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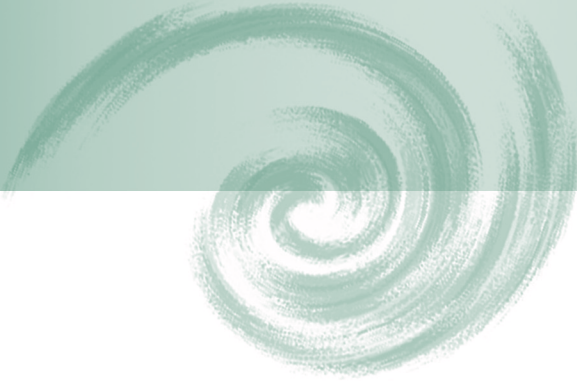


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Elan Leibner

Dear Readers,

This issue of the *Research Bulletin* marks the beginning of the publication's twentieth year! I open this editorial with an appreciative nod toward my predecessors and, just as importantly, toward my successors. Though I have no immediate plans to vacate this post, those engaged in Waldorf pedagogy know that the work we do is in some measure a place-holder, a bridge between the giving of the impulse and a time in the fairly distant future when it will be possible to realize it fully.

The *Research Bulletin* has always had two goals: to reach out to those beyond the Waldorf community—especially in academia and the wider educational world to find common ground and substance for dialogue—and to publish research, essays, and polemics intended to deepen the work of those active within that community. In a sense these twin gestures, horizontally (to and from the periphery) and vertically (from above downward) are the cross of true North for both the Research Institute for Waldorf Education (RIWE) and its *Bulletin*. As I noted earlier, the time quality of the past connecting with the future through our deeds in the present is another axis we have to keep in mind. It is gratifying that schools, foundations, and individuals have found the *Bulletin* sufficiently worthwhile to support, advertising-free, for this long. Thank you all!

This issue leads off with a remarkable essay by Frederick Amrine. Written originally as an introduction to an as-yet-to-be-published Steiner book about eurythmy, Amrine presents, with customary scholarship, the surprising (to us) roots of eurythmy in the work of three American dance pioneers: Loie Fuller, Isadora Duncan,

and Ruth St. Denis. Showing eurythmy to be the rightful culmination and fulfillment of these trailblazers' spiritual and artistic impulses, Amrine presents an artistic context for eurythmy's appearance on the world stage, and he does so in a new and more thorough and insightful manner than has ever been done before. There are many fascinating details in his narrative, and anyone who cares about eurythmy is warmly invited to discover heretofore hidden aspects of its origins. Those who follow Amrine's comment about a YouTube video will be treated to an astonishing piece of early videography.

Jaap van der Wal is a Dutch physician and researcher working in the field of embryology. His article, reprinted from the book *Trailing Clouds of Glory* recently published by Waldorf Publications, is a thought-provoking meditation on the essential mysteries of conception and embryological development. Wal is an original and penetrating voice, and those not familiar with his work will find a rich source of inspiration both in the content of his ideas and in the mood with which he approaches these eternal riddles of birth and rebirth. His website contains a multitude of additional material for those whose interest is piqued by this article.

Forest kindergartens have been sprouting recently like mushrooms after steady rain, and Heidi Drexel set out to enquire how they work, what benefits they offer, and what challenges they face. Rather than arguing for or against these programs, she interviewed practitioners, colleagues, and early childhood leaders, seeking to inform and focus the conversation. Her contribution is a sound piece of background and state-of-the-experiment update for schools and individuals who are considering the outdoor

program possibility. She ends her article with a sound reminder that, in the end, it is the pedagogical wisdom of the teacher, not the format of the program, that will determine how successful it is.

Gary Lamb offers an informative and even-handed description of the charter school movement with a section detailing specifically its ramifications for independent Waldorf schools. His article provides a helpful history of the idea of charters, as well as a description of current practices, essential players in the field, and some of the ideas that inform the spread of this particular version of educational reform. Lamb is not a supporter of charters, but he avoids arguing against them. Instead, he presents the costs and benefits, leaving the reader free to assess the merits of their existence. He points out that this phenomenon is part and parcel of a larger development in the United States, one that should be fully comprehended for its enormous potential impact.

