at: waldorfresearchbulletin@gmail.com.

# From the Executive Director

Douglas Gerwin

Living organisms have three choices: They can grow, they can decay, or they can take on new forms. Following a huge organizational growth spurt last year with the acquisition of Waldorf Publications (formerly AWSNA Publications), the Research Institute for Waldorf Education (RIWE) focused its attention initially on an outpouring of publications and books—both printed and electronic. These will continue with the publication of new and revised titles (previewed in the last *Research Bulletin*) as the Institute now shifts its attention to innovative forms of collaboration and research as a result of a retreat staged during the spring term.

At the suggestion of its trustees, the Research Institute invited a circle of guests to attend a weekend retreat in the context of its annual board meeting to explore two distinct yet related themes: "technology and morality in education" and "assessment and morality in education." From a stimulating ten hours of presentation and discussion arose a new impetus to broaden our reach to academic institutions engaged in similar work, while simultaneously undertaking fresh research to deepen our understanding of these themes as they relate to Waldorf education. The importance of sharing these results with our growing Spanish-speaking readership was stressed.

New links were forged meanwhile with the leadership of the Pedagogical and Medical Sections at the Goetheanum, including the inauguration of a joint venture to promote a multi-lingual website for educators and pedagogical counselors. This project focuses on the works of Rudolf Steiner and related German-speaking authors. This site is linked to the Research Institute's Online Waldorf Library (OWL) as well as to the Institute's own website, and special care will be taken not to duplicate services already offered on our own sites.

With growth in traffic, especially from abroad, the OWL continues to serve a worldwide readership, mostly in English but increasingly in Spanish. More than 700 books and some 1400 articles are now available for downloading at no cost to our readers, who topped 65,500 site visits during the first half of this year.

The Research Institute's website has also been expanded this year with pertinent non-anthroposophical research that supports the Waldorf approach to education—specifically in the areas of child development, brain research, technology, and the essential role of play in a young child's life.

Thanks to a growing pool of available translators, a further 10 titles underwent translation from English into Spanish during the course of last year. Primary focus of these translations was on materials concerning early childhood. Also published for Spanish readers was *Poesia* (an illustrated collection of songs and games for teaching Spanish in the lower grades).

Some 70 new titles were created in eBook form during the course of the year, bringing the total number of manuscripts available in PDF format to around 200. Among them are further examples in a sequence of WECAN and Waldorf Publications books freshly translated into Spanish. In addition, a further series of articles was collected and posted on OWL, including new curriculum suggestions on the teaching of science in both the lower school and high school.

The Research Institute completed two more cycles of its popular "Teaching Sensible Science" program, one in Baltimore and the other in Seattle. Already the next cycle is being planned for Ann Arbor, starting in February 2015. As with previous rounds, the objective of this course is to engage teachers in the transformation of their own teaching, especially as it relates to the sciences. Details of this latest cycle are available on the website of the Research Institute:

www.waldorfresearchinstitute.org

# The Value of Risk in Children's Play

Joan Almon

*Better a broken bone than a broken spirit.*
– Lady Allen of Hurtwood, founder of adventure playgrounds in England

Eight years ago, when the US Alliance for Childhood began its campaign to restore play to children's lives, we were told repeatedly, "Whatever you do, don't use the word *play*. It's become a four-letter word." We gave it much thought but could find no better word to describe this essential activity. It was time to redeem the word. Since then many articles have appeared in the popular press about play, including cover stories in *The New York Times Magazine* and *Scientific American*. Documentaries have been made, the American Academy of Pediatrics has issued position statements on the importance of play, and new books have appeared on the subject. On the whole, *play* has become an acceptable word again.

Now it is time to tackle another four-letter word—risk. To say that children benefit from risk is almost heresy in the United States. We have become very risk-averse. As Lenore Skenazy, the humorous critic of modern parenting, says in her book, *Free Range Kids*,[1]

> …a lot of parents today are really bad at assessing risk. They see no difference between letting their children walk to school and letting them walk through a firing range. When they picture their kids riding their bikes to a birthday party, they see them dodging Mack trucks with brake problems. To let their children play unsupervised in a park at age eight or ten or even thirteen seems about as responsible as throwing them in the shark tank at Sea World with their pockets full of meatballs.

Any risk is seen as too much risk. A crazy, not-to-be-taken, see-you-on-the-local-news risk. And the only thing these parents don't seem to realize is that the greatest risk of all just might be trying to raise a child who never encounters *any* risks. (p. 5)

Gradually, parents, teachers, and other professionals are taking a fresh look at risk. There is a growing recognition that 21st century skills include creativity, invention, resilience, and problem solving. Adventurous, child-initiated play is full of opportunities for developing these capacities, but many children are deprived of the chance to play freely and meet age-appropriate risks. As a result, aspects of their development are often stunted. For example, they frequently lack skills in the use of their hands, and public schools have begun hiring occupational therapists to work with large numbers of children. Also, business leaders tell us that many of the young people they hire have great difficulty in working with others. They may be fine on Facebook but lack face-to-face skills that are essential in the workplace, skills acquired in part through social play on the playground. Professors tell us that their students today need things very clearly spelled out, more so than did previous generations. They lack confidence to deal with uncertainties. All of this has long-term consequences for the children themselves but also for society.

Adventurous, child-initiated play is full of opportunities for developing creativity, invention, resilience, and problem solving.

Waldorf students usually fare better than many others in handling risk, in part because the education is so broad-based and stimulates physical and social development, as well as cognitive development. The close ties among the children within a class strengthen their social capacity, while woodworking, knitting, spacial dynamics, circus skills, eurythmy, and a host of other activities develop the hands and limbs in an integrated way.

Yet even Waldorf students probably have far fewer opportunities to play freely in adventuresome ways than did earlier generations. One way to assess the changes in encountering risk is to ask parents how far they roamed as children and what adventures they had playing without parental oversight. If they are over thirty they probably had quite adventuresome childhoods. Under thirty they may have been allowed to play only in organized sports or under strict adult supervision. But if they played freely as children, one can ask if they would allow their children the same freedom. Almost always the answer is, "No!"

This is a good moment to ask whether Waldorf students of all ages are getting enough opportunities to develop their capacity for meeting risk and dealing with it.

As modern culture begins to consider the importance of risk, it is a good moment to ask whether Waldorf students of all ages are getting enough opportunities to develop their capacity for meeting risk and dealing with it. Are school playgrounds, for instance, providing children with enough challenges as they go through the grades? Also, are there ways that Waldorf education can contribute to the movement for play and risk by sharing insights and examples?

## Understanding Risk

Several years ago the Alliance for Childhood began researching risk in children's play. We identified three levels. The first has a great deal of oversight by adults, and the third requires much practice and often some instruction by adults. The second level is the type of risk children have always sought out and learned to deal with on their own. It is the primary level for which the Alliance is advocating.

**1. Challenging activities.** These look risky and take courage to do, but they come with plenty of safety features. Examples: Ropes courses and climbing walls where children are harnessed require courage, for they look scary, but the safety features mean that children cannot fall far. Bungee jumping is another example. No skills are needed—just a brave heart and confidence that the company handling the bungee jumps takes safety seriously.

**2. Moderate risk.** Things could go wrong but generally don't, provided the child has experience in risk-assessment. Examples: zip lines, high climbing equipment, and building forts or play houses with tools. Some skills are needed, but children develop them as they play. Bumps and bruises are part of the learning process and can be expected. Sprains and broken bones also happen on rare occasions. No one wants to see injuries, but fortunately children heal well and are not stopped from play for long.

**3. Advanced/extreme risk.** These activities require much practice and advanced skills. They are very attractive to teens and young adults who favor extreme risks. Examples: parkour in which young people climb anything in their path, leaping from one place to another and trying not to touch the ground. When taken to extremes, participants leap from building to building across wide divides. Other examples include advanced leaps with skateboards, motorcycle stunts (think Evel Knievel), and cliff diving. Injuries can be serious, but people drawn to this level of risk seem willing to take the chance.

To go deeper into the question of risk, we commissioned a survey that included interviews with directors of adventure playgrounds in California. These playgrounds, described in some detail in this article, provide risky, adventuresome opportunities to build with hammers and nails, to engage with fast-moving zip lines, and much else. The researcher, Halcyon Reese-Learned, also spoke with leading play advocates to gather their views. The survey became the basis of an Alliance publication, *Adventure: The value of risk in children's play.*

The basic findings of the survey contradict a number of myths about play that often serve as barriers to its pursuit.

- Risky play—in contrast to hazardous play—does not lead to high accident rates.
- Park districts that offer adventure playgrounds are not beset by lawsuits.
- Parks that offer adventure playgrounds do not pay higher insurance rates.

When children are faced with risk, they rise to meet and overcome it.

When children are faced with risk, they rise to meet and overcome it. One sees them move cautiously, testing a branch or deciding if they're up to the challenge of the huge slide. Such assessments have been part of human nature, probably from the beginning of human development. Without the capacity to assess, we could not have survived the risks of living in the wild—or even the risks of urban life today.

Through play, children prepare themselves for the risks of life. They play in every environment and with every element, including fire. When I meet with staff from parks departments, in particular, I always ask about the types of play they enjoyed as children. They tended to be very adventuresome. When I ask if they built fires with their friends, about half raise their hands, somewhat sheepishly. They would be appalled to find children building fires on their own today, but it was a common form of play not that long ago. Through it children learned to manage fire and contain it—and to manage themselves at the same time. They knew that if they were too wild in handling fire, serious injury could occur.

Bob Hughes, a play advocate and writer in England, describes playing with the elements as a form of recapitulative play. He sees such play as a vital part of human evolution. He also describes a close connection between such play and another type, which he calls "deep play." In deep play children confront the things they are most fearful of, and this can be scary for adults who are watching. But Hughes describes how children approach such play with surprising caution and rarely experience injuries.

Deep play represents a very real journey on the part of every child who engages in it—whether that journey includes standing up against a bully, climbing to a challenging height, swinging perilously close to solid objects, confronting a phobia. In my experience, it is very rare that children actually injure themselves when they engage in this playtype. They extend their limits gradually and are looking to experience only a representation rather than the reality of death or damage. When they do, it normally means they have either been pushed by someone or have pushed themselves significantly beyond their abilities. This possibility and its potential consequences should act as a serious reminder of the impact of peer pressure (or even playworker pressure), or the development of a culture between children in which they move past risk and engage in foolhardy or potentially suicidal activity of the serial thrill-seeker.[2]

What saves children from serious injury is their ability to weigh risk. This is a capacity to assess the outer risks and match one's own capacities to them. Thus one child may feel secure to climb very high in a tree, as was the case with a five-year-old girl in my first kindergarten, while others of that age would not dream of taking such a risk. Yet she did it over and over and never came to any harm.

How do children know how to assess risks? The apparently innate ability begins in infancy. With experience it advances all through life. An interesting experiment marked its presence in babies. Researchers Eleanor Gibson and Richard Walk placed six-month-olds who could crawl on a large sheet of Plexiglas with a checkerboard design underneath. As they crawled, the infants came to a point where the checkerboard dropped by a foot or more, although the Plexiglas stayed at the same level. The experiment was originally designed to test depth perception in babies, but the researchers noticed something more. Already at six months the babies recognized risk and showed an ability to assess it. They noticed the drop-off and hesitated while deciding how to navigate it. Some retreated while others cautiously crawled forward, testing the surface to be sure they would not fall down.

The apparently innate ability to assess risk begins in infancy.

In my own mixed-age kindergarten classes, I watched children assess risks while climbing a tall ladder. Each year during spring housecleaning I brought in an eight-foot stepladder in order to dust the upper walls and ceiling. When I was finished, the children had a chance to climb it. Year after year, I watched children advance up that ladder. As fours they usually went up only a few steps. As sixes they climbed to the top. Sometimes they would go up a step and then back down when they realized it was too high for their current level of ability.

I gave children in my classes as much freedom as I could to climb, tunnel, run, sled, and ski down hills on planks of wood. They chose their own levels of comfort and then advanced slowly. They suffered very few injuries, and I rarely had to intervene to stop them. Occasionally I encouraged children who seemed "stuck" to explore a next level of adventure. Always, their behavior became much better once they had confronted a new challenge and mastered it. Occasionally I had to stop a child who was clearly having a hard time assessing risks. One large three-year-old wanted to keep up with the older children who climbed on tables and built high. After his third fall from the table, I told him he needed to wait a while until he was older. He seemed relieved.

The teacher's role in risk assessment is important. To begin with, the teacher creates the play environment by deciding which equipment, materials, and opportunities are appropriate. One observes, learns, and adjusts the environment over time. Regular inspection of the equipment and grounds is also very important. While children are good at assessing visible risk, they cannot be expected to take hazards into account. A hazard might be broken glass that is not visible or a piece of equipment that is broken or poorly designed.

Joe Frost, a professor emeritus at the University of Texas, is widely recognized as a leader in the play movement. He is a strong advocate for adventuresome play. He has helped research play equipment and has often been called as an expert witness in lawsuits where children have been injured on playgrounds. He notes that the problems are generally from poor design and improper maintenance.

There is a next level beyond risk assessment which is very helpful, and that is risk-benefit analysis. At this level, adults knowingly accept certain risks because the benefits are great. For example, injuries from sports are common, and the CDC reports that 775,000 children ages 14 and under are treated in emergency rooms for sport-related injuries each year. But because the benefits of sports are perceived to be great, the tolerance for injury is also great.

An excellent British publication on risk contains two chapters on risk-benefit analysis. Available online, it is called *Managing Risk in*

*Play Provision: Implementation Guide* by David Ball, Tim Gill, and Bernard Spiegal. Another British publication on risk by Tim Gill, also online, is called *No Fear: Growing Up in a Risk Averse Society.* These and the Alliance's *Adventure: The value of risk in children's play* provide data and insights that can be very helpful in talking with parents, board members, inspectors, and others about why risk in play is so important and why it does not increase rates of injury.

## Obstacles to Risk and Adventuresome Play

One of the most dangerous things we can do in raising and educating children is to deprive them of opportunities to develop their ability to assess risks and build the confidence that goes with that. Many of today's children seem especially fearful of anything uncertain. This is the generation that grew up with helicopter parents who hovered over every aspect of their lives, giving little freedom to take risks or make mistakes. Is the pendulum swinging? We see signs that it is beginning. We cannot afford another generation that is risk-averse and unskilled in assessing risks.

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There are many obstacles that prevent children from playing freely. Chief among them is the widespread, although often unrealistic, fear of stranger danger. It is a tragedy when terrible things happen to children, but the highly dramatic reports in the media keep parents in a constant state of fear, even if their own community has proven to be very safe over long periods of time. Recent surveys of parents show, however, that they want their children to play more freely, but they want some form of supervision to be sure they are kept safe. If handled well, adult oversight and children's free play can go together.

Other obstacles that keep children from playing freely include problems of dense traffic and few sidewalks in some neighborhoods. Many subdivisions have restrictions on children's free play. They cannot build forts or tree houses or even draw chalk on the sidewalks. Many safe neighborhoods often look like ghost towns if one is looking for children at play. Most play activities are to be found instead at organized activities or indoors with screens. At the same time, areas beset by crime pose some real dangers for children, although one does see children playing in groups in daylight hours.

As a result of these obstacles, today's children have few opportunities to play without adult oversight. If parents are courageous enough to let their children outdoors to play, the children rarely find other children to play with. We have also heard from parents who let their school-age children out to play, and who were then visited by the police after neighbors reported them for neglecting their children. It is well worth asking the parents in one's class about their experiences in play and their experiences in letting their own children play. Then one can work with parents on how best to compensate for lost, valuable opportunities for play and risk at home and in school.

## Developing Adventuresome Play Spaces

In recent decades playground designers have become more and more safety conscious, with the result that public playgrounds are so tame they rarely appeal to children over five. In the past few years, however, there have been efforts to extend the age range, and one sees more challenging equipment being installed. Yet one could go much further, while still taking basic safety standards into account. Good examples are provided by adventure playgrounds in the US and abroad.

During the German occupation in World War II, Denmark saw a rise in juvenile delinquency. Its answer was unusual: build more playgrounds. The government consulted with Carl Theodor Sørensen, a Danish landscape architect who had designed many playgrounds before the war. He revisited them and found them largely vacant. Where were the children playing? The answer was in bombed-out building sites. He took his cue from the children and helped create a "junk playground" on the outskirts of Copenhagen. There the children played freely under the benevolent eyes of a "playworker," as such playground staff later came to be known.

From Denmark the idea for such playgrounds was brought to England after the war by Lady Allen of Hurtwood, also a landscape architect. She called them adventure playgrounds, and they have grown to several hundred throughout the UK. They are staffed by trained playworkers who open the sheds, take out the scrap materials called loose parts, and let the children play. Playwork is a profession, and many trainings exist in the UK, ranging from certificate programs to undergraduate and graduate degrees.

Playworkers know a great deal about play and work with children of all ages. They intervene only when needed, for their guiding principles include an understanding that play is "a set of behaviors that are freely chosen, personally directed, and intrinsically motivated." This means that the ideas for play bubble up from within the children, who then get to choose and direct how they will play. Playworkers help create play environments and then put on their cloaks of invisibility so children can have an experience close to that of earlier generations who played without constant interference from adults. The fine art of playwork lies in knowing when to intervene and when to let children work things out on their own.

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Several years ago, a National Public Radio reporter described what he saw at the Berkeley Adventure Playground,[3] which has been in existence since 1979:

> Scattered around the one-acre lot are at least 15 wooden forts of varying size—some two stories high, others with only two walls. They're all covered in paint, and many bear the names of the children who had a hand in their creation: Sophie, Bobby, Roger, Morita. There are also piles of scrap wood, old boats, fishing-net, tires, you name it.

In a Swiss adventure playground near Zurich called *Holzwurm,* I was intrigued by the three-story buildings the children had constructed. They looked ramshackle and ready to tip over, but that was misleading. Typically children test their houses for safety as they build, and they use so many nails that the structure is not about to fall over. Indeed, when it's time to take one down to make room for more, staff use chain saws to cut them down. Then great bonfires are built!

In the United States there are currently three such playgrounds on the West Coast, run by city parks departments in Huntington Beach, Berkeley, and Mercer Island by Seattle. One might think they are beset by accidents and lawsuits, but the opposite is the case. Insurance companies do not charge parks departments extra for adventure playgrounds, and the two California playgrounds, which are over thirty years old, have had one lawsuit each at most.

When the Huntington Beach adventure playground began in the 1970s (near Los Angeles), the staff persuaded the insurance company to monitor its safety record. After three summers, the insurance company determined that the adventure play safety record was so close to that of traditional playgrounds that no additional premiums would be needed. The same is true at other adventure playgrounds.

In 2001 the highly respected National Children's Bureau in the UK was asked to examine evidence of accidents, risk, and risk management at adventure playgrounds in three of London's boroughs. They examined data from more than a dozen adventure playgrounds and concluded that accidents, particularly serious accidents, were rare at the adventure playgrounds.