In a paper for an international conference of early childhood educators, Ruth Ker gathered a

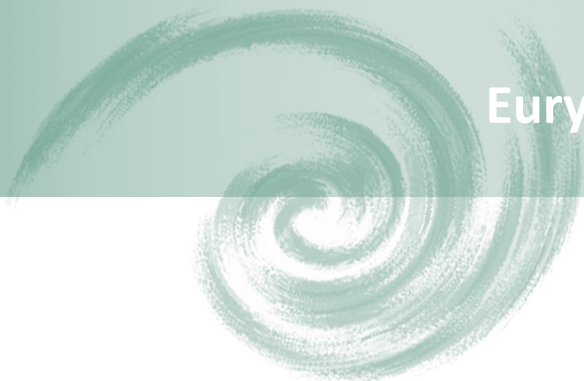
wealth of current research on the value of play-centered early childhood programs as opposed to programs that focus on early academic instruction. Her contribution, reprinted here from the kindergarten journal *Gateways*, offers many studies that support the learning-by-doing-and-playing approach of the Waldorf nursery-kindergarten.

Our series of contributions in support of the study of the Pedagogical Section Council's Core Principles of Waldorf Education continues with two articles discussing the principle of Developmental Curriculum. James Pewtherer writes about the grade school years, and Douglas Gerwin about the high school.

After reports from Waldorf Publications and the Online Waldorf Library, we have a new feature: a listing of current research projects that teachers are invited to join. Two projects are on this inaugural list, and people are invited to send us short descriptions of their research if they wish to have it on future lists.

From all of us at the *Research Bulletin* team: Happy Reading!

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



Eurythmy and the "New Dance"¹

Frederick Amrine

The emergence of eurythmy is an important episode in the history of dance, but it has barely rated a mention within the scholarly literature.² The few references that can be found, even within otherwise admirable studies, are usually a sentence or two at most, obviously tossed off in haste, and invariably wrong-headed.³ Nor has there been much movement in the other direction: It has not helped that so many anthroposophical writings on eurythmy in English take such pains to distinguish it fundamentally from all other forms of movement, or try to bolster it with unsupportable claims of uniqueness.⁴ Eurythmy cannot be unrelated to the history of dance and yet simultaneously its "apotheosis."⁵

My own contention challenges both narratives. I shall argue that eurythmy is the continuation of an aesthetic revolution that began not in Europe but in America, that the original impulses leading to the "new dance" were deeply spiritual, and that eurythmy is the fulfillment of that original impetus.

My counter-narrative about the pre-history of eurythmy within the history of dance should be of particular interest to English-speaking anthroposophists, because it identifies as the all-important immediate context for the development of eurythmy the pioneering work by *three American women*: Loie Fuller, Isadora Duncan, and Ruth St. Denis.⁶ No argument is needed to establish the centrality of their roles in the emergence of the "new dance"; scholars are in full agreement in that regard. But to my knowledge nobody has

ever noted the relationship between eurythmy and the new art of movement this trio sought to inaugurate. The task of this introduction will be to persuade both anthroposophists and mainstream dance historians that there are deep but largely unapprehended affinities between the "new dance" and eurythmy. Moreover, I shall argue that it is not the "modern dance" of Wigman, Jooss, Graham, and Humphreys but rather Rudolf Steiner's eurythmy that is the rightful heir of Fuller, Duncan, and St. Denis.

Eurythmy and the "new dance" share at least three separate roots. As a shorthand, let me call them "spiritual science," "Greek drama," and "Oriental spirituality."⁷ Loie Fuller was more than just a dancer: Like Goethe and Steiner—indeed, like Professor Strader in Steiner's *Mystery Dramas*—she was a "spiritual scientist" who invented and patented a kind of perpetual motion machine, collaborated with Marie and Pierre Curie,⁸ and was elected to

the French Astronomical Society. Like Steiner, Isadora Duncan went back to Greek drama via Nietzsche, and to Nature itself via Greek art.⁹ Where Duncan was more instinctive and more in tune with the older consciousness, Steiner was more conscious and forward-looking. But as my account will attempt to show, Duncan was far more reflective and even erudite than her image in the popular culture of her day and ours.

Like Steiner, Ruth St. Denis sought to bring the spiritual wisdom of the Orient to the West, and to revive the ancient Mysteries in a new, artistic form. Here as elsewhere, Steiner seldom cites or refers to contemporaries who influenced him; like

The original impulses leading to the "new dance" were deeply spiritual, and eurythmy is the fulfillment of that original impetus.

many other great thinkers and artists, Steiner was consumed by a passion to create something new and did not pause to acknowledge predecessors.

Like most other European intellectuals, Steiner was allergic to America, which may have gotten in the way as well. But the parallels between eurythmy and the arts of movement these three American women brought to Europe are profound, and he simply must have known all about them. After all, Steiner himself was deeply immersed in avant-garde artistic circles at the turn of the century; the American women were great sensations; and in 1904 Isadora Duncan started a school in Grunewald, only a few miles from Steiner’s apartment at Motzstrasse 17 in Berlin—the same city where Ruth St. Denis enjoyed the greatest acclaim and collaborated with the renowned director Max Reinhardt.

The great ferment in the dance world of Central Europe during the early ’teens of the last century is a well-known story.¹⁰ Dalcroze¹¹ moved from Switzerland to the new garden city of Hellerau, outside Dresden, and established a school where he taught a new and highly disciplined approach to music that he called “eurythmics.” Most of the important European innovators of the nascent “new dance” came to study with him, only to move on fairly quickly, put off by the rigidity of his system. Steiner knew all about Dalcroze, but aside from their names, eurythmy and eurythmics have little in common. Many of the innovators also spent time at the utopian community at Monte Verità. But Monte Verità was a short-lived phenomenon that gave rise to no ongoing institution or distinctive style of performance. Steiner did not participate in either of those nurseries of European “modern dance.” Hence it is tempting to conclude that eurythmy and modern dance arose entirely independently, with no influence flowing in either direction, but, aside from the Americans, there was a Central European player in that early

history who had significant connections to Steiner and his work.

Indeed, it was by far the most important player in that history: Rudolf Laban, a “Michaelic” figure if ever there was one, born in the Michaelic year 1879.¹² Steiner and Laban were together in Munich during the years immediately preceding the outbreak of the First World War, and they moved within the same avant-garde milieu. Laban was peripherally connected with the Blue Rider, which was heavily influenced by Steiner.¹³ Surely Laban heard Steiner lecture during

those years, and it is very likely that they met. If not directly, Steiner would have learned about Fuller, Duncan, and St. Denis indirectly through Laban, who was intensely engaged in all the new developments across the entire field of dance.

A “spiritual scientist” of the dance

It seems that the “new dance” began inconspicuously, with a casual experiment:

It was while rehearsing in a comedy, *Quack, MD*, that she accidentally discovered her dance—or so says the legend. Offstage one day a beam of sunlight caught a piece of silk she was draping on herself and in the mirror she was transformed. Being of a scientific turn of mind, she began to experiment with ways to move the silk around in the sunlight, and she perfected a number of motions—twirls, waltz steps, little skips—that made the silk swirl.¹⁴

Born in a suburb of Chicago, Loie Fuller¹⁵ followed in the footsteps of Kate Vaughn, who introduced the “skirt dance” to London in 1876. But one should not be fooled: Although they had become a staple of vaudeville, skirt dances have a distinguished pedigree. The oldest dances of which we have images may well be Cretan “skirt dances,”¹⁶ and “dances...associated with the ‘mystery’ plays or ceremonies were well

Eurythmy and the “new dance” share at least three separate roots: spiritual science, Greek drama, and Oriental spirituality.

known in Crete; in fact, the Greeks believed that the Cretans had ‘invented’ such rituals. Some of these rites may have been part of solemn and secret initiations....”¹⁷ Was the law of spiritual evolution so often described by Steiner at work here, whereby the new can arise only after a quick, symbolic revival of the old—ontogeny recapitulating phylogeny?

Fuller saw the aesthetic potential of staging flowing movement as such, immersed in a flood of colored lights. After experimenting with movement and electric lighting, she took her innovative act to New York City in 1892, where she debuted her “Serpentine Dance” at the Madison Square Theater. Emboldened by the accolades, she decided to bring her dances to the front lines of the avant-garde: That same year, she sailed for Paris, where she was hired by the Folies Bergère and took the town by storm with her “Fire Dance,” “Lily Dance,” “Butterfly Dance,” and of course the “Serpentine Dance,” now further transformed by a wide range of technological innovations.