Similar results were found in Ottawa in the 1970s when adventure playgrounds existed there. While strict comparisons were not possible because of a lack of systematic record-keeping, the qualitative accounts from adventure playgrounds indicated that the accidents were low in frequency and severity. The researchers commented that children seemed to be more careful when they knew they were handling tools that were potentially dangerous.

Adventure playgrounds turn the "as little risk as possible" adage on its head.

While serious accidents are rare when children are given opportunities for adventurous play, smaller injuries do happen. Bumps and bruises and even an occasional broken bone have always been accepted as part of an active childhood. As the excellent British publication *Managing Risk in Play Provision* states, "In a playground, bumps, bruises, scrapes and even a broken limb are not necessarily warning signs of greater dangers, as they might be in a factory or an office environment. They are to be expected as part of everyday life for children growing up." (p. 29)

There are many types of play. A good player engages in all of them, and a rich play environment is designed to support every type.

Nonetheless, most playgrounds are designed today to pose as little risk to children as possible. Adventure playgrounds turn that adage on its head and offer children as much risk as they can handle. How much risk children can handle varies by age and skill. In a Waldorf setting it's a great help that children are good with their hands and have developed their coordination through games and play. Chances are they handle risk very well.

If a child is injured on a frequent basis, it is well worth asking why. Perhaps there is a problem with balance or other senses that can be improved through remedial exercises. Or perhaps there's an underlying issue, such as a need to prove something to others that overrides the child's good sense. Occasionally one sees a natural daredevil who relishes the thrill of the risk and does not mind a broken bone. Evel Knievel, for instance, is listed in the Guinness book of world records as having the most bone fractures of any human being —433. Imagine having had him in your class as a child or teen! On a more serious note, children sometimes seek injury for complex, psychological reasons. Knowing this is a first step toward providing help.

### Encouraging All Forms of Play

There are many types of play, and a good player engages in all of them, often in a single play session. A rich play environment is designed to support all forms of play. Some key play types are *make-believe play*, *large motor play*, and *fine motor play*. Most playgrounds include equipment and space for running, climbing, swinging, and sliding, all of which exercise large motor skills. Ideally the play space should also offer sand and water, earth and mud for fine motor shaping and modeling. Play materials that children can use for building or dressing up encourage make-believe play. These can be stumps and branches for building forts and dens, fabric for dress-ups and houses, and much more.

There are other types of play that regularly appear on a playground. These include *mastery play,* in which children repeat an action again and again until they have mastered it. Jump roping is one example, as is challenging oneself to leap from ever higher places. *Rules-based play* is most common in the elementary grades, in which children make up rules for their games and change them as needed. Or they play traditional games, learning their rules and then adapting them to meet the circumstances.

In *symbolic play* children change objects into whatever is needed for their play. A stick can become a fishing pole, a crutch, part of a house, or much more. All sorts of play objects lend themselves to symbolic play. They can be natural materials as well as objects cast off by adults, such as cardboard boxes. Children know they won't get into trouble for harming such objects, and they feel free to explore their use with great imagination.

In *arts-filled play* children use chalk for sidewalk art, paint with water on outdoor surfaces or with colors if available. They create instruments and make music, do puppet shows, act out stories, and invent dance routines.

The most troublesome forms of play from an adult perspective are *rough and tumble play* and *risk-taking, deep play* (which is discussed elsewhere in this article). These types tend to awaken uncertainty in adults about appropriate boundaries. Rough and tumble play is the type of physical play found in the animal kingdom as well as among human beings. It is different from aggressive play, which aims to dominate and even do physical harm. Rough and tumble play is a form of cooperative play that can be seen in puppies tumbling over one another. For teens and older children it can take the form of complex wrestling moves that they choreograph for themselves and act out on mats or soft ground. For younger children it is just good-natured roughhousing. One can usually tell if it's slipping into aggressive play, for the children's gestures become less rounded and more pointed. A hardening comes into the body, and the eyes and face look more focused and aggressive. That's a good moment to watch and see if the children can pull back into rough and tumble play or if they need help to keep from hurting each other.

## Adventuresome Play in a School Setting

There are many ways to enhance children's play opportunities at school, especially on the playground. Some require building new equipment, but others require very little expense. Here are some examples that have worked well in playgrounds I've visited.

***Loose parts:*** A first step to improving a play space is to bring in movable, loose parts. These are simple objects from the natural world or cast-offs from the adult world that children can use in their play. Stumps, branches, tree slices, stones, fabric, and other natural materials are frequently found on Waldorf playgrounds. But if a school can bear the mess, boxes, tubes from rugs, and other such artifacts also make great play materials. One of my favorite examples took place at a play day in Central Park. The children played with large boxes, cloths, rope, and tape, plus a few odd things like an old venetian blind. This was frequently integrated into the cardboard houses, but one boy slipped it over his head and it became his armor. He was so proud.

A growing number of public schools in England are providing loose parts at recess and storing them in playpods. There is a delightful film on YouTube showing the use of such a container. Just Google "Scrapstore PlayPods" for examples.

On a recent trip to the UK, a fellow play-enthusiast and I visited a number of adventure playgrounds and met with leading play advocates. A frequent question we asked was what makes a playground an "adventure playground." Some that we visited looked like the original junk playgrounds. Others looked very neat with large structures designed and built for that setting. The best answer we heard was that an adventure playground allows children to move things around. It looks different every day. Children may build with hammers and nails or hang ropes and drape cloths, but they "own" the play space in ways that are not possible if there is only fixed equipment.

**Swings:** Most playgrounds have traditional swings or horizontal tires, but there are other options that children love. Many adventure playgrounds build swing structures that are circular in form with six or eight sides. A swing hangs from each overhead beam so that when the children swing they look inward and swing toward each other. Facing each other adds much enjoyment and makes one wonder why swings are not all built in this way.

In addition to horizontal tire swings, which can be a car tire for one or two children or a tractor tire for many, there are also horizontal circle swings with netting in the center. One or more children can sit or lie down on the swing. It serves a purpose similar to a hammock in which children love to swing wildly or curl up with their friends for peaceful conversations.

A swing-like piece of equipment installed at Victoria Playground, a lovely destination playground in London, is comprised of a log suspended horizontally by chains from an overhead beam. One or more children can stand on the log, holding onto the chains and propelling the log forward and back.

One of my favorite swings as a child was a large boat swing that was moved back and forth by pulling on stout ropes. The larger the boat, the more strength it took to move it. Children love using their full strength in play, and any activity that gets them pulling together is a plus.

**Balance beams:** A traditional balance beam is mounted a short distance above the ground. That's fine for young children, but older children need more of a challenge. Some playgrounds have thick wire for balancing on, as in a circus. It may be a foot or two above the ground, but on either side are railings that children can hold onto as they develop their balance. These can be made of rope or other materials. An ingenious example made of knotted plastic bags can be seen on the TED talk given by Gever Tulley, founder of the Tinkering School. It's hard to imagine how many plastic bags were needed.

At London's Victoria Park can be found a series of long planks overlapped at various angles. The result is something between a balance beam and a seesaw. The planks move gently up and down as one walks on them. Teens also love sitting on them and experiencing a rocking movement as they chat.

**Slides:** Sliding boards are being given new life in adventuresome ways. The City Museum in St. Louis has a remarkable collection of slides that go down two or three stories in the old shoe factory that houses this play space. The newest and most remarkable one extends from the roof on the 11th floor to the first floor, with many twists and turns. It's not well-suited for a school, but children adore it.

It's becoming more common to see very tall slides on playgrounds. They usually are set into a hillside that may be natural or constructed of earth and rocks hauled in for the purpose. A wonderful slide can be found at Teardrop Park in Battery Park City in lower Manhattan by the Hudson River. Although there are stone steps going up the hillside to the top of the slide, nearly all the children prefer to scramble up the large rocks.

At the *Holzwurm* Playground near Zurich, a tower-like play structure was built, perhaps three stories high, with a slide running down one side. And three tall slides descend on a tall hillside at Victoria Park.

**Climbing structures:** Some of my favorite climbing equipment looks like the crown of a tree with many thick branches jutting out from the ground at various angles. Children can climb quite high on the branches or stay low to the ground. They can also build houses and forts on the ground under the branches. One also sees combinations of branches, telephone poles, and beams fastened together in odd shapes, sometimes enhanced by cargo nets for climbing.

Climbing walls have also become very popular and can become as high and challenging as one wants. It's also possible to have metal poles, sometimes with a bell at the top, for children to shimmy up. A few years ago I saw one at a playground and asked a fourth grader if he could climb it in order to show me how it was done. Watching him was like watching native children climb coconut palms in tropical countries. Up he went and rang the bell with no trouble at all.

**Fixed Equipment:** Adventure playgrounds typically have some fixed equipment. It is often unique and built for that playground, much like my experience with Waldorf early childhood playgrounds. Such playgrounds grow and develop over time. There are some good examples of adventuresome equipment on the website of Architectural Playground Equipment, distributor in North America for the German firm Richter. Some North American firms are also becoming more adventurous with their designs.

In general, the more adventurous the play, the greater its value.

## Suggestions

Based on our research and visits to adventurous play spaces, a few ideas stand out for schools. One is to take children's outdoor play as seriously as other pedagogical considerations. It's a vital part of children's learning experience. As one seven-year-old said, "At recess I remember everything I learned." Play is a powerful tool for learning, but it also strengthens children's physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development. In general, the more adventurous the play, the greater its value.

There will always be objections to adventuresome play, so it's a help to form a school committee to study the issue. Parents need to be involved in the process. One also needs to be aware of what the risk experts are saying in the reports mentioned in this article, and also to consult with the play experts—the children. Changes to a school playground, both large and small, need not be sudden. Playgrounds can grow and develop organically over time.

When it comes to adventurous spaces, it's good to watch the children and see how they meet new challenges. Generally, adult confidence grows as we watch the children.

Also, consider running adventure play camps that are advertised as such, with house-building opportunities, mud pits, water slides on wet tarps, and more. There's great interest in adventure experiences among some families and also tinkering opportunities. Both are natural outgrowths of the Waldorf approach. Such camps may also attract new families to the school, and they are likely to be just the kind of families that will love Waldorf education.

As a first step one could consider running some play days for the school community and the public. Ideas can be found at the website of pop-up adventure playgrounds.

For more ideas about play and risk and for photos and videos of many of the play ideas presented here, go to the website of the Alliance for Childhood: www.allianceforchildhood.org.

## Endnotes

1 Lenore Skenazy, *Free-Range Kids: Giving Our Children the Freedom We Had without Going Nuts with Worry* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009) p.5.

2 Bob Hughes, *Play Types: Speculations and Possibilities*, (London: London Centre for Playwork Education and Training, 2006) pp.41–42.

3 The web site for the Berkeley Adventure Playground is http://www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/contentdisplay.aspx?id=8656.

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# Learning in Relationships

Thomas Fuchs

Human beings are distinguished from other living creatures by their language. Comparative evolutionary research and human infancy research of the last few decades have shown what a wealth of communication abilities develop in human beings before spoken language is learned. Non-verbal communication—"body language" as it is also called—is expressed through facial expression, gesture, touch, vocal intonation, and whole body posture. These human expressions of communication exhibit a differentiation and variety that is unique and distinct from communications in the animal kingdom.

As adults we regulate our lives, our information, and our relationships to a large degree through language. Increasingly, we accomplish these things also through communication of digital-electronic symbols. But this symbolic language is always dependent upon a more primordial form of communication that, in a manner of speaking, already connects our physical bodies with each other and produces a fundamental relationship that the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty once described as "intercorporeity." (Merleau-Ponty 1960) It is the basis of what I will be examining in this essay: learning in physical interactions, in intercorporeal relationships. Aristotle knew that the human being is a *zoon politikon,* a social being. But we now have additional understanding of what that means: Through association and interaction with others, human beings' physical organisms, including the brain, are formed.

In the following I will outline the biological, psychological, and social foundations of learning in intercorporeal relationships. I will begin with a brief look at brain development because the brain presents itself as the matrix, so to speak, for all learning processes that take place during childhood. Then we will trace a few basic features of the steps of development in human social learning.

## Neuroplasticity and Development

Human beings, like no other living creatures, require the presence of their fellow beings in order to develop their abilities. No other species comes into the world with such a malleable, or what is called plastic, brain as the human being. By reason of neuronal plasticity (that is, development of synaptic structures, especially in early childhood), the brain develops into an organ that, as a complement to its environment, fits like a key in a lock. That characterization applies first and foremost to the social environment. Our neurobiological structures require appropriate emotional and intellectual offerings from our attachment figures in order to develop. In other words: *The human brain is essentially a socially and biographically formed organ.*

Human beings' physical organisms, including the brain, are formed through association and interaction with others.

In 1949 the American neurophysiologist D.O. Hebb formulated the basic law of synaptic learning: Simultaneously activated neurons strengthen their synaptic couplings and, accordingly, form additional connections. (Hebb 1949/2002) This leads to facilitation, that is, future increased signal transmission. By contrast, connections that are seldom or never used are dismantled, which is the equivalent of forgetting. Compare it to a jungle path that, with frequent use, gradually becomes wider until finally it is a comfortable road. However, if it remains unused, it will become overgrown and finally disappear altogether. Frequently used neuronal connections are the same as well-trodden paths, while seldom-activated connections are lost.

A massive surplus of neurons and synapses is formed during the first months of a child's life. Initially, there are nearly double the number of synapses that will eventually be needed. Then, according to their stimulation and use, these synapses are either strengthened or dismantled. Up to the end of the second year of life, this experience-dependent selection process forms the basic, permanent nerve network. However, its microstructure remains alterable throughout life in the form of synaptic connection patterns. In the same way that muscles grow through training but atrophy with inactivity, the capacity of the responsible neuronal network either grows or degenerates depending upon the frequency of its use.

The structure of our brain changes with every use, depending on the stimuli the brain encounters and the relationships it mediates. The human brain represents, as it were, all of the experiences from its past. The younger the child and the more intense the impressions, the more impressionable is the brain. Basically, this applies throughout our lives; through our experiences, we constantly create and change the neuronal structure of our brain, and with it also our dispositions of perception and action. In short, we alter ourselves through our conduct of life.

Through our experiences, we constantly create and change the neuronal structure of our brain, and with it also our dispositions of perception and action.

## Primary Intersubjectivity

With these introductory remarks in mind, I will now turn to my actual theme, which is the development of communication in early childhood. Let us begin with the first year of life.

"In the beginning was relationship," and the most immediate form of relationship to the world is through the sense of touch. Tactile bodily contact (touching, lifting, rocking, and, of course, breastfeeding) is the first form of communication between mother and child. It conveys not only the experience of being carried, being held, receiving warmth and protection, but also pivotal experiences for the development of trust in the world and in other people. From a biological standpoint, all of these tactile experiences also bring about a release in the mother of oxytocin, a hormone that not only stimulates breast-milk production, but also supports bonding between mother and child. Even in animals, mothers care for their young more intensively if they experience higher levels of oxytocin.

Let us now examine the sense of sight. Here also, infants are biologically attuned to social interactions. For one thing, they have an inborn ability to differentiate between animate and inanimate objects. For another thing, newborns already exhibit a heightened attentiveness to faces. What's more, from the beginning they are also able to accurately imitate adults' gestures such as sticking out the tongue, opening the mouth, wrinkling the forehead, and so forth. (Meltzoff and Moore 1977) They possess an inborn social body schema so that the infant's own body connects with the perception of the other; that is, from the outset, the child experiences both as related. A newborn does not perceive its mother as just an image, or something vis-á-vis, but rather the newborn emulates her expression within itself. Research in the last couple of decades supports the premise that human infants' ability to spontaneously imitate the expressions and actions of others is the foundation for empathy. I will return to this subject later.

Through numerous comparative culture studies, it has been shown that certain basic patterns of human facial expressions are innate. There is a series of six basic emotions—happiness, sadness, anger, revulsion, surprise, and fear—that are associated with the same facial expressions in all cultures. Associated forms of expression are wrinkling the forehead, nose wrinkling, widening the eyes, crying, smiling, and lifting the eyebrows. About six to eight weeks after birth, infants develop the ability to react to their surroundings with smiling, thereby interacting with other people and forming connections with them. Later on, other culturally influenced emotions and forms of expression appear.

Research supports the premise that human infants' ability to spontaneously imitate the expressions and actions of others is the foundation for empathy.

Over and above these forms of imitation and expression, there is also increasing development of *emotional resonance* between infant and mother. She intuitively answers the child's signals and initiatives with appropriate responses of voice and gesture. Mothers unconsciously use simplified manners (baby talk, facial expressions, eye contact, reaction to greeting, and so forth) that are appropriate for the as yet undeveloped repertoire of the child. Two infancy researchers, M. and H. Papousek (1995), describe these and other similar behaviors as "intuitive mothering skills." Mothers (and also fathers) possess biologically-based, unconscious knowledge that affords them the ability, through voice, facial expressions, and gestures, to make themselves understood by the infant, and to appropriately calm or stimulate a child, while letting themselves be guided by the child's signals.

This early dialogue between mother and child is infused with *musical* qualities of expression.

This early dialogue between mother and child is infused with *musical* qualities of expression: rhythm, the dynamics of facial expressions, vocalization, and gestural interaction (crescendo, decrescendo, flowing, soft, explosive, and so forth). This leads to the interactive "emotional attunement" that infancy researchers have highlighted. Daniel Stern (1985) speaks about a "shared dance" that mother and infant spontaneously perform together. During this communication process, the child increasingly learns to differentiate between the various signals of the mother's emotional expressions. At the same time, the infant becomes better able to understand and differentiate its own emotions. But, above all, the infant develops the prime feeling of living together with others in a world of emotions and of being connected with them.

If we combine all of these observations of emotional expression and imitation, then we can speak about a primal, and biologically rooted, system of resonance and empathy that is engraved upon a child's early development. We grow up in a primal sphere of communicative "intercorporeality" within which we remain throughout our lives. Whenever two people encounter each other, they are, from the beginning, drawn into an interaction that connects them bodily, creating an intuitive understanding between them. The emotions of the other are immediately understood by their expression, because they elicit in us a mostly unnoticed bodily impression with subtle sensations and emotions. The result is an *intercorporeal resonance:* The other person is literally felt in one's own body. (Fuchs & de Jaegher 2009)

### Mirror Neurons

The result of this resonance is empathy. It is the foundation of our social life, the reason communication is even possible in the first place. People constantly empathize with the feelings and expressions of others. They feel and share their joy or their pain; they understand the intention of a hand offered for welcome, and they understand why another reaches for a glass of water. One of the neuronal bases of empathy, the subject of intense research during the last ten years, is called the mirror neuron system. (Gallese et al. 1996, Gallese 2001)

These neurons were first identified in the premotor cortex of monkeys, an area of the brain responsible for organization and regulation of movement. Since then, neuron groups of this kind have been shown to exist in various areas of the human brain. Mirror neurons are activated when we carry out very specific actions such as reaching for an apple or a cup, as well as when we perceive the same action carried out by someone else. The effect can be explained in this way: I understand what it means when you reach for a cup because it indicates a similar movement in my own arm. As far as we can tell today, the system has two main functions:

It creates *resonance* between one's own body and that of the other, thereby making it easier to understand the other's actions.

Resonance of the mirror neurons paves the way for *willingness to act.* The more often an action by another is observed, the lower the threshold for imitation and the easier it is to imitate that action. Imitation in infants also has to do with the activity of mirror neurons. The mirror neuron system seems to be the basis of imitation and model learning; these, in turn, are centrally important human abilities affecting cultural development.

Neuronal mirror systems also play a role in contagious laughing, crying, and yawning. At present, further research is being applied to emotional reactions; if one observes, for example, the pain or revulsion of another, a center in the anterior insula is activated which is involved in one's own reactions of pain or revulsion. (Wicker et al. 2003)

Admittedly, this biologically rooted system does not bring about human sociability; the latter is not simply inborn, but rather is based upon typical, recurring interactions with others. The mirror neuron system can be activated by reaching for an apple, for instance, only after the child has grasped the *meaning* of reaching for the object. In the same way, empathy with emotional reactions like revulsion requires an understanding of the situation, such as the connection between odor and revulsion. The mirror system can develop correctly only if it is embedded in a *context of social interactions and meanings.*

The mirror neuron system can develop correctly only if it is embedded in a context of social interactions and meanings.

### Implicit Memory

Let us go further along early childhood development. How does social learning take place during the first year of life? Memory, in which singular biographical experiences or learned facts are retained, begins to mature only in the second year of life. But there is a very different kind of memory. The vast majority of all we have learned we make use of quite automatically during the course of daily life without its prompting us to remember the past. Through repetitive experiences or practice, abilities and habits have formed that are involuntarily activated during applicable situations: walking, swimming, riding a bicycle, speaking or writing. This also applies to the ability to associate with others at any moment, without having to consciously pay attention to the bodily interaction. In the field of memory research, the term *implicit*—meaning involuntary, automatic—is used to differentiate this kind of memory from autobiographical memory.

Implicit memory relies upon different brain structures than autobiographical memory; it is subcortically organized and becomes functional much earlier in a child's life. Through implicit memory, infants are able to recognize regularities in repeated experiences, acquire faculties, and learn, already at the age of 3 to 4 months, from events in their environment. Above all, through contact with others, they acquire behavioral patterns that organize their interactions. "Schemes-of-being-with," as Daniel Stern described them, include "Me-with-Mother-breastfeeding," "Me-with-Father-playing-ball," and so forth. This results in what can also be described as *implicit relationship knowledge* (Stern 1998): knowing how to relate to others, have fun together, express happiness, get attention, avoid rejection, and so on. It is, to a certain degree, a "musical" memory, organized in time according to the rhythm, dynamics, and undertones that inaudibly resonate within interactions with others.

Already in the first few months of life, infants demonstrate memory for shared interaction sequences through the way they expect their mothers to react. Babies quickly learn which emotional expressions parents respond to, are spurned to action by, or rather dismiss, for example. This can be very nicely shown through the so-called *still-face* experiment. (Weinberg & Tronick 1996) During play with her infant, the mother is asked to assume a blank facial expression and stare straight ahead for two minutes. Babies usually react with clear irritation and unease—the expected resonance from the mother is absent—and they try every possible way, with gestures and vocalizing, to bring their mother back into the familiar form of contact.

Through this, two groups of children can be differentiated (Field 1984): Infants of sensitive and lively mothers remain active even in the *still-face* situation, and obviously expect to bring their mother back into contact in this way. But infants of mothers who are more detached and lacking resonance (for instance, because of post-partum depression), react differently; in the beginning they are restless and quickly become passive and helpless. They have not learned to effectively use their behavior to bring about contact. However, if the children do not acquire relationship patterns through which they may enter into secure contact with others, then their bonding with others cannot develop appropriately. Later on they show a marked weakness in bonding. (Field et al. 1988)

So we see that, from the beginning, early interactions are laid down in the memory and brain structures of the child, and thus, in his or her behavioral dispositions.

## Bonding System

We now come to a central concept of developmental psychology that has been the subject of intense research in recent decades: the bonding theory. According to John Bowlby, who first developed this concept as far back as the 1950s, social relationships in early childhood are regulated by "a biologically-based bonding system that fulfills the function of securing the emotional proximity and care from the most important attachment figures." (Bowlby 1982) It includes:

- Biologically anchored, coordinated *signals* such as searching, calling, gazing, crying, clinging.
- The corresponding *driving emotions and needs* for things like security, care, warmth, and affection.
- The attendant *physiological, e.g., neuroendocrine* functions.

The infant's basic needs are fulfilled through this system: The infant is dependent upon the mother's body warmth, her smell, her touch, her loving attention, and appropriate stimulation and calming. These interactions play an irreplaceable role in the emotional and social development of an infant. The child's early experiences of relationships are stored in the implicit memory and anchored as *secure bonds.* The infant gains the basic trust and secure basis with which to actively explore the world. The first relationships also become inner models that put their significant stamp upon later relationships, well into adulthood. (Brisch et al. 2002)

Conversely, however, insufficient attention, lack of feelings of security, or separation from the mother lead to psychophysical stress reactions in infants, with rising agitation at first, but then increasingly to resignation and apathy. Studies by Rene Spitz in the 1960s with orphanage children are well known. (Spitz 1967) Complete withdrawal of emotional care and attention resulted in the development of serious deprivation syndromes with apathy, depression, and higher death rates. Even less serious relationship dysfunctions—arising, for example, from post-partum depression in the mother—have negative effects on the child's cognitive and emotional development. (Murray & Cooper 2003) The maturing of the emotional relationship system is an experience-dependent process that is susceptible to disruption from many different causes.

## Secondary Intersubjectivity

I have now presented the early—that is, non-verbal—form of communication and relationship, which is also described as "Primary Intersubjectivity." (Trevarthen 2001) During the next phase, called "Secondary Intersubjectivity" (Trevarthen & Hubley 1978), verbal-symbolic communication develops: the actual human ability for dialogue. Let us take a closer look at this development.

One crucial step is the development of "joint attention," whereby the mother and child together turn their attention to an outside object. This ability is developed exclusively in human infants around the age of nine months. At this age, babies begin to turn their attention to outside objects together with adults, and also to make certain that adults are paying attention by giving them short glances. Babies also soon transition to attracting an adults' attention through pointing gestures. They will point to a glass so that the mother fills it, to an animal so that she may see it, or to an object their mother is searching for in order to help her. By the same token, babies also now begin to understand the pointing gestures of adults, that is, the meaning of the pointing hand. Pointing implicates a joint relationship to a third object seen or comprehended by both partners. A specifically human form of communication is manifested by the pointing gesture: coming to an understanding about a shared outside point of reference. Here lies the fundamental limit of the mental capabilities of other primates such as chimpanzees, who are unable to develop joint attention. (Fuchs 2008) It is such a radical, new level of development that one speaks of the nine-months-revolution. (Tomasello 2001)

First words are now also combined with pointing gestures. Parents point to an object and name it. And, likewise, the first words children use are often combined with pointing. These are integrated into cooperative activities in which the children are involved and that are structured by the parents: diaper changing, eating in a highchair, riding in an automobile, feeding ducks, building a block tower together, and so forth. The capacity of speech thus develops in the course of shared practices directed toward the environment. The children must recognize that their caregivers use words purposefully, that is, with the intention of describing. They adopt a word for a new object only when the adult's attention is actually directed toward that object. If the caregiver looks in another direction, or if the voice comes from a recording, the child does not make the connection between the word and the object.

### Adoption of Perspective and Self-awareness

With speech, children learn a fundamentally new medium of communication, along with knowledge of the world and of their own selves.

They are now better able to put themselves in the position of others, comprehend their intentions, and take their perspective into account. But how does a child actually learn to say “I”? How does it come to develop self-awareness? We will see that this phenomenon is also linked to relationships and communication with others.

The infant does, in fact, bring with it a very elementary, bodily sense of self. Already before birth it has basic sensations of touch and movement in which it likewise senses its own self. However, in the first months of life this elementary sense of self develops and differentiates itself, above all, through experiences with others who look at and speak to the infant. The precursor of self-awareness develops with the reflection of one’s self in the eyes of the mother, that is, in being addressed by others. (Fuchs 2013)

The precursor of self-awareness develops with the reflection of one’s self in the eyes of the mother, that is, in being addressed by others.

The pivotal step on the path to self-consciousness takes place from the age of nine months, when the infant has learned joint attention and begins to grasp the perspective of others. The infant then learns to also see itself “with others’ eyes,” for that is how self-consciousness develops. For example, the child learns what it means to have a name: something like, “I am Monica.” This happens when the child realizes that the name points to itself. The child begins to understand this significance during the second year of life. Interestingly, at first, the child will say: “Monica is playing with dolls” or “Monica did that.” She refers to herself by her own name before she uses the word “I” to designate herself.

Between the ages of one and two, it will also become possible for the child to recognize itself in the mirror. There is a well-known experiment whereby a red dot is put on the child’s forehead unnoticed. As early as the age of 16 to 18 months, when he looks in the mirror, he will grasp at his own forehead. That means he understands that the image in the mirror represents him. Before that age, the image in the mirror is simply a funny face. Recognizing oneself in the mirror signifies the ability to view one’s self from the perspective of others, in a certain way, to see oneself from the outside. This is a milestone in the development of self-consciousness. (Fuchs 2013)

From the second or third year of life, the child finally learns to utilize the “I” pronoun. Indeed, the “I” stands for “me,” but it is also a changeable word that constantly shifts its location according to who is speaking. Only when the child understands that everyone alike can say “I” does it grasp the universality of personal perspective. Now, the child has come to understand that it is one among others, that it belongs to a community of people. The structures in the prefrontal brain necessary for this purpose mature with interactive experiences in which others speak to, and treat, the child as a person of its own. Self-consciousness and, likewise, the ability to be considerate of others are socially acquired abilities.

Self-consciousness and, likewise, the ability to be considerate of others are socially acquired abilities.

### Summary

Human beings do not come into the world simply as single beings who must be gradually introduced into community. Right from the beginning, they are biologically inclined to relationships with others. For the infant, this *bonding system* carries out the task of securing close proximity to, care from, and emotional connectedness with the most important attachment figures. Above and beyond that, with the *resonance and empathy system,* a biologically based system for a subtle, bodily understanding develops. Upon this basis, human beings, like no other species, develop the abilities of empathy, sympathy, and verbal communication. Within the first year of life the foundation is laid for relationship, bonding, and mutual understanding that is necessary for the development of symbolic-verbal communication during the second and third years of life.

In early childhood development, this symbolic communication appears for the first time in the form of spontaneous gestures and pointing. They are based upon the ability of human beings to establish joint attention—that is, connection with another person—to direct one's attention to an object and to know that the other person is doing the same, and to form common objectives, intentions, and mutual knowledge. Speech development is likewise based upon the primary motives of human communication, namely, to inform others, help others, and share emotions with them. This altruistic and cooperative primary focus differentiates humans from even the most highly developed primates, since the latter make use of gestures only to secure some advantage for themselves with the help of others. (Tomasello 2009)

I would like to make one last observation about the role of the brain. We have seen that human communication, speech, and self-awareness can develop only through interaction with others. The corresponding neuronal patterns are impressed upon the brain during the course of early childhood development. The brain works like a matrix that takes in the child's relationship experiences and transforms them into permanent abilities. (Fuchs 2008) Through this the brain becomes the organ of the mind. However, the mind is a gift from others—the community—and not a product of the brain.

… [T]he mind is a gift from others – the community – and not a product of the brain.

Knowledge of neuroplasticity already can support an approach to education that looks upon learning as a development that integrates knowledge, feelings, senses, and practical experiences.

## Final remarks

Finally, let us take a look at the relationship between the neurosciences and education. Essentially, the relationship between these two fields is just beginning to be known. What can one say with reasonable certainty?

In many cases, learning takes place implicitly, that is, "along the way," and not through directed feeding of material. It begins with relationship learning in early childhood, with walking and speaking, and it continues with learning processes in groups whereby social behaviors are learned through shared practice and imitation.

The basic pattern for human learning from early childhood on is *in relationships to others,* specifically, in personal contact with those teaching and with other learners. Relationships activate the motivation system; neglect cripples it, and, in consequence, increases aggressiveness. No lessons are as well remembered as those combined with meaningful, intensive experiences of relationship.

The years up to the end of puberty are especially sensitive phases of learning. The earlier children begin to play a musical instrument or learn a foreign language, the better. Some abilities are dependent upon certain windows of opportunity in a child's development during which they must be cultivated, while others can be learned at any time during one's life.

Learning is a holistic—that is to say cognitive, emotional, and bodily—process.

Cognitive, emotional, and physical memories are inseparably woven together, and the various kinds of memory support each other in learning. As a result:

- Children can better retain what is learned when learning takes place in a positive atmosphere and is associated with positive feelings. Thus, a central concern of education should be to create beneficial and wholesome social and spatial environments.
- Facts should be embedded in a familiar frame of reference and connected with emotional and intermodal experiences. History, for instance, must be given a "face" and connected with real people. Patterns and pictures support memory formation (e.g., Sicily is triangular; Italy is a boot).
- Unattractive environments that aren't true to life hinder learning. By contrast, environments that exhilarate the senses and appeal to the whole body have a stimulating effect. Children retain information more readily when it is presented through multiple senses and when they can approach it practically, through movement and touch.

Admittedly, neurobiology cannot specify upon which image of humankind we should base our education, what goals we should attain as teachers, or what form of education should be provided to our children. Those who expect such fundamental guidance from neurobiology will be disappointed. The brain is a matrix that absorbs what it encounters. But definite answers to the questions of what we should do in the field of education and why we should do it cannot be expected from this field of brain research. In addition, many questions about brain development and the connection between the brain and the mind remain largely unanswered; among them are the nagging questions about how information relates to sense structures, or how higher cognitive functions come into being. At this time, cooperation between education and neuroscience can address only very basic learning processes. That being said, knowledge of neuroplasticity already can support an approach to education that is not primarily cognitively oriented, but rather looks upon learning as a development that integrates knowledge, feelings, senses, and practical experiences. Learning is more than acquiring knowledge and abilities; it is also the *formation* of the personality, of patterns of experience and relations. Indeed, it goes clear into the organic structure of the body, into the brain. We carry the responsibility for creating educational environments that foster children's natural tendency to learn in and through relationships.

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# Encountering Sophia in the Classroom: Gender Inclusion in the Waldorf Curriculum

Kristin Agudelo

Over 200 years ago Abigail Adams wrote to her husband, John, asking him to "remember the ladies and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors." Since Abigail's time, the necessity of "remembering the ladies" in various educational canons has been argued persuasively by a number of scholars in a variety of contexts. However, very little on women has been written in the Waldorf curriculum and how the issue of gender inclusion might unfold, both in theory and in practice, in the Waldorf high school classroom.

This article will attempt to take some first steps towards rectifying this overlooked area of Waldorf pedagogy. First, I'll address the more theoretical aspects of the question, focusing especially on Rudolf Steiner's insights about gender and offering practical suggestions for Waldorf teachers based on his work. Then I will very briefly take a peek at a few major female figures who should find their way into every Waldorf high school curriculum—not only because they are fascinating and important historical figures in and of themselves, but more critically, because they played pivotal roles in the development of human consciousness as outlined by Rudolf Steiner. Looking ever so quickly at these women will give you a taste for just how rich our curriculum could be if we were to incorporate even just a few of the women who have contributed greatly to the evolution of consciousness.

> Why, given all the many valuable elements already present in our curriculum, should we make a special effort to teach about women?

Let's start with a fundamental question: Our curriculum is already very rich (some would say, already over-filled with content). Why, given all the many valuable elements already present in our Waldorf curriculum, should we make a special effort to teach about women?

## What Non-Waldorf Educators Say

Before we jump into Steiner's thoughts on the subject, it will be helpful to briefly review some of the most popular arguments made by the non-Waldorf educational community for gender inclusion in the classroom. Most non-Waldorf discussions of gender in the classroom are based on concerns about the ways in which curriculum content affects male and female students' self-image and -development. Since Waldorf education is based on a fundamental desire to help each student evolve his or her highest capacities, it seems critical to familiarize ourselves with these arguments and to look at how our teaching might affect the personal development of both male and female students.[1] Also pertinent to the Waldorf classroom is the claim, made by mainstream educators, that non-inclusive teaching is simply historically inaccurate; this question of specificity and accuracy was raised by Steiner himself in a lecture on gender parity, so we would be wise to pay attention to the work of our non-Waldorf colleagues.

In general, non-anthroposophical arguments for gender inclusion in the classroom can be grouped under several broad themes:

***Girls are damaged by the lack of positive role models in traditional curricula***, which have tended to portray women as passive and dependent on men (or at best, an inspiration to them—

e.g., Beatrice to Dante, or Pocahontas to John Smith); to limit their inclusion to a few token major historical figures (such as Sappho, Queen Elizabeth I); or to ignore them altogether. This latter attitude of benign neglect is especially prevalent in political histories, which by their very nature focus narrowly on one area of human interaction from which women have, for the most part, been excluded. The lack of women in traditional literature and history curricula, so the argument goes, makes girls feel invisible and, therefore, holds them back in their own self-development (which, in turn, reinforces the overall aims and social structures of our patriarchal culture).

The second argument is a positive corollary to the negative one outlined above: ***Girls need to be inspired by powerful female characters and historical figures to whom they can relate and on whom they can model their behavior.*** Many commentators also argue that boys benefit from exposure to inspirational and/or powerful female characters, since it fosters an attitude that women as well as men are worthy of respect and emulation. This argument moves beyond tokenism (the inclusion of a few notable women as a sidebar to the main lesson) when the curriculum includes a broad spectrum of women as a matter of course, aiming to make visible the lives of women in general.

This can be achieved, for instance, by discussing the economic role that women's (often unpaid) labor plays in various cultures, by consciously examining the roles and expectations placed on women across different cultures and times, or even by something as simple as saying, "We don't know much about the lives of women in pre-Vedic India, but the evidence we do have suggests...." Both types of inclusion— heroic female characters and a broad-based look at the roles of women in a given time, culture, or text—are necessary for fostering healthy self-development in girls and boys. Put simply, we need both to be inspired by the heroic actions of the few and to know that the humble lives of the many are valued.

The third argument is perhaps the simplest: ***Women have been active contributors to the social, economic, and political arenas since the beginnings of time, so representing them is simply a matter of accurate, thorough scholarship.*** In this view, introducing women and women's accomplishments into our curricula is simply a corrective to what has historically been a sometimes unconscious, sometimes willful blindness on the part of scholars. For example, an accurate understanding of Ancient Egyptian society must try to recreate (to the best of our ability) the lives of half its population, as well as the contributions of individual women, ranging from the great female pharaohs to the women named in specific court documents and papyri. The fact that reconstructing the lives and perceptions of women is often a difficult challenge does not excuse us from the attempt to do so. And advances in historiography, which has come to include a greater reliance on evidence such as court records and archaeological excavations rather than purely textual and/or political data, have often made it possible to construct at least a broad picture of what women's lives entailed (as in the case of Ancient Egypt, for instance), even if we are left with relatively few personalities that emerge from the somewhat impressionistic canvas.