Fuller metamorphosed the skirt dance in multiple important ways. The skirt became a

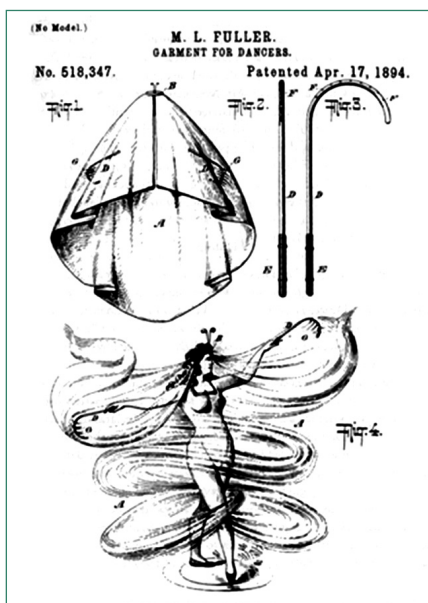
Like eurythmy, Fuller’s dance was an experience that appealed directly to the imagination rather than the senses.

huge veil, controlled by long wands—a method that she even patented. She kept the veils in continuous motion; there were no pauses and no poses. More important, she used them to emulate and explore natural phenomena, and that was what attracted so many great artists, poets, and even scientists to her performances. She seemed to have conjured forth, and presented directly, real living form—the “life body” of living organisms that Steiner calls the “etheric.”¹⁸ But even just as a purely aesthetic experience, her dances were overwhelming.

Most important of all, she worked in entirely new ways with light itself, inventing—and patenting—ever more elaborate stagings that involved a whole team of electricians beneath the stage, changing out specially colored gels continuously as she performed. Bathed in colored light upon an otherwise darkened stage, her body itself hidden by the swirling veils, she seemed to float in mid-air as “an apparition” like “a sylph from another world.”¹⁹ The body of the dancer was completely de-materialized, dissolved in an aura of colored light.²⁰ Like eurythmy, it was an experience that appealed directly to the imagination rather than the senses.

Steiner was of course also a great pioneer in the use of colored lighting to stage dance and drama. The importance of color and light for a eurythmy performance has been described eloquently by Wolfgang Veit, who reminds us that Steiner even spoke of a “light eurythmy.”²¹

As the presentation progresses, the stage is again and again plunged into richly contrasting color moods. It is suffused with a flood of colored light and transformed ever anew by gentle, fluid lighting transitions. This changing tapestry of light is itself the eurythmist’s stage scenery. With her gestures the eurythmist dips into it, taking up the flooding light.



There exists, amazingly, a film made by the Lumière Brothers in 1897 of Loie Fuller performing, and it is available on YouTube.²² Even more amazing, and a testament to the importance of Loie Fuller, is the fact that they hand-tinted the black-and-white-film, frame by frame, so that one gets some sense of the color dynamics. But the best sense of Fuller’s dances is to be had from the drawings and paintings they inspired by great contemporary artists such as Toulouse-Lautrec’s rendition of her “Dance of the Veils” (1893). As eurythmy would eventually undertake to do much more systematically and insightfully, Fuller sought to make the spiritual motions of musical *melos* immediately visible in a form that she called “visionary music or music for the eye.”²³

Loie Fuller was the great pioneer, and she passed the torch to the next of the American women. She recognized immediately the greatness of Isadora Duncan, invited her to tour Germany with her, and sponsored her trips to Budapest and Vienna.

The gift of Isis

Angela Isadora Duncan was born in San Francisco in 1877. From an early age, she displayed an extraordinary talent for movement of every kind. Repelled by what she saw as artificiality in ballet, she soon developed her own distinctive, “natural” style of dance, imitating the waves along the beach beneath Cliff House.²⁴ Right when Madame Blavatsky began unveiling the secrets of the goddess, Duncan chose to go by her middle name because it means “gift of Isis.” Like most American women of her generation, she had little formal schooling; unlike most, she became an autodidact who read widely and thoughtfully. In her most formative years she received and followed the sophisticated guidance of Oakland’s chief librarian, Ina Coolbrith, who would go on to become the Poet Laureate of

California. At a time when there was as yet little or no scholarship on the history of dance,²⁵ she knew enough about the cultural anthropology of dance to claim she had “awakened” an art that had “slept for 2000 years.”²⁶

Duncan’s ambitions took her to New York, where she performed programs called “The Dance and Philosophy” in the salons of the wealthy. Like Steiner, Duncan broke new ground by moving to poetry and “serious” music, including a full performance of *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*. Her dancing was well received in private circles, but the public response was tepid, so in 1899 she set sail for Europe, and there she found the enthusiastic reception she had sought. In London, she quickly gained access to the innermost circles of the artistic and intellectual elites; a famous Classics professor even recited ancient Greek verse at her performances. Surprisingly, the young Americans Loie Fuller and Isadora Duncan were lionized not by the New World but by the Old.