There are, of course, many more subtleties to the argument in favor of including women in the canon, but, to my mind, they all fall under one of the three arguments presented above. Waldorf educators, like any others, should be mindful of these very persuasive arguments in favor of inclusion when considering how to structure their lessons. However, there are even further reasons for making efforts to be inclusive—reasons based on Rudolf Steiner's own teachings.

## Steiner on "Woman and Society"

It should come as no surprise to any Waldorf teacher, given the nearly infinite list of subjects Steiner addressed, that he had also thoroughly thought through the issue of gender. Perhaps the place where he addressed the topic most comprehensively is in his lecture “Woman and Society” (*Die Frauenfrage*), given in November of 1906.[2] It’s worth taking a moment to review the main arguments he puts forth there. For what may at first appear to be a rather academic discussion of women’s role in society has direct, practical applications for our pedagogical practice. With that in mind, let’s delve into Steiner’s insights on gender so that we can better appreciate both the “how” and “why” of gender inclusion in the classroom.

In “Woman and Society” Steiner takes up the questions raised by the nascent feminist movement, especially as it was expressed in suffragist literature and demonstrations. Acknowledging the growing importance of this movement, Steiner stated point blank that the question of women’s inclusion into hitherto un-integrated portions of society “is one of the greatest present questions of our culture,” and he observed that the issue involved much more than simply the admission of women into higher education and the professions, or even the question of universal suffrage. Rather, he noted, “the issue concerning women embraces an economic, a social, and a psychological side, and many other aspects as well.” These two statements alone should be incentive for Waldorf teachers to be diligent about the inclusion of women in the canon!

Steiner was already anticipating much later understandings of power as a dynamic, culturally constructed relationship, not a thing to be wielded or held.

After laying out what was at stake in the first part of the lecture, Steiner went on to consider a number of the prevailing theories concerning women, correctly observing that in most cases they directly contradicted each other. Moreover, he continued, if we were to look at the scientists’ and psychologists’ conclusions about women (which, at the time Steiner was lecturing, were that men were active and creative, and women were natural followers), we would find that these “experts” were severely limited by the narrow data they collected.

Investigation of other times and cultures, he stated, would reveal women who participated in what we define as “masculine” work. This observation about the cultural and temporal context of gender roles might seem commonplace to the 21st century reader, but at the time, it was incredibly provocative. It’s hard to imagine Havelock Ellis or any of the other contemporary intellectuals he mentions accepting that their theories might be culturally limited. Furthermore, Steiner points out (and this is especially important for historians) that the concept of “Woman,” even within a given culture, is itself “an unacceptable generalization.” Which women? Where? In what contexts? Are they from the lower or upper class? Steiner insists we be specific.

Even further, he argues: if we investigate “influential” women and conclude there are very few of them out there, aren’t we being confined by our own cultural assumptions of what constitutes “influence”? We need to examine our own biases—towards privileging public spheres over private and political power/voting over other ways of exercising influence. If we have confronted the issue of women’s inclusion only in these last hundred years or so, that is because our culture is itself both the creator and product of conditions in which it is possible to think about arenas such as “the political” or “the academic” as abstract entities, within which the equally abstract notion of “human rights” (applicable to both male and female) can be applied.

I find it exhilarating to think that, in 1906, Steiner was already anticipating a much later post-structuralist understanding of power as a dynamic, culturally constructed *relationship*, not a *thing* to be wielded or held. He would be right at home, for example, with Michel Foucault's description of power as "relations … interwoven with other kinds of relations (production, kinship, family, sexuality) for which they play at once a conditioning and a conditioned role."[3] For Steiner, as for Foucault, power or influence in a culture is not a weapon that the dominant class (men) uses to oppress its inferiors (women), but a network of relationships *between* men and women that includes spheres normally thought of as outside the realm of "the powerful": the home, the intellectual salon, and the everyday marketplace, to name a few.

## Gender and the Human Being

Steiner does not stop with his presciently, post-structuralist redefinition of power that takes into account the ways in which women might exercise cultural influence. Towards the end of the lecture, he moves from considering the various culturally and materially determined aspects of the "woman question" (class, time period, societal context, and so forth) into what he considers the heart of the matter—the essential nature of the human being.

We must consider in every human being the totality of that person's nature, both the revealed and the hidden parts – the male and the female.

At that point, Steiner introduces a surprising twist to the discussion. Anticipating Carl Jung's theory of the anima/animus by about ten years, he claims that, if considered in totality, each human being encompasses two poles, male and female. According to Steiner, the physical body expresses only one or the other of these poles.[4] In the emotional life, however, he claims that we can clearly see that both stereotypically feminine and masculine qualities can, in fact, belong to human beings of either physical gender.

In this description of the human being as two-poled, Steiner looks not only forward to Jung, but also backwards to Aristophanes (or, at least, to Aristophanes as described by Plato in his *Symposium*). In what we might call the ur-myth of the bi-gendered human being, Aristophanes' tale proposes that the original humans were composed of two gendered parts that made up a complete whole (though unlike Steiner, Aristophanes held that these two halves could be male-female, male-male, or female-female, thus explaining the varieties of human love as we each search among our prospective lovers for our severed half).

Steiner was less interested than Aristophanes (at least, in this context) in the effect of this double gender on human sexual behavior than he was in the way in which we can harness this dual energy to best develop our full potential as human beings. In this emphasis, he once again anticipated Jung's work on individuation. We must consider in every human being, Steiner urges, the totality of that person's nature, both the revealed and the hidden parts—the male and the female. Moreover, we must strive to integrate within ourselves whichever characteristics we are missing. In other words, a complete human being combines so-called male and female characteristics so that our external gender is complemented by an internal tendency towards the traits of the opposite.

Not content to simply scoop Jung, Steiner goes on to insist that gender discrimination is inherently tied to a culture's means of production.[5] He argues that, if we find ourselves in an entrenched patriarchy, it is because materialism "impels itself towards an external culture." In other words, the same impulses (or discourses, if one prefers a post-structuralist term) give rise to both patriarchal attitudes, that place a premium on male bodies and experiences, and to our materialist/positivist culture. The two—patriarchy and materialism—are coeval, birthed by the same forces.

To support his startlingly contemporary assertion about the interdependence of patriarchy and materialism, Steiner turned to a somewhat counterintuitive source: the language of mystics. Mystics, he claims, on some level understand that our material age is a reification of masculine forces at work in our bodies and our world. In other words, mystics see the world of things as a sort of calcification or hardening of fundamentally spiritual impulses. Steiner argues that therefore mystics often use feminine imagery to describe their journeys in the non-material world of Spirit. And it is true that many female, as well as male, mystics frame their union with the divine using female imagery.[6] The prime example, for Steiner, of this feminine spirituality is Goethe, whose "Eternal-feminine" leads Faust (and us) from the illusory world of material to the immaterial "event" of Presence. Or Dante, who is guided to Paradise through the intervention of Beatrice.

If we bring those (gender) roles into balance within ourselves, cultural renewal will be the inevitable outcome.

If, however, one is not an accomplished mystic and the prospect of a deeply entrenched patriarchal materialism is dispiriting, Steiner reminds us not to indulge in apathy or despair. Cultures change, and it is our job, as human beings, to change our surroundings by developing ourselves to our highest capacity. To this end, he urges:

> Men and women must look on their physical body as an instrument which enables them, in one direction or another, to be active as a totality in the physical world. The more human beings are aware of the spiritual within them, the more does the body become an instrument, and the more do they learn to understand people by looking into the depths of the soul.[7]

It's a gendered version of "think global, act local." If we want to change the world, we need to change the self—become the doubly-gendered human being we are meant to be. In so doing, we will change the culture around us. Patriarchy, by definition, requires men and women to adhere to strictly defined gender roles; if we bring those roles into balance within ourselves, cultural renewal will be the inevitable outcome.

"What does all this have to do with pedagogy?" you may ask. Quite simply, it is one of our main tasks as Waldorf educators to help young people experience and develop both sides of their human nature. We can do this in many ways—by encouraging, as Steiner did in some of his lectures to the first Waldorf teachers, both genders to participate in stereotypically male and female crafts (woodworking, knitting, and so forth), and by nurturing through skillful pedagogy certain behaviors that we notice are dormant in our students (e.g., encouraging retiring students to become braver about speaking, encouraging aggressive students to become more compassionate).

Perhaps just as important for the Waldorf humanities teacher, we can also accomplish this by encouraging our students to live into the experiences of both genders by offering them opportunities to do so in literature, story, song, film, and so on. We all know how a work of literature can get us "inside the head" of characters far removed from our own lives: Odysseus, Dante, and Parzifal are examples from our own curriculum. If we harness this power of imagination (something which, incidentally, Steiner describes as "female") so that students can live with and inhabit the perspectives, feelings, and bodily experiences of women as well as men, then we will have gone a long way towards accomplishing two goals: countering the prevailing patriarchal/materialist world-view and encouraging the students' inner growth along the lines Steiner is advocating.[8]

## Recommendations for Gender Inclusion in Waldorf Classrooms

So what is the "take-home" of the foregoing re-cap of Steiner's consideration of "Woman and Society"? I've boiled it down to six goals to strive for in our classrooms:

1. Given the importance Steiner placed on gender issues, it is imperative that we make an active effort to include women's voices and perspectives in all aspects of our curriculum, from literature and history to math, science, physical culture, and the arts. One simple first step is using gender-neutral language such as "human" or "humanity" instead of "man" or "mankind." This is standard practice in public schools but has been painfully slow to catch on in Waldorf circles, perhaps because of a somewhat misplaced wish to remain faithful to Steiner's German.[9] However, if we are going to move towards a more balanced experience of gender, we need to be intentional in our use of gender-inclusive language, inside and outside the classroom. This means using "human" and "humankind" whenever we are speaking of both genders, reserving "man" and "mankind" for situations in which we are specifically referring to the male gender.[10]

2. We need to embed women's voices and perspectives in their specific socio-economic, political, geographic, and temporal locations.

3. We should expand our notions of "influence," "power," and "contributions" beyond those valued by our own culture and look towards ways in which women have historically exercised their personhood, power, and influence. This will vary by geography and culture. Be alert to ways in which women, through their domestic, religious, and economic endeavors, might be participating in networks of power that we, with our contemporary Western lenses, might not immediately see.

4. Tokenism is insufficient to do justice to women's voices and experiences. We need examples of both heroic/outstanding women and everyday women. On a practical level, this means that in addition to covering famous queens, female authors, and other notables, we also need social history. When discussing cities, teachers can describe what the homes looked like and what activities might have taken place in them. Who provided the childcare? Who made the food? Who did the farming? Who made the clothes? Good social and economic history will address the role of women.[11]

5. As Waldorf teachers, we must nurture those gendered aspects of our own personality that are less well-developed. Although these "hidden sides" are often qualities associated with the opposite sex, they vary tremendously from person to person. As with all things anthroposophical, there is no single answer to fit all men or all women; each of us must make an honest appraisal of the gendered qualities we most need to develop in ourselves—not only once, but again and again over the course of our spiritual and professional development. Bringing this question of gender into our ongoing meditative practice can be extremely useful in helping identify and address areas of weakness.

6. We need to be intentional about the importance of the moral/spiritual work we are doing when we engage in questions of gender in the classroom. It's all too easy to feel like gender inclusion is something we "add on" to our usual lesson, or that we simply don't have time to be as inclusive as we would like to be. But Steiner has assured us that the question of inclusion is of vital importance and is not a matter of trends. In fact, in seeming anticipation of the accusation that he's just espousing some sort of newfangled feminist claptrap, he emphatically declared that we "cannot solve the Woman's question with trends and ideals!"[12] Rather, as he painstakingly shows, he is arguing for the centrality of gender inclusion as a spiritual practice. He sums up: "In reality you can only solve it [the "Woman's question"] by creating

that concept, that disposition of soul which enables men and women to understand each other out of the *totality* of human nature."[13]

## A Quick Introduction to a Few Notable Women

I hope the foregoing overview of the "woman's question" has convinced you to take up for yourself the study of how gender plays out in your own classroom and particularly how you might strive to be more inclusive in your pedagogy. Being inclusive can be a lot of work—finding new resources and adjusting tried and true lesson plans take time. For that reason, I maintain a website, www.notablewomen.wordpress.com, designed to help Waldorf schools and teachers include more women in their curricula by providing relatively short, easy-to-read articles on a number of women from history (and a few more current figures), along with suggestions for lesson plans.

To demonstrate briefly the type of luminary I profile on the site, I will "introduce" you here to one of the women I believe to be among the most important for the evolution of consciousness, the Ancient Sumerian priestess Enheduanna. Though she is only one among many women who were game changers for human consciousness, her example should be enough to indicate both the quality of the individualities I'm interested in unearthing, and the degree to which our curriculum is impoverished if we do not make every effort to include them.

### *Enheduanna: The World's First Named Author*

To the best we can tell, Enheduanna lived around 2300 BCE. The daughter of the famous Assyrian king Sargon, she was high priestess of the moon god Nanna in the city of Ur and author of more than 4500 extant lines of poetry—most in the form of temple hymns and other longer works in praise of the gods. Aside from archaeologists and ancient historians, few people today have ever heard of her, but she has the distinction of being the very first named author in human history. That's right—the very first author who thought to put his or her name to paper (or in this case, clay tablets) was a woman. And, just to give you a sense of how revolutionary Enheduanna was, she was writing about 800 years before *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, a much more famous work (attributed to a man) that is commonly cited as the beginning of literature.

You can go to my website to find out much more detail about Enheduanna's biography and literary output, but for now, I'll point out briefly: As far as we can tell, before Enheduanna, no one anywhere (not China, not Ancient America, not Egypt) had ever thought to either name him- or herself as an author.[14] Moreover, no one had ever thought to write about his or her inner feelings and experience. We have writing from before Enheduanna's time—all sorts of data lists involving accounting and some praises of gods and goddesses (though even there, Enheduanna's are among the first). However, no one had ever used the word "I" in writing, and certainly no one had ever gone on to use that "I" as a way to explore his or her inner landscape.

> Before Enheduanna … no one had ever used the word "I" in writing … or gone on to use that "I" as a way to explore his or her inner landscape.

In contrast, Enheduanna not only named herself as author, but wrote in vivid detail about her feelings towards the goddess Inanna, and the way in which her biography and her spiritual experience of Inanna intersected. It's literally a world-changing moment in human consciousness: the first sign that humans had entered Steiner's "Egypto-Chaldean Epoch" (2900–750 BCE), the era he describes as being that in which humanity comes into awareness of its inner emotional life.[15] Enheduanna herself apparently knew that she was doing something entirely new. In one of her temple hymns, she wrote,

> The person who bound this tablet together is Enheduanna. / My king, something never before created, did not this one give birth to it?[16]

This passage (among others in her work) is breathtaking in its novelty and in its self-awareness of that novelty. The fact that the hymns themselves are masterworks of poetry adds to their splendor. So gifted was Enheduanna, in fact, that her works were copied down as models for hundreds of years afterward—first by Sumerian scribes and later by Babylonians. The early 20th century Assyriologist William Hallo termed her "the Sumerian Shakespeare." To which I would counter: Given that she preceded Shakespeare by about 3800 years, it might be more apt to dub the bard "the English Enheduanna." Her work is just as earth-shattering, if not more so. How can we profess to teach a curriculum that works with Steiner's indications about the evolution of consciousness if we are missing such a critical figure?

### A Few Other Female Luminaries

Enheduanna is just one such luminary female missing from our rolls; others include Perpetua, a Roman woman who wrote the world's first diary while imprisoned waiting to be thrown to the beasts; Marie de France, who single-handedly invented the genre of courtly romance by combining into a single genre the two extant strands of Celtic fairytales and courtly poetry from Aquitaine (and not coincidentally, stands at the beginning of a direct line of transmission from herself to Chretien de Troyes and Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzifal*); Hildegard von Bingen, whose theology and cosmology encapsulate many of the same ideas later unpacked by Rudolf Steiner, and many, many more. These are not women to be ignored, nor are they mere add-ons to the important male figures we already privilege in our curriculum. Rather, discovering more about these women and integrating them into our lesson plans at all levels will constitute a giant step forward in the project that Steiner challenged us so eloquently to undertake: to bring balance to ourselves, our students' lives, and the world as a whole by fully developing both sides of our human nature.

### Final Thoughts: Building a "City of Ladies"

To do justice to Steiner's vision, it seems appropriate to end by taking a turn toward the metaphysical. I began this article with a reference to an 18th century American first lady's plea to her husband to "remember the ladies" as he governed what was then a relatively new country founded on democratic ideals. I'd like to end with another image from a female author, this one from the 14th century scholar and advocate, Christine de Pizan. Pizan is a remarkable figure—perhaps the world's first self-conscious "feminist," in that she intentionally set about not only to persuade her male peers (and the world at large) to respect women and their work, but she went on to contribute materially to these efforts by founding an all-female scriptorium that churned out copies of her own considerable *oeuvre*, which was much in demand by her contemporaries.

Pizan is a particularly interesting figure for anthroposophists, because her concept of the way in which humans work in and on the spiritual world parallels some of Steiner's views. In her Book of the City of Ladies, for instance, she wrote of a vision in which she was visited by three spiritual beings she called "daughters of God": Lady Reason, Lady Rectitude, and Lady Justice.[17] These Ladies, whose illuminated countenances and melodious speech overwhelmed Christine's senses, tasked her with what became her life's work—founding a "city of ladies" that would exist in both the spiritual and earthly realms. In her vision, Christine worked alongside the ladies to dig and excavate the foundations of the city, lay down the walls, and otherwise construct a strong, impregnable fortress wherein unjustly treated women could find refuge. However, this foundation, these walls were formed not out of material clay and stone, but out of the scholarly discourse between herself and the three Ladies on the subjects of the origins of inequality, women's rights, and virtuous women's biographies. Her words, then, were the foundation of the city. In effect, Christine built up an edifice in the spiritual realm that was able to then nourish and sustain women here on earth.

I find it remarkable that a 14th century Venetian-born Frenchwoman described nearly exactly the type of concrete spiritual work Steiner envisioned when he enjoined his followers to actively nourish and build up the spiritual being "Anthroposophia." Like Steiner, Pizan saw her work here on earth—her writing, her scholarly activity, her ethical and spiritual practices—as contributing in a concrete way to the evolution not just of human consciousness, but of the spiritual world itself. At the risk of sounding overly grandiose, I would suggest that, like Steiner and Pizan, we should see our own efforts at gender inclusion on the same large scale.

Like Steiner, Pizan saw her work here on earth as contributing in a concrete way to the evolution not just of human consciousness, but of the spiritual world itself.

Specifically, I would encourage the anthroposophical community at large, and especially those involved in education, to consider that our efforts at gender inclusion actually go way beyond simply validating the experiences of girls in today's classrooms, or even helping all students develop their full, bi-gendered selves. Rather, like Christine de Pizan, our teaching, done with right intention, builds a spiritual edifice that fortifies *the entire spiritual realm*. The question of gender inclusion, I would posit, is a matter not just of pedagogy, but of theology and cosmology as well.

## Practical Steps Forward

Reflecting on Steiner's and Pizan's insights is pretty heady stuff, and I hope you will find their indications on gender, as I have, worth contemplating and taking into your meditative life. However, as anthroposophists and teachers, we also need to take some on-the-ground, concrete steps. I've sketched out below two imaginations for the future: first, for the Waldorf curriculum, and second, for anthroposophical/spiritual work on gender.

### For the Classroom

In my perfect world, I would take a walk through the grades in a Waldorf school in which, upon entering the second grade classrooms, I'd hear some of Marie de France's animal fables being retold. Then, moving up to fifth grade, I'd hear about Enheduanna when the class studied Ancient Mesopotamia. Perhaps (a slightly toned-down version of) Perpetua or Hypatia would make an appearance in sixth grade during the Roman block. In high school, I'd hear about Marie de France once again during the *Parzival* block, this time for her courtly tales. Enheduanna might reappear in 10th grade Ancient Cultures (where the teens would read some of her poetry and contemplate what it says about human consciousness that Enheduanna chose to name herself in it). Hildegard von Bingen would be taught not only in music and art history, but also during science blocks as a representative (alongside Dante) of the archetypal medieval cosmology or as a counterpoint to later Enlightenment views of Reason. The model here would be to teach game-changers like Enheduanna and Hildegard just as we teach Shakespeare and Plato—more than once, in a variety of settings, in both upper and lower school.

Just as (or even more) importantly in my ideal scenario, when I would step into faculty meetings, I would overhear conversations in which teachers (male and female) were taking the lead in being consciously inclusive in their lesson plans, their work being founded in a deep consideration of the spiritual labor that Steiner has called us to undertake. They would be paying attention to how their course material might affect girls and boys differently, how to create gender parity among students in class and the means by which we might encourage, within each student, the development of his/her "other half." When designing courses, the question of gender inclusion wouldn't be an afterthought or an "it would be nice if…"—it would be thought through and integrated from the get-go. But even more importantly, I would see faculties looking at how they might strive spiritually to bring a balance between male and female modes of relating to and being in the world, both as individuals and as a teaching body.

Our teaching, done with right intention, builds a spiritual edifice that fortifies the entire spiritual realm.

### For the Spiritual World: Unfolding the Sophianic Impulse

But there is still another vision that I think supersedes the strictly pedagogical imagination I've outlined above. It refers to Christine de Pizan's spiritual edifice: the continued spiritual work on the part of dedicated anthroposophists to further unfold the Sophianic impulse that Steiner has said characterizes our age. I do not think it is a coincidence that Sophia (and Anthroposophia) are linguistically *feminine.* That is to say, the work of our era involves a raising up of a specifically feminine type of wisdom or insight. Steiner stated that in the 19th century the Christ Impulse became overly materialized due to the growth of a certain type of biblical criticism that prioritized the historical Jesus; in order to reinvigorate the Wisdom in Christ, he called upon the anthroposophical community to search for Mary/Isis as a manifestation of Sophianic presence.[18] Of course, rediscovering the presence of Mary/Isis in myth, story, and ritual is one important way to pursue this search. However, I would argue there might be other (even potentially more fruitful) ways to engage with Divine Wisdom.

The first of these other methods would be to work and study more closely those individualities who have grappled with, reflected on, and (in some cases) had ecstatic experiences of Divine Sophia Herself. I'm thinking here specifically of Hildegard von Bingen, but there are others (male and female) as well: Theresa of Avila, Julian of Norwich, Mechtild of Magdeburg (among the female medieval mystics), Solovyev and Bulgakov (among the Eastern Orthodox), Jane Leade and Jakob Böhme (among early Protestants), Matthew Fox, Mary Daly, Rosemary Radford Reuther, and others (among modern-day feminist theologians). Some of these figures are already relatively well-studied within anthroposophy; others are less so. Making efforts to uncover and study the life and works of each of them (plus the many more not listed here) can further our understanding of Sophia's work in the world, even if we don't adopt every precept of each person's theology.

A second method would be to study various luminary women to see if there are any underlying similarities between them that might help us understand the particularly feminine qualities of the spiritual world as it is manifest in and interpreted through female bodies. I hope that the very brief presentation in this article of Enheduanna's biography and work is enough to convince you that these notable women are worth spending some time getting to know. Comparing the narratives of several of these female luminaries might lead us to interesting insights about how gender plays a role in the evolution of consciousness.

Finally, there's the very real work of meditating on and contemplating the figure of Sophia herself. To that end, I offer you this image of Divine Sophia enthroned, taken from a Russian icon found in the church of St. George in Novgorod. Sophia is the figure at the center, with the Virgin on her right, Christ and the archangels above her head, and John the Baptist on her left. What you may not be able to tell from a black and white reproduction is that Sophia is entirely red—her clothes, wings, skin are all a muted scarlet. This coloring is important: in iconography, red is the color of the incarnation.

Finally, there is the very real work of meditating on and contemplating the figure of Sophia herself.

What I take from this image, which is famous as being the prototypical icon of Divine Sophia, is the fact that, for all her divinity, Sophia is very much involved in the work of incarnation. In other words, Sophia (and, by extension, the Sophianic impulse Steiner described) cannot be seen as some far-away, esoteric idea that we look forward to welcoming one day. On the contrary, Sophia is involved in how we incarnate, and if we wish to further her work in the world, we are called to embody her impulse in our own lives. For us as teachers, this means working with the feminine in an active way in our curricula and in our classrooms. It is important, vital work—not just a matter of tipping the scales a bit in favor of women and girls, but a matter of furthering the evolution of human consciousness. Steiner himself has explicitly enjoined us to take up this call, both exoterically, in our social and work lives, and esoterically, in our spiritual work. I invite you and your school community to join me in that journey.

## Endnotes

1 The following website contains a good recap of the evidence from mainstream educational sources in favor of inclusion. Holt, Evelyn R. "Remember the Ladies—Women in the Curriculum." ERIC Digest. http://www.ericdigests.org/pre-9215/ladies.htm, March 1990. Accessed July 28, 2014.

2 Rudolf Steiner, "Woman and Society" [*Die Frauenfrage*] (lecture given in Hamburg, Germany, November 17, 1906). http://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/19061117p01.html. Steiner also spent much of Chapter 14 in his *Philosophy of Freedom* considering the question of gender. Though I make more explicit reference to *Die Frauenfrage* here, his thought as outlined in *Philosophy of Freedom* also informs my considerations. It's also important to note that Steiner insisted that Waldorf education be co-educational in an era when students were educated in gender-separated classrooms. This surely is a powerful model not only for our own classrooms (which are, of course, already co-ed), but also of the larger sense of intentionality in actively working for gender parity that Steiner was modeling for us.

3 Michel Foucault, "Power and Strategies" in *Power and Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (New York: Vintage Press, 1980), 142.

4 We might wonder, here, about transgendered people, including hermaphrodites. Steiner was writing at a time when such questions were not as present for the public as they are these days. My strong suspicion is that he would not have been terribly satisfied with descriptions of transgendered people, for instance, as "gender dysphoric" or struggling with "gender identity disorder." Rather, I believe he probably would have seen the discrepancy between the person's biological (physical) body and his/her subjective (emotional/spiritual) experience as a person of the opposite gender as an indication that these two poles of gender experience were beginning to express themselves in new ways. He clearly states that our future development as a species is on a trajectory towards unisexuality. What role intersex (hermaphrodites) and transgendered individuals might play in this evolution is, to my mind, an intriguing question raised by Steiner's indications, and would be a fascinating research project in its own right.

5 Here is an interesting point of overlap with Marxist feminists. While Steiner is not himself a Marxist (indeed, his economic theory could be understood

as a rebuttal to the Marxist theories that were so popular among intellectuals of his day), his understanding of gender does share with Marxist feminism the linking of economic and gender injustice to a single underlying materialistic force of oppression. Where they differ is in Steiner's insistence that this materialism can ultimately be countered only by a *spiritual* resistance to the forces of materialism itself, rather than in the replacement of one form of materialism (capitalism) by another (communism).

6 Though there are exceptions on both sides as well—men and women who envision themselves as "marrying" or otherwise communing with a male deity or spirit. Consider, for example, John of the Cross's somewhat homoerotic mystical imagery or Catherine of Siena's mystical marriage to Christ.

7 Op. cit., Rudolf Steiner, "Woman and Society" [*Die Frauenfrage*].

8 The question of whether other minority perspectives might open up similar "breaches" in the patriarchal/materialist discourse is a fascinating one and, though beyond the scope of this paper, deserves consideration. To what degree would post-colonial narratives (which disrupt the dominant discourses of imperialism and capitalism) have a similar effect on spiritual growth?

9 I say "misplaced" because Steiner nearly always uses *Mensch* and *Menschen* when speaking of humans in general, a word that most modern German translators translate as "human," "human being," or "person" to distinguish it from the narrower *Mann*, a word that specifically denotes males.

10 Teachers of English might also seriously consider accepting "they" as a substitute for the old universal "he." In many academic environments (including top universities), professors now encourage students to either use "he/she" in their academic writing, or even "they" as a singular (as in the sentence "everyone take out their pencil"). What in earlier days would have been seen as an unforgivable breach of subject/number agreement is now seen as the lesser of two evils—better to have a disagreement in number (the argument goes) than exclude half the human race by insisting on "he" as the singular. As Steiner and Owen Barfield have so amply demonstrated, languages evolve along with consciousness, and it is becoming increasingly acceptable in academic circles to insist on gender inclusive language, even at the expense of agreement in number. In my opinion, we should welcome this change as evidence of an increasing consciousness about the importance of "remembering the ladies."

11 It's interesting that if we simply follow the template of Steiner's threefold social organism when planning our history lessons (making sure to always cover the political, economic, and cultural spheres), it's hard to completely exclude women.

12 Op. cit., Rudolf Steiner, "Woman and Society" [*Die Frauenfrage*].

13 Ibid.

14 The first named Chinese authors (many of whom are quasi-historical) appear in the 8th c. BCE; Indian Vedic texts (the earliest of which are believed to have been compiled c. 1500 BCE) were not ascribed to individuals, and the earliest pre-Vedic Indic writing (from the Harappan civilization, which flourished in Enheduanna's time) has not been deciphered.

15 It's almost certain that Steiner didn't know of Enheduanna's writings, since Leonard Woolley, the archeologist who first rediscovered her work, did not even begin excavating in Ur until 1922. I have been unable to pinpoint the date that he revealed the disk of Enheduanna to the world, but it appears that his earliest publications (for the Trustees of the British and University of Pennsylvania Museums) were in the late 1920s and early 1930s, after Steiner's death. It's even more amazing, then, that Enheduanna's work fits so nicely with the Egypto-Chaldean period as outlined by Steiner, given that the earliest literature Steiner would have had access to was the Gilgamesh epic, which post-dates Enheduanna by about 700 years.

16 From an online translation by Betty de Shong Meador of Enheduanna's hymns: http://www.atanet.org/publications/beacons_10_pages/page_15.pdf.

17 Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, trans. Earl Jeffrey Richards (New York: Persea Books, 1982).

18 He did this perhaps most clearly in his Christmas address of 1920: "The Quest for the New Isis, the Divine Sophia: The Quest for the Divine Sophia." Available online at http://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/19201224p01.html.

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# Imagine Knowledge: A Livable Path

Paula C. Sager

*You cannot depend on your eyes when your*
*imagination is out of focus.*
– Mark Twain[1]

Only by imagination,” writes Owen Barfield, “can the world be known.” While it is important to develop ever more powerful, ever more sensitive instruments to aid perception, he cautions such perception will not lead to moral action, without the human mind becoming “increasingly aware of its own creative activity.”[2]

Barfield, whom C.S. Lewis called “the wisest and best of my unofficial teachers,” was not the first to point to imagination as fertile ground for understanding how and what the human mind can know. The philosopher Immanuel Kant, who two centuries earlier described imagination as a “blind but indispensable function of the soul,”[3] came, by the end of his life, to a different conclusion: that the faculty of imagination, in its inherently free and creative scope, is inclusive of both the rational and empirical mind. While Kant could appreciate the primacy of individualized imagination, he could not philosophically account for it. Nonetheless, as a new direction, his thinking in the *Critique of Judgment*[4] inspired some of Kant’s followers to undertake a serious study of imagination and the aesthetic experience.

## Post-Kantian Integration of Sense and Reason

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was one such post-Kantian, and in Chapter XIII of his *Biographia Literaria*, he distinguishes between a science that “presupposes intelligence as already existing and complete” and a philosopher who “contemplates it in its growth.”[5] This is not simply a difference between product and process. In the first case, a domain of knowledge, in this instance, science, sets and maintains the presumption of intelligence. In the second case, it is the individual who establishes a relationship of inquiry to the living *activity* of intelligence. Coleridge’s philosopher has not only the right as an independent, thinking person to inquire into the nature of “the worlds of intelligence,” but also the capacity to do so.[6]

Crediting Kant as “an effective pioneer” of this “master-thought,” Coleridge references Kant’s investigation of forces in opposition to each other and raises the question of how two co-existing, indestructible and infinite forces (sense and reason) might interpenetrate and with what result. He famously concludes:

> The primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary Imagination I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the *kind* of its agency, and differing only in *degree* and in the *mode* of its operation.[7]

With these two sentences, Coleridge makes a very large move toward unity. Unlike Kant or John Locke before him, who both insisted that all cognition must be logical and analytical, Coleridge proposes that imagination is the link between the finite faculties of the human mind and the eternal creative source of human consciousness, what he calls “the infinite I AM.” As such, primary imagination is the unconscious activity that mediates the external world of phenomena and the internal world of human perception. Secondary imagination—an echo of and not in any way severed from the power and agency of primary imagination—makes possible the process of synthesizing perceptions and thoughts so that the result is a way of knowing that is alive, creative, and fresh.

Coleridge draws a distinction between the vital quality of imagination and something he calls *fancy*, which he describes as a kind of imaginative thinking that does not draw directly from the indestructible and infinite forces of creation. Fancy, as a mental activity, recombines already-known elements of perception and thought but relies upon association and a state of mind that is essentially separate from any continuity between the capacity to think and the generative source of that capacity. For Coleridge, access to primary and secondary imagination is necessary to original and transformative creativity, while fancy serves to make use of creative insights. A mind dwelling solely in the mode of fancy, however, may be subject to recycled or clichéd acts of imagination.

Coleridge proposes that imagination is the link between the finite faculties of the human mind and the eternal creative source of human consciousness.

## Paradox of Language

At the same time that Coleridge was developing new perspectives in philosophy and epistemology, his good friend William Wordsworth was re-inventing poetry. Using the medium of language to describe his deepening relationship to nature and his own consciousness, Wordsworth also identifies imagination as “the main essential Power.”[8]

In his long autobiographical poem, *The Prelude*, dedicated to Coleridge, Wordsworth tracks the journey, not just of his own life, but the life of humanity. Echoing passages from Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, he interweaves images of the “Fall of Man” through a narrative of his own coming of age, a parallel downward trajectory. The innocence of his own boyhood when “the sun / Unfelt shone brightly round us in our joy,”[9] leads to adolescence when books and schooling claim attention: “Rank growth of propositions overruns / The Stripling’s brain.”[10] While literature and poetry bring the young Wordsworth “touches of deep joy”[11] and later geometry offers its own deep pleasure,[12] a mood of melancholy sets in followed by the “stormy course” of his college years.[13] As a young man in London, Wordsworth emerges from books and formal learning to become fully conscious of his own alienation from the people and life around him. Seeing a blind beggar “propped against a Wall,” a sign hanging from his neck to tell his pitiful story, Wordsworth experiences a “turning” of his mind and, as if in a mirror, “on the shape of that unmoving man, / His steadfast face and sightless eyes, I gazed / As if admonished from another world.”[14]

The city and this time in Wordsworth’s life stand as a dark and diminished contrast to the beloved countryside of his childhood. It is a place where, he writes, “I feel the imaginative Power / Languish within me.”[15] By the conclusion of *The Prelude*, this imaginative power is reclaimed—transformed even—and identified by Wordsworth as “a genuine Liberty.” The commitment to it, he calls an enlarging of freedom.[16]

In tracing the development of his creative imagination, Wordsworth delineates a path from the childhood innocence of his “earliest visitations,” when he was not conscious of their import, to the lonely estrangement of his young adult years and to his full maturity “where now I range, / A meditative, oft a suffering, man.”[17] Consciousness of imagination, in other words, does not preclude suffering. The hard-won capacity for rational thinking is what enables the poet to be conscious and literate about his or her own aesthetic experiences, unlike the child. It is, however, this very thinking that can separate the poet from the unified state of such an experience, hence suffering.

In *Poetic Diction*, Barfield argues that language itself holds the mystery of this paradox. Etymology reveals that the derivative of most, if not all, words, even the most abstract and contemporary, “referred in earlier days to one of these two things—a solid, sensible object, or some animal (probably human) activity.”[18] Modern languages, he writes, trade in dead metaphors—Emerson’s “fossil poetry”[19]—and are mostly grasped by what Barfield calls “logical mind.” Language grasped by “poetic mind” recognizes that the world and the individual self share a living reality that can be known and experienced as the continuum within which perception “flows from two different sources, one of these being the nature of language itself, especially in its earlier stages, and the other the individualized imagination of a poet.”[20]

Barfield considers imagination to be the human capacity to experience reality *and* create a metaphorical representation of its truth.

A true metaphor, therefore, would be one that activates a sense of connection to living reality, with imagination being the human capacity to experience that reality *and* create a metaphorical representation of its truth. Barfield explains it as a progression from “inspiration grasping the hitherto unapprehended, and imagination relating it to the already known.”[21] The apprehension of a true metaphor marks a turning point in consciousness and acknowledges a reciprocal relationship between self and world. The experience of a true metaphor is a reminder that everything can be known, in a participatory manner, both as substantive form and dynamic manifestation of source. As Barfield describes it, imagination, as a fundamental vehicle for knowledge, is available to serve all domains of inquiry. Imagination is equally essential to the process of assessing and responding to the unique qualities and needs of each moment or situation.

## True Metaphor: In Flight

An example of a true metaphor, from my own experience, arose in response to an incident on an airplane. It was March of 2004 and I had been traveling with my family in France when the train bombings in Madrid occurred. Everywhere we went, security was heightened, along with a general level of anxiety and suspicion, especially palpable in Paris’ Charles DeGaulle Airport as we prepared to head home.

On the plane, I watched as two flight attendants transferred a man from a wheelchair to the seat in front of me. He was wearing his West African robes inside out and for the first hour of the trip chatted amiably in French with nearby fellow passengers. After takeoff, I settled into a book but was suddenly startled by the sound of wailing. With despairing groans, the man sitting in front of me repeatedly raised his arms high into the air, letting them fall onto the headrest in front of him, each time shaking the whole seat and the woman in it. My first reaction to these wild gestures and strange, despondent sounds was fear, followed by concern, and then curiosity about how others would respond.