Isadora Duncan was a free spirit who lived large: Her imagination was completely unfettered, and her personal motto was “*sans limites*.” But she also practiced real spiritual discipline, moving from Delsarte’s²⁷ scientific exercises to yoga to what can only be described as intense meditations on the real inner springs of movement. Her own description of such meditations—and their outcome—will sound surprisingly familiar to any student of Steiner:

I spent long days and nights in the studio seeking the dance which might be the divine expression of the human spirit through the medium of the body’s movements. For hours I would stand quite still, my two hands folded between my breasts, covering the solar plexus. My mother often became alarmed to see me remain for such long intervals quite motionless as if in a trance—but I was seeking and finally

Fuller sought to make the spiritual motions of musical *melos* immediately visible in a form that she called “visionary music or music for the eye.”

discovered the central spring of all movement, the crater of motor power, the unity from which all diversities of movements are born, the mirror of vision for the creation of the dance—it was from this discovery that was born the theory on which I founded my school.

The ballet school taught the pupils that this spring was found in the center of the back at the base of the spine. From this axis, says the ballet master, arms, legs, and trunk must move freely, giving the result of an articulated puppet. This method produces an artificial mechanical movement not worthy of the soul. I, on the contrary, sought the source of the spiritual expression to flow into the channels of the body filling it with vibrating light—the centrifugal force reflecting the spirit's vision.

After many months, when I had learned to concentrate all my force to this one Center, I found thereafter when I listened to music the rays and vibrations of the music streamed to this one fount of light within me—there they reflected themselves in Spiritual Vision not the brain's mirror but the soul's, and from this vision, I could express them in Dance.²⁸

Duncan felt strongly that “the dance of the future,” as she called her ideal, would arise out of “spiritual intuitions” rather than inherited techniques.²⁹ Intense meditations on movement led to the development of a powerful imaginative faculty that she herself termed a kind of clairvoyance.³⁰ When listening to music, she inwardly saw “lines” to which she then adapted the movements of her body.³¹ She claimed that in her dances, “the great Rhythms of Life are enabled to play through the physical instrument, the profundities of consciousness are given a channel to the light of our social day. These profundities of consciousness are in us all.”³²

"The dance of the future will have to become again the high religious art as it was with the Greeks, for art which is not religious is not art; it is mere merchandise."

Her seeming simplicity has been called “oceanic in its depth” and a recovery of ancient modes of cosmogony and magic.³³ Much as Steiner rendered the life-world as such visible through eurythmy, her dancing conjured up “a three-dimensional world in which invisible presences or aspects of the musical climate drew and repelled her.”³⁴ She even spoke openly of her belief in reincarnation.³⁵

Meditation and spiritual study led to profound theories. It has been claimed that Isadora Duncan was not only the first American dancer to develop a theory of the dance, she was also the first “to define movement based on natural and spiritual laws rather than on formal considerations of geometric space,” and the first to argue for dance as a “high art” on the basis of a rigorous comparison with the other, canonical art forms.³⁶ In all these ways, she anticipated Rudolf Steiner's later development of eurythmy. Moreover, some of the main inspirations of her theories were thinkers who had influenced Steiner profoundly as well. In Germany she discovered Nietzsche, and *The Birth of Tragedy* became, as she said, henceforth her Bible. She also read Ernst Haeckel in the original and, like Steiner, was inspired by Haeckel to develop her own spiritual view of evolution. Like Steiner, she echoed Schiller's *Aesthetic Education* in envisioning a new social order based upon a *philosophy of freedom*: “The ‘law’ was irrelevant to Duncan's politics, in which freedom was performed through the body, through expression. Freedom was agency erupting from within the individual, rather than being gifted en masse from without, by the state.”³⁷

Duncan laid out her theories most rigorously in *The Dance of the Future*, a manifesto of 1903 delivered before the Berlin Press Club and then published in Germany in both German and the English original. Although the book is quite rare now,³⁸ it is inconceivable that Steiner, who had

been thoroughly immersed in the avant-garde arts scene in Berlin before the turn of the century, did not read this booklet intently. She ended her speech by stating that “the dance of the future will have to become again the high religious art as it was with the Greeks for art which is not religious is not art, it is mere merchandise.”