A couple of passengers on either side of the distraught man began to speak gently to him, trying to discern the problem. A flight attendant joined them, and as I observed their interactions, I was struck by their care and mindfulness. They artfully modulated their tone of voice and choice of words as they spoke to him and, as I listened, it occurred to me that I could likewise modulate, not my voice, but my thoughts. I could quietly join the efforts to create an atmosphere that might support the man. I closed my eyes and spent some moments becoming aware of how constricted my chest felt, how tight and raised my shoulders were. Fear had settled into my body even though I no longer felt afraid. I spent some moments feeling the sensations in my body and how they evoked an emotional texture of fear. By becoming conscious of the emotion in this way, it no longer had a grip on me. My body became more relaxed, more open. My mind could now return to the situation in a calmer state.

The woman across the aisle from me was also watching the situation attentively. Apparently, she, like me, was choosing to be involved as a silent witness. I remembered what a friend had told me recently about witnessing a compassionate space around one who is suffering. So, as the man continued loudly and fitfully to be in distress, I thought about compassion and imagined it arising in me and spreading into the space around him. I began to be aware of an inner quality, something that felt like spaciousness. Out of this sense of space, silently, came the words: *a blanket of love.*

I visualized the weaving of the blanket, imagining it being woven by the undulating threads of feeling that were present in the spaciousness of my experience. When I started to picture wrapping the man in this blanket, it felt too invasive, too busy. By far the most simple, direct, and powerful way for me to act was to just allow the words to be present, to feel them arise from a source of energetic activity within me.

After about fifteen minutes of our small group's vigilant participation—both visible and invisible—the man put his head back, laid his hands in his lap, and fell asleep for the next six hours. About forty minutes before we landed in Boston, he woke and stayed peaceful for the remainder of the flight.

## Imagination and Truth

I thought of this experience while reading an essay written in tribute to Owen Barfield, by the physicist David Bohm. In it, Bohm streamlines Coleridge's somewhat vague use of the terms: first imagination, second imagination, and fancy. Bohm, instead, defines imagination "as the power to display the activity of the mind as a whole through mental images."[22] As clarification, he writes:

> What Coleridge considers as primary imagination will then be considered as the display through such images of creative and original *insight,* while what he regards as fancy will be taken to be the corresponding display of the more mechanical and routine aspects of thought. Thus, the one activity, indicated by the word "imagination," is to be distinguished mainly according to the order of its *content*, which moves between the extremes of imaginative insight and imaginative fancy.[23]

The word, *display*, as Bohm uses it, points to the phenomenal aspect of imagination and offers a way of understanding my experience on the plane.

At first the phrase, *blanket of love*, evoked a sense that the mood created in the cabin of the plane was like a soft blanket. As I held the image in my mind, I experienced a kind of inner activity that had qualities of weaving, warmth, spaciousness, and energy. It was as if the image-phrase had changed from a noun to a verb. *Blanket of love* had become *love-blanketing*. I began to be less aware of the image and more aware of the qualitative nature of the experience. I was in the experience, not having it. No longer was it just about doing something to support another person; it seemed that I too was being supported. I felt expanded and yet held. This change—I would call it a shift in consciousness—had significance. Even though I could not verify what anyone else was experiencing, I could perceive inwardly that something had changed. External evidence of this could be construed by the fact that the man became calm and went to sleep, an observation that, of course, raises a thorny issue: how can one *know* when an inner experience is true or not?

On the subject of truth, Rudolf Steiner, who as a philosopher and spiritual teacher had a deep influence on Barfield and his work, wrote:

> We no longer want merely to *believe*; we want to *know*. Belief demands the recognition of truths that we do not quite understand. But whatever we do not completely comprehend goes against the individual element in us that wants to experience everything in its deepest inner core. The only *knowing* that satisfies us is the kind that submits to no outer norm, but springs from the inner life of the personality.[24]

Can such a knowing be cultivated and trusted? Arthur Zajonc, physicist and president of the Mind and Life Institute, observes: "We require a way of bringing experience and reason together, a way of perceiving meaning in the given, even when the given arises through deep meditation."[25] Zajonc suggests that the way to bring experience and reason together is through contemplative inquiry. Meditation and other forms of contemplative inquiry provide a discipline that supports entry into the subjective realm where it is possible to investigate the relationship between interior experience and the exterior world with safety and discernment. The faculty of imagination can lead, not to flights of fancy but, on the contrary, to a centered awareness of the unfolding of conscious experience.

The faculty of imagination can lead not to flights of fancy but, on the contrary, to a centered awareness of the unfolding of conscious experience.

## The Aesthetic State and Moral Action

As Wordsworth and Coleridge advocate, imagination is a power worth cultivating and appreciating. Both writers insist that this power is about individual freedom in the largest sense. What they don't address in any detail is the relationship of free-aspiring individuals to others or to society. This is a subject that Friedrich Schiller, also inspired by Kant, tackles in a series of "Letters" in his book, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*. Here, he extends the application of art and imagination (words he has transposed into the more philosophic term, *aesthetic*) into the realm of politics and moral action. In a footnote to the Thirteenth Letter, Schiller wrote:

> If we are to become compassionate, helpful, effective human beings, feeling and character must unite, even as wide-open senses must combine with vigor of intellect if we are to acquire experience. How can we, however laudable our precepts, how can we be just, kindly, and human toward others, if we lack the power of receiving into ourselves, faithfully and truly, natures unlike ours, of feeling our way into the situation of others, of making other people's feelings our own?[26]

Imagination and what Schiller calls the play-drive are what allow for "feeling our way into" the situation of others or into an issue or social question. In Schiller's vision of a community that embodies the "Aesthetic State," love, work, and play are synonymous.

Schiller benefited from an inspired friendship—much like that between Wordsworth and Coleridge—with the great German writer, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Entirely out of his own investigation, Goethe developed a scientific approach to *feeling the way into* nature that he describes as "a delicate empiricism which makes itself utterly identical with the object, thereby becoming true theory."[27] Goethe's approach allows the theory to stay closer to, even "identical with" phenomena instead of becoming separate and abstract. In my example of applied imagination on the plane ride, the theory that I both experienced and could propose is that a person staying present with his or her own inner experience can be open and attentive to another person, thereby supporting the other without compromising self-autonomy.

### Theory as Participation as Theory

The word *theory* shares the same Greek root as the word *theater*. Both derive from a verb that means "to view" or "to make a spectacle," suggesting, as Bohm points out, "that theory is to be regarded primarily as a way of looking at the world through the mind."[28] Perhaps the word *theory*, like the word *theater*, can also be seen to include, in addition to the spectator, the performer—the one who enacts the "spectacle." Theory can then be understood to result from an activity that is inclusive of two generally polarized modes of participation: one more passive—the perceiving faculty of the *viewer*; the other more active—the activity of the *player* or that which is being viewed. Goethe wrote: "The ultimate goal would be: to grasp that everything in the realm of fact is already theory. …Let us not seek for something behind the phenomena—they themselves are the theory."[29]

Therefore, the word *theory* tells us something about how human beings can participate in the world, not just view it.

Goethe's understanding of theory, as the facts of phenomena, by necessity includes the presence of the observer. It is the viewer's imagination, then, as an infinite faculty, that initiates a process of discerning particular phenomenal content within a participatory unity of wholeness. Therefore, the word *theory* tells us something about how human beings can participate in the world, not just view it. In this new mode of participation, the distinct roles of viewer and actor or player become integrated; they become a way of being. In this way of being, a person's thoughts and perceptions are not in conflict with their actions but rather precipitate action. Awareness of the relationship between perception, thought, and will becomes the portal to the domain of freedom and ethical action. Steiner put it simply: "To be free means: to be able—on my own, through moral imagination—to determine the mental pictures (motives) underlying an action."[30] As in Goethe's way of knowing a phenomenon through direct experience, acting out of moral imagination requires developing a more receptive mode of consciousness toward our own experience, which is exactly what a commitment to contemplative practice can offer.

### Theory Loves a Context

Theory is situational; it thrives in a context. In Providence a group of us are creating a learning community—The Mariposa Center—focused on early childhood education. A seasonal, nature-based curriculum in an urban setting is our context; working closely with a diverse group of families is our context; participating in a standards-based state public pre-K program is our context; and a commitment to faculty professional development grounded in reflective and contemplative practices is our context.

Mariposa co-founders and faculty engage in on-going contemplative and reflective inquiry to deepen our understanding of how the teacher perceives and learns from the activity of the children and how the children perceive, imitate, and learn from the teacher's activity and presence. Through imaginative consciousness, each teacher cultivates awareness of his or her own body in space, his or her own experience of thinking, feeling, and willing. Cultivating self-witnessing supports the teachers' capacities both to *see* the child and experience *being seen* by the child. The teachers become conscious of a process that happens automatically and unconsciously for the children as they take in, absorb, and learn by imitation and their own developing imagination.

One way to imagine the exchange between teacher and child is to picture a horizontal figure eight. On one side, the teacher brings forth—out of his or her own enlivened imagination—story, song, movement and gesture, images, ideas, and feelings. On the other side, the child absorbs what is received, and a process of integration begins which may become activated and furthered through imaginative play. The more intentional and sensitive the teacher can be to the mood created in the classroom and by his or her own presence, the more receptive the child can be. The teacher may observe and reflect upon what the child reveals of his or her inner learning process through play, speech, drawing, and interactions with others. Witnessing such moments provides creative opportunities for teachers to adapt and develop curriculum and intention accordingly, looping the expression of these back again to the child. Needless to say, this figure-8 picture of relationship is not a static image, programmatic model, nor is it necessarily a smooth, unhindered process. Instead, it is a continual unfolding of possibility, of learning and shared connection between and within both teacher and child, of teachable moments that may take minutes or months to integrate.

Cultivating self-witnessing supports the teachers' capacities both to *see* the child and experience *being seen* by the child.

This central relationship between teacher and child that forms the heart of Mariposa is held in an encircling gesture of support that requires participation, offered out of individual freedom, from families, staff, board members, and the wider community. We are all learning from the process while doing it.

## Imagination and the Theater of Everywhere

Human freedom arises spontaneously when inner self-awareness, or I-consciousness, responds to and interacts with life as it spontaneously manifests. Remember, Wordsworth calls the power of imagination an *enlarging* of freedom. Without imagination, a person cannot generate ethical ideas. Such a person, writes Steiner, "must receive these ideas from without."[31] Imagination is essential in order to maintain the freedom to think and act independently. Steiner adds that "freedom is to be found in the reality of human action" and by this he means action that realizes "conceptual intuitions"[32] or what he elsewhere refers to as "living thinking." The word *living*, as applied to thinking, suggests that a person may experience "*in consciousness* the intuitive thinking that also has reality beyond consciousness."[33]

Bohm, too, discusses qualitative distinctions between kinds of thinking and notes the difference between reactive thought, based on memory and association, and reflective thought, which occurs when an experience proves to have variables that call for a review of what would otherwise prompt a reactive response. He asks: "How then can thought respond to a problem or a difficulty without being dominated by an irrelevant, confusing, and generally destructive mechanical pattern of reaction?"[34] Bohm's antidote is "a quality of insight" that transcends reactive or associative thinking. Insightful thinking must be "fresh and new, creative and original." And here, Bohm, the scientist, reframes Coleridge's understanding of imagination, replacing it with the word, "intelligence." Paraphrasing Coleridge, Bohm writes, "The deep source of intelligence is the unknown and undefinable totality, from which all perception originates."[35]

The challenge, it would seem, is to bear the humility of seeking knowledge in the larger context of “the unknown and undefinable totality.” No single system can absolve that challenge. The best recourse, suggests Bohm, is to have “a general alertness, which makes us aware, from moment to moment, of how the process of thought is getting caught in fixed sets of categories.”[36] With such presence of mind, the poet and the scientist, the teacher, the parent, and the community member can meet in the theater that is everywhere. With a modest intent to be “just, kindly, and human toward others,” may we bring our powers, our intelligent imagination and our imaginative intelligence to the shared endeavor of knowing the living-world, even as we continue to make the creative mystery of it more explicit.

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# The Formative Qualities of Foreign Language Teaching

Erhard Dahl

A fifth grade teacher in Germany had been reciting “The Ballad of Semmerwater” at the beginning of the English lessons for some time. So the children knew the following lines by heart:

> Once there stood by Semmerwater
> A mickle town and tall;
> King’s tower and Queen’s bower,
> And the wakeman on the wall.

During this particular week the teacher had intended to practice listening comprehension. She wanted the pupils first to listen carefully and then do what their classmates asked them to do. Jakob was standing beside the teacher. He told his classmate Rosanna, “Go to the wall and point at the picture.” As quick as a flash Sabine’s arm shot up. The teacher asked her to tell the class what was on her mind. In German Sabine said, “That’s wrong. A ‘wall’ is not a *Wand.* You told us when we recited the poem that the wakeman stood on a wall (in German: *Mauer*), a town wall (*Stadtmauer*)!”

Without saying a word, the teacher wrote on the blackboard the German words *Mauer* and *Wand*, then *essen* and *fressen*, and finally *Brief* and *Buchstabe.* Next to each pair she wrote a single English word: next to the words *Mauer* and *Wand* the word “wall,” next to *essen* and *fressen* the word “eat,” and next to *Brief* and *Buchstabe* the word “letter.” “Which of you has noticed something?” she asked in German.

“Two different German words have only one English word,” a girl observed.

A boy shouted out, “How marvellous! Now I won’t have to learn so many English words!” A wave of laughter rippled around the classroom.

Said the teacher: “Wouldn’t that be nice!—but look here!”

Now she wrote a second set of German words on the blackboard: *Schnecke, Affe, Straße,* and next to each she wrote two English words: next to *Schnecke* “snail” and “slug,” next to *Affe* “monkey” and “ape,” and next to *Straße* “street” and “road.” The children looked confused and the teacher asked again, “Does anything strike you here?”

After a few moments a girl raised her hand, “Now it’s just the other way round. For each German word there are two English words.”

“Quite right!” the teacher said. “Germans see differences between *Wand* and *Mauer,* English speaking people don’t. However, they distinguish between a snail and a slug, a road and a street and a monkey and an ape. We will come across many other English words in our English lessons, and a lot of them will remind us that people who speak a foreign language look at humans, plants, animals, and objects in different ways.”

The little boy who had been so happy about the small number of English words blurted out, “What a shame!”

What did the teacher accomplish during these few minutes? Spontaneously she picked up a neglected aspect of language instruction, that is, she set aside pragmatic goals having to do with utility in order to reflect on the differences between two languages. One could say that she offered the children a chance to glimpse the “otherness” of the language they were learning. In short she was encouraging these children to think.

During a lecture given in Yorkshire, England, on August 15, 1923, in reference to the characteristics of different languages, Rudolf Steiner said that it is the task of teachers to compensate for the constricting effects of the children’s mother tongue by teaching them other languages.[1] Steiner was aware that our mother tongue could limit our worldview, thereby exerting a sort of bondage on our thinking. I believe this was Steiner's prime motive for including two modern foreign languages in the curriculum of the first Waldorf school. Of course, he wanted the pupils at this school to become good speakers of English; however, as he made clear to his English-speaking audience in Yorkshire, the crucial pedagogical aim of self-awareness, of thinking for oneself, cannot be achieved merely by using language instinctively. If they are to become free thinkers, children need to transcend the barriers of their native speech.

It is the task of teachers to compensate for the constricting effects of the children's mother tongue by teaching them other languages.

Rudolf Steiner is not the only philosopher of education to have argued that language is far more than simply a neutral mirror of reality. Language embodies an active view of the world that favors certain possibilities of human behavior, certain ways of recording experience. A language carves out its own perspective on reality; no two languages set the world in the same mold.

In the sections that follow, two aspects of teaching foreign languages will be pursued:

- Examples in the English language that demonstrate its "otherness"
- Other activities that can provide the children with formative educational experiences

If they are to become free thinkers, children need to transcend the barriers of their native speech.

## The "Otherness" of the English Language

### The categorization of reality

Each language—and hence, any speaker of that language—draws attention to different aspects of the world. If, for example, you do not recognize "shell" as being a distinctive attribute, then—as for instance in German—you will not distinguish between a snail (with a shell) and a slug (which has no shell).

Besides attributes such as these, the teacher should also demonstrate how semantic dimensions lead to a certain way of categorizing reality. For example, the distinction in English between "taking" and "bringing"—which are both translations for the single German word *bringen*—draws attention to the direction of movement, something the German language does not recognize: the difference between moving away from someone ("taking") and moving towards someone ("bringing").

### Habits of perception

In working with vocabulary, the pupils' powers of perception can be refined in two different ways. On the one hand, by studying words, metaphors, and expressions that convey reactions of soul, they acquire enhanced skill to describe their sensations with greater nuance. On the other hand, there is also a sensorial element to their perception. This is why the teacher should not forget to describe the emotional quality of words and the emotional effect words have in different languages. The well-known German translator Walter Schürenberg writes, "If I use the word *Psychologie* for the English word 'psychology,' then I use the same word. However, it possesses a completely different specific gravity in German; a heavy load of pretension and education sticks with it"[2]—which is not the case in English. Similarly you cannot translate the English word "guide" as *Führer* because this word is so charged in Germany as a consequence of its use by the

Nazis. Another German translator, Esther Kinsky, asks, “How bright or dark does my *rot* become when I learn that in other languages it is called ‘red’ or ‘rouge’? How lanky or overhanging is my *Baum* suddenly when compared to ‘tree’ or ‘arbre’?”[3]

And finally there is the famous example of the German word *Heimat.* Which language can offer a true equivalent here? In this German noun are interwoven allusions to “heritage,” “yearning,” “obligation,” and “pride.”

Even the simplest words are charged with a particular energy, historical association, or emotional attachment; translators speak of “sentimental value” and “affective investment” inherent in words. As foreign language teachers we need to point out occasionally that for foreign speakers certain words and expressions have emotional echoes that are untraceable in the students’ own mother tongue. If pupils experience this fairly regularly in the course of twelve years, we help them develop an inner suppleness, as it were—an ability to perceive in a more differentiated way. The greater the number of impressions that arise in my soul, the more alert and awake will be my perception. Conversely, I will also be ready and eager to meet my surroundings more actively.

A conscious encounter with the “otherness” of another language will help me to confront my own, native consciousness and thereby promote better self-understanding. In this way the foreign language classroom fosters not so much an expression of internationality as of cosmopolitanism. As Johannes Kiersch puts it, “Foreign language learning in the Waldorf school develops capacities of empathy. It fosters ‘social pedagogy,’ peace education, not by discussion or instruction but by developing perceptiveness.”[4]

Foreign language learning in the Waldorf school develops capacities of empathy, not by discussion or instruction but by developing perceptiveness.

### *The imagery of language*

Drawing attention to the imagery embedded in a foreign language can also stimulate pupils to reflect on the tight-knit relationship between word and reality. The German expression *Gedankenkette* (literally “thought-chain”), for example, evokes the image of a chain; in English we find a different image: a “train of thought.” Other examples of imagery that may arise in the English classroom: eyeball (German: *Augapfel,* literally “eye-apple”), horseshoe (*Hufeisen*, literally “hoof-iron”), windfarm (*Windpark*) or running neck and neck (*Brust an Brust laufen,* literally “running breast next to breast”). All of these metaphoric images appeal directly to the imagination, yet they also attest to the different worldviews inherent in any language.

### *The silence of one language and the talking of another*

Every language suffers from gaps caused by the absence of a certain word, expression, or grammatical structure that another language can easily fill up. To make our pupils aware of these voids, to sensitize them to such absences, provides another opportunity to experience the formative potential of the foreign language classroom. I find German students are quite amazed to discover such gaps in their mother tongue or in the foreign language they are learning. A few examples:

– An English speaker is able to distinguish among “big,” “tall,” “large,” “great,” whereas a German speaker is confined to *groß*. An English speaker can distinguish among the actions “to reach,” “to achieve,” “to gain,” “to attain,” “to arrive at”—whereas in German there is just *erreichen.*

– Germans, on the other hand, can distinguish between a male and a female neighbor—*Nachbar* and *Nachbarin*—and many other male and female forms of a noun. Here the void resides in the English language. This may lead to extraordinary difficulties for translators. In a recent German translation of Henry James's narrative "The Path of Duty," the German translator, Ingrid Rein, admits to being at a loss whether the protagonist is telling his story to a lady or to a gentleman because Henry James has his protagonist address the other with words such as "compatriot," "my dear," and "American," all of which can be translated into German male or female nouns.

A significant gap opens up in the German language when introducing the use of adverbs in the English-language classroom. Germans don't see any reason to alter the adjective in the sentence *Sie ist sorgfältig* ("She is conscientious") when they say *Sie schreibt sorgfältig* ("She writes conscientiously"). The distinction between "careful" and "carefully" is completely unknown in the German language. By making students aware that a foreign language ignores certain linguistic distinctions, they develop a new relationship to their mother tongue.

If we want to get to know the collective experience of a people through their language, we can do no better than to learn some of their proverbs.

No discussion of linguistic gaps is complete without a consideration of subtle distinctions in English having to do with time. Here is a quotation from *Winnie the Pooh*: "They're funny things, Accidents. You never have them till you're having them." The German language has no expressive form for this experience of time. *Johannes spielt Geige* ("John plays the violin" or "John is playing the violin") could mean he does that regularly or he is doing it right now.

English often appropriates certain German words when there is no English equivalent. Here is a line from the novel *Fugitive Pieces* by Anne Michaels: "The October twilight was radiant with a pure pale *gegenschein*." Among commonly used words that lack a counterpart in English are: *Angst, Zeitgeist, Bildungsroman, Doppelgänger, Ersatz, Leitmotif, Bildung, Schadenfreude, Weltanschauung, Gestalt, Feierabend.*

Conversely the German language is unable to translate English words such as "duty," "common sense," "affirmative action," "russet," and many others.

To my mind (another English word with no direct German translation!), in short, it would be a missed opportunity if we didn't point out in our classroom those human experiences which can *not* be expressed either in the pupil's mother tongue or in one of the languages the pupil learns at school.

## Other Activities

### Proverbs

If we want to get to know the collective experience of a people through their language, to appreciate what we might call folk wisdom, we can do no better than to learn some of their proverbs. If a German cautions you again risking it all for a particular thing, he would say: "*Setz nicht alles auf eine Karte!*" ("Don't put everything on a single map"). An English speaker would say: "Don't put all your eggs in one basket!" In German you get "*vom Regen in die Traufe*" ("from the rain into the trough") while in English you get "out of the frying pan into the fire." Almost in a pseudo-philosophical manner a German would say: "*Wer A sagt, muss auch B sagen*" ("He who says A must also say B") while a more pragmatic English speaker would say: "In for a penny, in for a pound!" Proverbs make the pupils see and feel the otherness of another language—and hence of their own.

### Stereotypical comparisons

Like proverbs, certain cliché comparisons can provide lively debate in the classroom.

For instance: *kerzengrade* ("candle-straight") to mean "straight as an arrow"; *sich gleichen wie ein Ei dem anderen* ("to resemble each other as one egg resembles another") to mean "like two peas in a pod"; *mausetot* ("mouse-dead") to mean "dead as a doornail."

## Encountering Foreign Literature

A work of art remains silent if we don't—while reading—wander through the rooms of our soul, if we don't awaken the experiences, sensations, values, and attitudes we have developed. Foreign literature easily offers new experiences that will confound what we have thought, felt, and believed. By encountering this strange reality, unexpected possibilities of emotional reactions, imagination, memory, identification, perceptions, associations, and ways of thinking will emerge. "Access to world literature," Susan Sontag said when she was awarded the *Friedenspreis des Deutschen Buchhandels* in Frankfurt in 2003, "provides escape from the prison of national vanity, of Philistinism, of compulsory provincialism, of imperfect destinies and bad luck. Literature is the passport to enter a larger life; that is, the zone of freedom."

> Once liberated from the constrictions of a particular worldview, [students] will be able to choose their perspectives on life more freely.

Foreign literature prompts the reader to understand otherness, to see a view that differs from the perspective which has been shaped so much by one's own culture. If the teacher helps students to see this otherness not as a deviation from social norms of their own culture but as an alternative world of equal value, then lingering experiences that have blindfolded them may lose their grip, and absolute bonds that tie them to a particular worldview may weaken or dissolve. Once liberated from these constrictions, they will be able to choose their perspectives on life more freely.

## Conclusion

Rudolf Steiner's suggestions for teaching leave much leeway to pursue not just the pragmatic side but also the philosophical depths of foreign languages. Consideration of the philosophical implications of a language not only guards us from using it out of mere instinct but also enriches our appreciation of the wisdom hidden within its structure and its conventions. It does so by providing pupils with other ways of seeing the world and of expressing their relation to the world, by providing different instruments of consciousness, perception, and feelings, by giving them a chance to escape from the narrowness of the life they have led in their first language.

Isn't this what distinguishes foreign language teaching in the education of young people? All too easily we may approach the learning of foreign languages for its pragmatic utility. Foreign language teaching at Waldorf schools, however, is legitimized when it also points well beyond its pragmatic goals and sets out to explore its philosophic roots.

## Endnotes

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4 Johannes Kirsch, *Fremdsprachen in der Waldorfschule* (Stuttgart 1992), p.30.

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# Core Principles of Waldorf Education: An Introduction and First Discourse

In January 2013 the Pedagogical Section Council of North America (PSC) crafted a document entitled "Core Principles of Waldorf Education"; since then it has been periodically revised. As the document circulated within the Waldorf movement, the PSC received several requests for further elaboration on these principles, as well as supporting references.

With this issue of the *Research Bulletin*, we begin a series of short articles in which members of the Council offer study materials and commentary that elaborate on these Core Principles.

## A Little Background

The impetus for drafting this document was a prolonged period of debate over the use of the name "Waldorf" in non-independent (public charter) schools. Members of the PSC, like others in the Waldorf movement, were not all in agreement about the questions raised by this debate. However, since the Pedagogical Section includes teachers who work in both independent and in charter schools, and since the question of "What is a Waldorf school?" has become a legal question, the Council decided to focus on the pedagogical rather than on the legal aspects of this question. We have attempted to identify the essential aspects of Waldorf education so that every school and every teacher can study them and then assess their work relative to these principles. The document was never meant to be an enforceable criterion, but rather an anchor for discussion and study on the meaning of the term "Waldorf education."

We now present these principles and the first in our series of contributions, starting with Elan Leibner and Holly Koteen-Soulé, who offer elaborations of the first two Core Principles.

## Core Principles of Waldorf Education by the PSC of North America

*(amended August 2014)*

Waldorf education can be characterized as having seven core principles. Each one of them can be the subject of a life-long study. Nevertheless, they can be summarized in the following manner:

**Image of the Human Being:** The human being in its essence is a being of Spirit, soul, and body. Childhood and adolescence, from birth to age 21, are the periods during which the Spirit/soul gradually takes hold of the physical instrument that is our body. The Self is the irreducible spiritual individuality within each one of us which continues its human journey through successive incarnations.

**Phases of Child Development:** This process of embodiment has an archetypal sequence of approximately seven-year phases, and each child's development is an individual expression of the archetype. Each phase has unique and characteristic physical, emotional, and cognitive dimensions.

**Developmental Curriculum:** The curriculum is created to meet and support the phase of development of the individual and the class. From birth to age 7, the guiding principle is that of imitation; from 7 to 14 the guiding principle is that of following the teacher's guidance; during the high school years, the guiding principle is idealism and the development of independent judgment.

**Freedom in Teaching:** Rudolf Steiner gave indications for the development of a new pedagogical art, with the expectation that "the teacher must invent this art at every moment." Out of the understanding of child development and Waldorf pedagogy, the Waldorf teacher is expected to meet the needs of the children in the class out of his/her insights and the circumstances of the school. Interferences with the freedom of the teacher by the school, parents, standardized testing regimen, or the government, while they may be necessary in a specific circumstance (for safety or legal reasons, for example), are nonetheless compromises.[1]

**Methodology of Teaching:** There are a few key methodological guidelines for the grade school and high school teachers. Early childhood teachers work with these principles appropriate to the way in which the child before the age of 7 learns, out of imitation rather than direct instruction.

*Artistic metamorphosis:* The teacher should understand, internalize, and then present the topic in an artistic form.[2]

*From experience to concept:* The direction of the learning process should proceed from the students' soul activities of willing, through feeling to thinking. In the high school the context of the experience is provided at the outset.[3]

*Holistic process:* proceeding from the whole to the parts and back again, and addressing the whole human being.

*Use of rhythm and repetition.*[4]

**Relationships:** Enduring human relationships between students and their teachers are essential and irreplaceable. The task of all teachers is to work with the developing individuality of each student and with each class as a whole. Truly human pedagogical relationships gain in depth and stability when they are cultivated over many years. They cannot be replaced by instructions utilizing computers or other electronic means. Healthy working relationships with parents and colleagues are also essential to the wellbeing of the class community and the school.

**Spiritual Orientation:** In order to cultivate the imaginations, inspirations, and intuitions needed for their work, Rudolf Steiner gave the teachers an abundance of guidance for developing an inner, meditative life. This guidance includes individual professional meditations and an imagination of the circle of teachers forming an organ of spiritual perception. Faculty and individual study, artistic activity, and research form additional facets of ongoing professional development.

## Endnotes

1 A note about school governance: While not directly a pedagogical matter, school governance can be an essential aspect of freedom in teaching. Just as a developmental curriculum should support the phases of child development, school governance should support the teachers' pedagogical freedom (while maintaining the school's responsibilities towards society).

2 The term "artistic" does not necessarily mean the traditional arts (singing, drawing, sculpting, and so forth), but rather that, like those arts, the perceptually manifest reveals something invisible through utilizing perceptible media. Thus a math problem or science project can be just as artistic as storytelling or painting.

3 This mirrors the development of human cognition, which is at first active in the limbs and only later in the head.

4 There are four basic rhythms with which the Waldorf teacher works. The most basic of those is the day-night (or two-day) rhythm. Material that is presented on a given day is allowed to "go to sleep" before it is reviewed and brought to conceptual clarity on the following day. A second rhythm is that of the week. It is "the interest rhythm," and teachers strive to complete an engagement with a topic within a week of working on it. A paper that is returned to the student after more than a week will no longer be interesting to the student. The only interesting thing will be the teacher's comments, but the topic itself is already past the "interest window." A third rhythm is that of four weeks. Blocks, or units of instruction, are usually best covered in four-week periods. This life-rhythm can be understood in contemplation of feminine reproductive cycles, for example, and can be

said to bring a topic to a temporary level of maturity. The last of the pedagogical rhythms is that of a year. This is the time it can take for a new concept to be mastered to the degree that it can be used as a capacity. Thus a mathematical concept introduced early in third grade should be mastered sufficiently to be assumed as a capacity for work at the beginning of fourth grade.

# A Contribution to the Study of the First Core Principle

Elan Leibner

**Image of the Human Being:** The human being in its essence is a being of Spirit, soul, and body. Childhood and adolescence, from birth to age 21, are the periods during which the Spirit/soul gradually takes hold of the physical instrument that is our body. The Self is the irreducible spiritual individuality within each one of us which continues its human journey through successive incarnations.

There are four thoughts woven together in the first Core Principle:

1. The human being is a being of Spirit, soul, and body.
2. The process of incarnating the Spirit and soul into the body takes approximately 21 years.
3. The essential Self is an irreducible spiritual principle.
4. The Self incarnates repeatedly and in human form.

Let us review these thoughts in order.

1. Rudolf Steiner's basic introduction to the nature of the human being is found in the first chapter of his foundational book *Theosophy*. The threefold (body, soul, spirit) principle is presented and then elaborated upon considerably. Briefly, and using Steiner's own example, when we look at a flower in the meadow, there are three aspects to consider: Our bodily senses give us the stimuli necessary for the flower to enter our consciousness; our spirit allows us to recognize the flower as, for example, a daisy, which means recognizing a lawfulness that would remain even when the physical specimen is no longer before us; our soul forms a relationship between our subject and the flower in question.

The following exercise can help make the threefold human being more readily comprehensible:

Place a manufactured object such a pencil or a paper clip before you. Describe its appearance in detail (size, color, shape, smell, and any other pertinent sensory attribute). This description originates with what Steiner calls the bodily aspect of the human being.

Next, describe your personal response to this object: like or dislike, attraction or repulsion, and so forth. This response originates in what Steiner calls the soul.

Finally, try to articulate the concept of the object. In manufactured objects the concept is nearly identical with the function. A paper clip is meant to clip papers together, for example, and the clipping is more or less the thought or intention that brought it into being. You can try to follow as best you can the series of steps that led from the functional intention through the manufacturing process to the presence of the object before you. This thought process, which is not observable through the senses, originates in what Steiner calls the spirit. Only the spirit can perceive the spiritual, hidden aspects of the world around us.

2. The process of incarnating (literally "entering the flesh") takes 21 years on average. In her discussion of the second Core Principle,

Holly Koteen-Soulé presents the phases of this process in detail. A good source for this idea is Steiner's book *The Education of the Child in the Light of Spiritual Science.*

From a pedagogical perspective, one of the most succinct articulations of the relationship between spirit and soul, on the one hand, and the body, on the other, can be found in the first lecture of *Study of Man.* This lecture cannot be recommended highly enough for anyone who wants the quintessence of Waldorf education brought in an astonishingly concise formulation. Steiner presents in few words a whole cosmic drama in which the individuality of the child comes into the world and needs the teacher's help in order to learn how to function properly in the flesh, so to speak.

3. An essential idea in Steiner's presentation of human nature is that the spiritual core of the human being is not a reducible epiphenomenon of matter, but rather that it predates and also survives physical existence. This notion is presented in detail in the second chapter of *Theosophy* and throughout many of Steiner's writings. (We elected to capitalize Spirit in the first Core Principle in order to emphasize its eternal aspect.) In the first lecture of *Study of Man* Steiner emphasizes that the existence of the spirit before birth is just as crucial an aspect of the human condition as the much more commonly held idea of immortality as referring only to life after death.

4. Further regarding the human being's journey through successive incarnations: In anthroposophy a human being was, is, and will be a human being. In other traditions, the various kingdoms of nature are considered interchangeable for purposes of reincarnation. Steiner considered this view erroneous, and in the chapter on reincarnation mentioned earlier (in the book *Theosophy*), he explains that repeated earth lives can be thought of in a similar manner to waking up one morning with the results of the previous day's actions and plans. Just as it would not make sense to wake up as a sparrow tomorrow morning, so it would not be true to consider a human being as having been either a blade of grass or a grasshopper during a previous life on earth. Precisely because we are beings capable of new beginnings, new creations, we must live with the consequences of our actions and inactions (and even, according to Steiner, our thoughts and feelings) over time, both from day to day and from one life to the next.

Now that the four basic thoughts of the first Core Principle have been introduced, let us consider them in more detail. For Rudolf Steiner, the human being stands uniquely positioned between the spiritual world and the physical world. Human beings are the only earthly beings with the capacity to originate, to create new beginnings out of spiritual insights, and the only spiritual beings with the physical tools to work right into earthly substance.

To put it succinctly: Chimps can't write poetry; angels can't plant corn. There is no way to account for human spiritual activity from a purely material-causality perspective: It makes no sense to say, for instance, of the work of William Shakespeare that on Sunday night the weather was bad, but the stew his wife made for dinner was very good and his daughter slept well, and so therefore The Bard woke up the next day and wrote Hamlet's famous soliloquy. One can investigate the material and emotional events preceding the creation of a great work of art, but one cannot say that those circumstances caused the art to be created. Something surprising and uniquely individual transpires in every new creation, something that points to a level of existence at which every human being is a complete species unto him or her self. We can predict with relative certainty what a weather pattern or a particular diet will do to my dog, but we cannot predict what painting my wife will create because of the weather outside and the meal she just ate. To the extent that we eat, breathe, walk, and so on, we are a species like other mammal species; to the extent that we create new beginnings, we are each a species unto ourselves. Even persons who are not particularly creative create something new in the form of their biography, and this makes them unique in a way that no animal ever is.

At the opposite end of the body-spirit polarity, human beings are uniquely able among spiritual beings to work directly into material existence. We can conceive an idea, e.g., building a new school somewhere, and then go about realizing that idea in the physical world. In the example of Hamlet's soliloquy, Shakespeare could take pen to paper and bring the words he conceived into a form accessible to other people. Other spiritual beings require the assistance of human beings if their intentions are to be made manifest on earth.

The soul in Steiner's tripartite image of the human being occupies a middle ground between spirit and body. I can see the daisy with my physical senses (by means of my body) and learn to recognize more and more what makes it a daisy (by what we have termed spirit), but the soul forms a personal relationship of liking or disliking, caring about or choosing to ignore that which I encounter. If the sensory aspect constitutes the fleeting materialization of the daisy, and the concept "daisy" is the eternal, universal thought, the relationship my soul forms with the daisy makes for a uniquely personal relationship between the daisy and me. It tells something about me, rather than about the daisy.

For Steiner, every human being is a spirit living temporarily in a physical body, and the soul is the mediator between the two. The soul gathers impressions of the physical world through the bodily senses and brings those impressions for the spirit to gain knowledge and wisdom, and then it brings the impulses of the spirit into manifestation on earth through the activation of the will. The twenty-one-year period at the beginning of life is, according to Steiner, the time it takes for the spirit to reach earth maturity to the point of being fully capable of leading its own life. In many states this age used to be the voting age, and in many it is still a marker for various aspects of adult consent. In my state, New Jersey, we recognize the momentous completion of the twenty-one-year maturation process by allowing the young person to get drunk legally. Welcome to the world of responsible decision making, as it were.

Waldorf education is not the only pedagogical approach that begins with a view of the human being. It is, in fact, important to realize that *every* educational system begins with such a view, whether explicitly or not. This view would cover such questions as the essential nature of being human (e.g., the result of a series of cellular and molecular accidents; a being created by God on the sixth of seven days, and so forth). The pedagogy would then consider the development from childhood to adulthood and what a successful human being, and therefore a successful educational process, "looks like." If you believe that a human being is a complicated animal, that the animal is finally only compounded of material particles, that childhood is merely a stage of being a small adult, that success is measurable through some yardstick extrinsic to the individual (e.g., economic or academic achievement), then you will also design an educational system that aims to achieve goals that are measured outside of the individual that is being educated. In similar fashion, if you believe that all human beings are born in sin, that the goal of life is to avoid hell and join God and the saints in Heaven, and that the Church is the only door to the rightful path, then you will design a schooling that will bring the young person into the folds of the Mother Church, and this will then guide the choice of content and methods. I mention this since looking back on one's education and discerning its philosophical underpinnings can be an enlightening exercise.

If, in contrast, you hold the view that the essential nature of every student is an eternal, spiritual individuality that has to fashion its own journey in freedom, then your pedagogy will endeavor to support that spiritual element in developing and achieving its own aims. The skills and capacities that you will strive to nurture within the student will not be ends in themselves, nor will they be preparations for predetermined later stages, but rather vehicles for the student's "I" to find its way in the world. The idea that education is an attempt to reconnect a human being with his or her own goals, and that these goals are uniquely individual, finding their place in a context of relationships and activity—this idea would then rightfully become a crucial principle of your pedagogy. It is neatly summed in the oft-quoted edict: "Our highest endeavor must be to develop free human beings who are able of themselves to impart purpose and meaning to their lives."[1]

## References

Rudolf Steiner. *The Education of the Child in the Light of Spiritual Science* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1965).

________. *Theosophy* (Hudson, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1994).

________. *Study of Man* (Forest Row, UK: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2007).

## Endnote

1 From the foreword by Marie Steiner to Rudolf Steiner's Ilkley lecture cycle, published in English as *A Modern Art of Education* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1972), p.23.

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# A Contribution to the Study of the Second Core Principle

*Holly Koteen-Soule*

**Phases of Child Development:** This process of embodiment has an archetypal sequence of approximately seven-year phases, and each child's development is an individual expression of the archetype. Each phase has unique and characteristic physical, emotional, and cognitive dimensions.

What makes the four-year-old different from the ten-year-old, and what makes them both different from the seventeen-year-old? The Second Core Principle of Waldorf Education recognizes the critical importance of understanding the universal patterns of child development from birth to age 21, as well as the distinct characteristics of the first, second, and third seven-year cycles in the life of the child and adolescent.

To understand the differences we need to refer to the fourfold human being as described by Rudolf Steiner. The fourfold human being is comprised of the physical body, the etheric body, the astral body, and the I-organization. Although Steiner uses the word *body* in relation to the etheric and astral, he notes that these are actually "bodies" of forces, rather than material substances.[1]

Each of the first three bodies is connected with one of the seven-year periods of development and lends to that period and the developing child certain characteristic attributes.

### Birth to Age 7

The physical body is born at the emergence of the baby from the womb and is preeminent during the child's first seven years of growth and development. Just as the child's physical body is emancipated from the womb of the mother, according to Steiner, the other bodies also have a birth or emancipation from their protective sheaths.[2] The subsequent births of the finer bodies are as important for Waldorf education as the child's physical birth.

From birth to around the age of seven, young children are working on and out of their physical natures. Sensory experiences and movement are the means by which they develop their physical capacities and explore the world. Endowed with immense will forces, they take in the world by active doing. Whatever they sense in their surrounding, they become and act out or imitate. They master the essential human capacities of walking, speaking, and thinking through imitating the adults in their environment. They think through doing and learn by imitation.

The etheric body works in conjunction with the physical body during these first seven years, bringing forming forces to the physical body and maintaining its organic life processes. Edmond Schoorel suggests that the etheric body has its "inner birth" at the time the physical body goes through its "outer birth," in that the baby is able to maintain its own life processes separate from its mother.[3] Approximately seven years later, when the child's physical growth and development has reached a certain conclusion and fewer etheric forces are needed to form and maintain the physical body, the etheric body is born or emancipated from the physical body. A portion of the etheric forces is freed for new adventures. The eruption of the child's permanent teeth can be seen as a sign of the conclusion of this phase of development.

## Between 7 and 14

With the birth of the etheric body, some of the child's formative life forces are now available for psychological rather than physiological activities—for instance, for the forming of concepts, memories, habits, and temperament. The physical body is still active in gathering sensory experiences, but now the child of this age can form and recall inner pictures of his or her own experiences. This allows the child to be ready for direct instruction and to receive guidance from the teacher as a beloved source of worldly knowledge and skills. During the first seven years, rhythm is brought to the life of the young child out of regular and repetitive rituals in its surrounding, as well as out of the etheric forces of the parent and early childhood teacher. In the second period, rhythm and repetition help grade school children begin to strengthen their own etheric bodies and habit life.

Experiences connected to lively pictures and a rich palette of feelings are the ones most readily received and recalled. During the first seven years, the feeling life was still under the sway of the bodily instincts, impulses, and desires. Now the yet "unborn" astral body is connecting with the newly-freed etheric forces and the feeling life is slowly awakening. Feelings can be strong, even extreme, and often come over the child like uncontrollable weather. The inner life of the teacher, along with her stories and artistic activities, nourish and bring order, sense, and consequence to the imagination and developing inner life of the child between 7 and 14.

Whereas the young child thinks by doing, the grade school child thinks through images and pictures. This is not yet the abstract thinking capacity that will develop later, but rather a sense for wholeness, for relationships, and for the deeper meaning of things that can arise from a well-developed feeling life and artistic practice.

## Between 14 and 21

The outer birth of the astral body is heralded physically by the onset of puberty and the beginning of adolescence. The physical changes that signify the beginning of this period are readily recognizable. Was there also an "inner birth" of the astral body, as there was with the etheric body, and if so when did that occur? The moment when the young child, around the age of two or three years of age, begins to say "I" signals, according to Schoorel, the "inner birth" of the astral body.[4]

As an early childhood teacher, this awareness helped me greatly to understand the changes that I perceived in young children as they began to refer to themselves as an "I." This event in the life of a young child signals the end of a unitary consciousness or oneness with everything and a beginning of the separation that is required for the human being to be reflective and to think. The interval between the inner and outer birth of the astral body is around ten or eleven years. The seed of self-consciousness and abstract thinking that is planted at three takes many years—indeed the whole of the development between 7 and 14—before it is ready to flower.

Rudolf Steiner speaks about this in his seminal talk on education, *The Education of the Child in the Light of Spiritual Science.* In this lecture he says,

> Thought must take hold in a living way in the children's minds so that they first learn and then judge. What the intellect has to say about any matter should only be said when all the other faculties have spoken. Before then the intellect has only an intermediary part to play; its task is to comprehend what occurs and what is experienced in feeling, to receive it exactly as it is, not letting unripened judgment immediately come in and take over.[5]

During the final period of child development, the intellect and abstract thinking capacities come at last into the foreground. With the astral body emancipated from its protective sheath, the search for truth and a sense of self begin. The young person who is searching for his or her own truth cannot help but question the authority of adults and teachers. Reverence for the experience of one's elders is quickly replaced with criticalness. This is the expression of strengthening intellectual capacities, which is already present to some degree between 12 and 14.

These three periods of child development are sometimes referred to as the era of will, the era of feeling, and the era of thinking. However, the beginning of each seven-year period is more strongly influenced by the will element, the middle by the feeling element, and the final third of each period by the thinking element. It is as if there is an echoing of the past development and foreshadowing of the future development in each period. *Pars pro toto:* In each part the whole is reflected.

Whereas the early years of adolescence are often marked by rebellion and dissolution, as young teenagers seek to find their own way and to develop their ability to think and make well founded judgments, idealism and excitement about possibilities that lie ahead characterize the latter years of the period from 14 to 21.

## Archetypes and Not Norms

These developmental archetypes help us understand what we are observing in our students and inform the shaping and presenting of our lessons. The timing of developmental changes can vary widely among normally developing children, as can the individual means by which they express the changes that are taking place during a particular period of growth and maturation. Our knowledge of the archetypes should not blind us to seeing our individual students.

## The Birth of the "I"

Around the age of 21, the fourth birth—the birth of the ego or "I"—takes place, crowning the journey of child development and giving the young adult the means by which to direct his or her own life path and further development. For Schoorel, the inner birth of "I" occurs at what is sometimes called the nine-year change.[6] This represents a distinct shift during the second period of child development when—like the milestone of early childhood at three—the child experiences both the pain of separation and the enthusiasm for a newly-found independence.

## The Higher Bodies as Teachers

Waldorf teachers are familiar with the advice given by Steiner that is often called "The Pedagogical Law."[7] Schoorel indicates that the sequential births of the four bodies are the physiological basis for this principle.[8] In the process of development from birth to 21, the unborn members of the human constitution influence the development of the lower members, the next higher member having the strongest influence. The higher body, as yet unborn, works on the lower body that has been born already. Specifically, the unborn ether body, with the help of the environment, educates the physical body; the unborn astral body educates the ether body, and the unborn "I" educates the astral body. In each case, this occurs with the help of the environment, which includes parents and teachers.

This education is not, however, a one-way process. Schoorel speaks about the relation between the etheric and physical bodies during the period between birth and age 7 in this way:

> The stronger the imprint that the ether body makes on the physical body, the more the ether body itself will change and the more easily it will liberate itself from the physical body.[9]

It makes sense that this principle would also hold true for the relation between the astral and the ether during the second seven-year cycle and the astral and the "I" during the third period.

For me, the recognition of the origin of "The Pedagogical Law" and its physiological basis is tremendously helpful in understanding more deeply the process of development during the first 21 years and the distinct characteristics of the three seven-year cycles. It also gives me a new picture of my role as a helper of the child's own unborn members. Lastly, it underscores for me that the goal of our work is to support young human beings in their process of achieving self-determining independence.

### Endnotes

1 Rudolf Steiner, *The Education of the Child in the Light of Spiritual Science* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1965), pp.9–16. Steiner uses the German word *Leib* rather than *Körper*, both of which mean "body" in English. *Körper* is a cognate of a more physical organization (akin to the English "corpus" or even "corpse"), whereas *Leib*, as its sound suggests, is more akin to a living body.
2 Ibid., pp.21–22.
3 Edmond Schoorel, *The First Seven Years* (Fair Oaks, CA: Rudolf Steiner College Press), p.25.
4 Ibid., p.26.
5 Op. cit., Steiner, p.26.
6 Op. cit., Schoorel, *The First Seven Years* (Fair Oaks, CA: Rudolf Steiner College Press), p.27.
7 Rudolf Steiner, *Curative Education, leture 2* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1972).
8 Ibid., p.24.
9 Ibid., p.22.

# A Call for Reports on Responsible Innovation

*Elan Leibner*
for the Research Bulletin

Waldorf education must continually renew itself. As Rudolf Steiner told the teachers at the first Waldorf school in Stuttgart:

> In the practice of teaching there will awaken in us, out of this knowledge of human nature, the art of education in a quite individual form. In reality, the teacher must invent this art at every moment.*

Two things are woven together in this statement: the need to penetrate the knowledge of human nature and the need to then develop out of it original and "quite individual" teaching. Without grounding the art of education in anthroposophical knowledge of human nature, innovation can become a personal affair; without innovation, Waldorf education becomes a "thing" instead of a creative art.

"Responsible Innovation" is a term coined for a process that attempts to encourage exactly what the name denotes. In a series of workshops in Waldorf schools and at the AWSNA annual teachers conference in June 2014, the process, as briefly outlined below, was introduced and discussed. We would like to invite practicing teachers to send in reports of experimentation and innovation, both successful and not so successful, for what we hope will become a regular section in the *Research Bulletin.*

The process follows (with a nod to the Eternal City) the acronym S.P.Q.R, which in this case stands for Study, Planning and Peer Preview, Quest, and Review.

## Study

There are six facets to the study:

1. What are the signature aspects of child development for the age of the class you will be working with?
2. What are the experiences you want the children, individually and collectively, to have at this age?
3. What are the skills and capacities you are trying to develop in a child of this age?
4. What is the local flavor of your area? What is the *terroir,* as vintners call it, that can make *this school* and its practices different from other schools?
5. What are your individual talents and skills? What do you love to do? Make what you *love* and what you *do* as synonymous as possible. Teachers who engage in activities they love are filled with infectious enthusiasm!
6. What are the specific needs of this class or individuals within it?

The first three aspects are more or less universal, the third will vary school by school, and the last two are unique to each situation.

## Planning and Peer Preview

Plan a whole block, a part of a block, or even just a project within a block that is new and unique. Map it back to the six facets of study; in other words, prepare to justify what you are planning in terms of child development, locale, and so forth.

Now present your plan to your peers and ask them specifically for honest reflection on appropriateness, scope, and missing and/or extraneous aspects. This step will not only help you improve the plan, but it will also build colleagueship and support among your peers.

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* Rudolf Steiner, *Balance in Teaching,* GA 302a, Sept. 21, 1920 (Great Barrington, MA: Anthroposophic Press, 2007).

It is entirely possible that, after consulting with your peers, you will decide to abandon this particular idea. That can be a good thing. Part of being responsible is the ability to recognize the shortcomings of an idea, even your idea.

## Quest

If you decide to go ahead and try your idea, then do it with gusto. Dare to err! Like a medieval knight, get on your proverbial horse and go after it. Bring conviction and enthusiasm to your work, and leave doubts behind for the duration of the experiment. There will be time for reflections, corrections, and refinements afterwards.

## Review

It is crucially important to review any innovation after the fact. However, this phase of the process can be fraught with the danger that one can fall in love with one's idea, precisely because it came out of a more individual source. But try to ask whether your innovative idea accomplished what you were hoping to achieve. Solicit peer, parent, and student impressions, as appropriate. A new idea rarely emerges "fully incarnate"—that is, fully fleshed out—the first time. It is likely that some aspects went well, others less so. Be as honest as you can, and if possible draft a report for your peers outlining what you did, why you did it, how you did it, and how you would recommend or not recommend doing something similar in the future.

Finally, send us a copy of your report. It would be wonderful to create a clearinghouse for examples of Responsible Innovation, both through periodic publication of articles and through postings on our website.

# Report on the Online Waldorf Library

### *Marianne Alsop*

Once again it has been a busy and productive year for the Online Waldorf Library, which began in 2001 and is now in its thirteenth year. The OWL continues to offer site visitors recent editions of national and international journals published about Waldorf education: Research Bulletin; Gateways; Waldorf Journal Projects; Waldorf Clearinghouse Newsletter Archive; Journal for Waldorf-Rudolf Steiner Education (New Zealand); Pacifica Journal Archive (Oceana & the Far East); Waldorf Science Newsletter Archive; Pedagogical Journal/Rundbrief; RoSE Research on Rudolf Steiner; Association for a Healing Education. And direct links to In Context, Lilipoh, Net Future, and Living Education Archive (Steiner Schools Fellowship, UK).

Our article database is nearing 1400 freely available articles from a number of resources including the North American journals, Research Bulletins and Gateways, as well as out of print journals from the UK and the USA.

Our book database tops 700 books currently available in English with 11 in Spanish, of which 9 are eBooks. Books and eBooks in Spanish are now easily found via a direct link on the Home page. Recently added is the eBook, *Una Segunda Casa: LifeWays Cuidado de Niños y Familias* by Cynthia Aldinger and Mary O'Connell.

The number of eBooks in English stands at 185 as of fall 2014. This year alone 54 new eBooks were added, with new titles being added each month. Our eBooks have become one of the most popular aspects of the OWL, our articles being second.

Our site visitor data indicates a continuing increase in the use of the OWL by visitors from all over the world. Over the past six months we have had nearly 62,000 site visits with 60% being returning visitors and 40% being new visitors. At this time 44% of those are from the US, 7% are Australian, 6.5% are from the UK, 6% from Canada, 4% from India, 2.5% from New Zealand, 2% from the Philippines, and the remainder are from Malaysia, Taiwan, Brazil and the rest of the world!

Site visitors who contact me directly continue to have a huge variety of questions. I help students with research and frequently suggest articles and books for those new to Waldorf education. Waldorf teachers contact me all year long looking for main lesson resources. Our eBooks have been a huge help to students, teachers and parents alike!

**Visit the**
**Online Waldorf Library**
**at**
**www.waldorflibrary.org**

# Report on Waldorf Publications

Patrice Maynard

Waldorf Publications has accomplished its transition to the Research Institute over the past year like a replanted tree in a new garden with potentized soil. As with all such undertakings, this could be accomplished only with help from many hands:

- Generous donors poured gifts into our efforts to safeguard the whole process and to guarantee rejuvenation.
- Full member schools will continue to support publications with a new agreement, establishing “book banks” for each school, and thus helping to ensure ongoing growth with new books from new authors.
- The Research Institute board and staff provide warmth, willingness, and patience in planning to make adequate space for this new venture.
- A newly established publications committee from the board of RIWE gives ongoing light to draw the enterprise up and out.
- The Publications staff has shown continual stamina for daily tasks, while at the same time negotiating change and learning new systems within the volatile world of publishing.
- Myriad invisible and visible hands—AWSNA’s staff and board, David Mitchell from his high view, customers, friends, volunteers—have worked to build a successful new environment for this established organism developed over decades by the Waldorf school community.

Gratitude runs high around Waldorf Publications because of all this nurturing from so many.

In addition to closing our warehouse, establishing smaller storage and shipping facilities, beginning new, nimbler publishing practices, helping to organize existing research in accessible ways on the website of the Research Institute, and assisting in stimulating an international research colloquium, Waldorf Publications has established a new online store, featuring a store persona, our new “Library Lady,” as a helper in the store. She will offer recommendations for good books and pointers, for example, around storytelling at bed and meal times, and on other topics to help make parenting a little less stressful.

Seven new books from Waldorf Publications, on topics ranging from recorder music to chemistry, filled the Waldorf world this past year. Already nearing completion at this writing are two unusually important books that will herald a new year of publishing: Douglas Gerwin’s book on teaching young people about the power and pitfalls of human sexuality, *Trailing Clouds of Glory*; and a new reader for grades one through three, *The Sun With Loving Light*, an American version of Caroline von Heydebrandt’s first Waldorf reader. The plan is to help these fruits fall from the tree in increasingly widening circles, so the nourishment can be generously shared with the wider world, so ready to receive these offerings.

# Indices of Past *Research Bulletins*

### Volume I, Number 1

Waldorf Education in an Inner City Public School System
– Research Report

Encounters in Waldorf Education: A Tribute to Ernst Boyer
– Eugene Schwartz

Waldorf Education Research Institute in North America
– Susan Howard and Douglas Sloan

### Volume I, Number 2

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# 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

### PROJECTS

The following projects are in process or have been undertaken by the Research Institute:

Teaching Sensible Science Seminars
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.

### RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

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

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