Duncan began as a solo performer, but gradually the *dramatic* side of her art came forth: Laura Jacobs has described her mature productions as “thespian” rather than “terpsichorean.” When Duncan returned to the United States in 1908, there was great resistance to her dancing interpretations of symphonic music and whole operas by Gluck. But gradually she won over audiences. She staged a dance-drama based on *Oedipus Rex*, with lyric choruses penned by the anthroposophist Percy MacKaye (son of Delsarte’s protégé Steele MacKaye, father of Arvia MacKaye Ege and Christy Barnes), who translated and collaborated with Albert Steffen. She captured the Greek archetype of *systole* and *diastole*—“tension” and “release”³⁹—that is fundamental to the cathartic effect of Greek tragedy and the liveliness of Greek architecture, in which the columns seem to flex like muscles under the weight of the loads they bear. “These tension-and-release sequences are one of the fundamental ways in which the Duncan technique produces kinesthetic contrast, in order to suggest drama.”⁴⁰ By the time she returned to Europe in 1909 she was world-famous.

Like Steiner, Isadora Duncan understood the profound *pedagogical* implications of a renewed art of movement. Echoing the Froebel reformers she had heard in San Francisco, she talked about the importance of dance for the “character formation” of children.⁴¹ Her utopian vision was to create a worldwide school movement, centered on a new kind of dance. She

founded several small schools, but she dreamt of founding “a big School, with 1000 children in spacious surroundings,” including a school for the children of workers in New York City. “...Not one of Isadora’s biographers has mentioned the efforts of Juliette Poyntz, of the International Ladies’ Garment Workers Union in New York, in 1915, to establish a school for working-class children under Isadora’s direction.”⁴² Because the Bolsheviks resonated with her vision and were willing to fund her when nobody in the West would, Duncan accepted an invitation to found a school in Moscow. Shortly before her death she predicted that “the day is coming when a grand international school of children ... will open the doors of the future to a new humanity.”⁴³ And of course Duncan’s vision has been realized—by Steiner’s Waldorf schools, now the fastest growing independent school movement in the world, featuring eurythmy as an integral part of the curriculum.

Even Lincoln Kirstein, whose sympathies ultimately lie elsewhere, credits Isadora Duncan with having been, together with Fokine, the great pioneer of modern dance. She certainly was that, but she was more besides. Like Rudolf Steiner, she cultivated a spiritual vision of the arts as a path of personal and social transformation. In that sense especially, eurythmy is the rightful heir of her legacy.

Seeking the spirituality of the Orient

Another figure Steiner would have termed “Michaelic,” Ruth St. Denis (née Ruthie Dennis, canonized by the impresario David Belasco, “Miss Ruth” to her students and friends), was born in Newark, New Jersey, in 1879. Her mother, a strict Methodist, held a degree from the University of Michigan’s medical school, and she had the kinds of eclectic spiritual interests that spread throughout the U.S. around the turn of the

Like Rudolf Steiner, Duncan cultivated a spiritual vision of the arts as a path of personal and social transformation. In that sense especially, eurythmy is the rightful heir of her legacy.

twentieth century. So in addition to the Bible, she encouraged her daughter to study Mabel Collins Cook's theosophical *Idyll of the White Lotus* and Mary Baker Eddy's *Science and Health*. Both mother and daughter were caught up in the wave of enthusiasm for François Delsarte.⁴⁴ As a young woman, Ruth moved quickly from bicycle racing to acrobatics to vaudeville dancing, but then while touring with one of Belasco's gaudy spectacles, she had a profound epiphany as she walked past a drugstore in Buffalo. In the window was a poster advertising Egyptian Deities cigarettes, with "a bare-breasted woman, who was supposed to be the goddess Isis, seated in state amid pillars and lotus blossoms." Seeing that image persuaded her instantly to become a second Isadora, another devotee of the goddess Isis, and she later described her reaction to the poster in terms appropriate to a religious conversion:

Here was an external image which stirred into instant consciousness all that latent capacity for wonder, that still and meditative love of beauty which lay at the deepest center of my spirit. ...I identified in a flash with the figure of Isis. She became the expression of all the somber mystery and beauty of Egypt,

and I knew that my destiny as a dancer had sprung alive in that moment. I would become the rhythmic and impersonal instrument of spiritual revelation rather than a personal actress of comedy or tragedy. I had never before known such an inward shock of rapture.⁴⁵

Her vision arrived in 1904—the same year that Rudolf Steiner published two treatises that have come to be considered basic books of anthroposophy: *How to Know Higher Worlds* (1904) and *Theosophy* (1904). Like Steiner during his tenure as the head of the Theosophical Society in Germany, St. Denis made it her mission to bring the wisdom of the Orient to the West. Like Steiner, she described a path of inner development on which we "learn to withdraw the searching antennae of the mind from the circumference of outer activity to the inner and upper place of spiritual consciousness," where "we may begin to realize our harmonious relationship with the causal rhythm of the universe."⁴⁶

While still on tour, she began devouring every book she could find on Ancient Egypt in the local libraries. In San Francisco she paid a Japanese photographer \$5 to make a now-iconic

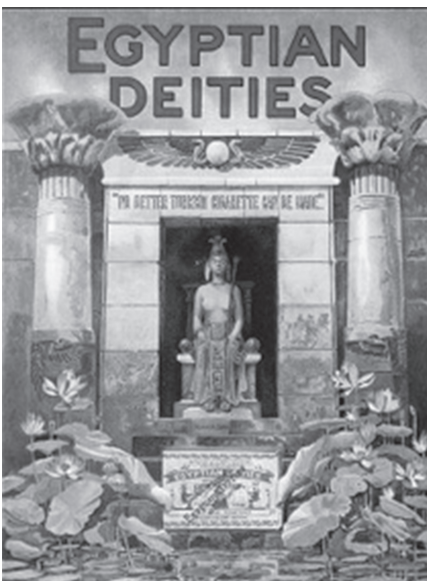


image of her posing as the goddess Isis. Further inspired by a Hindu dance troupe that was performing at Coney Island, she choreographed an extraordinary mystery drama called *Radha*, first staged in 1906; later she would describe it as “a first gesture towards a new use of the dance as a means of spiritual expression.”⁴⁷ In the way that Steiner and Duncan looked back to Ancient Greece via Nietzsche, St. Denis looked back to the ancient arts of Egypt, Japan, and India.

St. Denis’ dances had little to do with the superficial Orientalism that had become so fashionable in her day. As Deborah Jowitt has put it so eloquently, “A spiritual journey to India—to all regions of the East—was her means for refurbishing an ideal image of herself onstage, through which she hoped to guide herself and her audiences to spiritual fulfillment, and to revitalize dancing by so doing. ‘I demand of the dance,’ she wrote, ‘...that it reveal the God in man’.”⁴⁸

The collection *Wisdom Comes Dancing* includes St. Denis’ own synopsis of the dance-drama starring the milkmaid-consort of Krishna, based on a passage from the Gita. This key to St. Denis’ mini-drama of what Steiner would theorize as the evolution of consciousness deserves to be quoted at length:

After a short interval, Radha, partially hidden from view by the heavy clouds of rising incense, descends from her pedestal and, standing at the foot of it, gazes with benign countenance on the worshippers who draw back and prostrate themselves before her.

Radha then signifies that for a short time she has taken this form in order to give them a message. She bids them rise and receive this, which she then conveys through a mystic dance, the meaning of which is that they must not seek for permanent happiness in an impermanent world; that the quest for

pleasure through the five senses always ends in unfulfillment; that peace is only to be found within. ...

The second figure dances on a square representing, according to Buddhistic theology, the fourfold mysteries of life, and is done with writhings and twistings of the body to portray the despair of unfulfillment. At the end of this figure Radha sinks to the ground in darkness.

After a short interval a faint light discloses her in an attitude of prayer and meditation. This light, coming from a hanging lamp of lotus design, is first concentrated on her figure, then diffused with increasing power over the entire stage. Radha now rises from a kneeling posture, her face illumined with the light of joy within, and, holding the lotus

flower, begins the third figure of the dance, which follows lines of an open lotus flower, the steps leading from the center of the flower to the point of each petal. She dances on the balls of her feet, thus typifying the ecstasy and joy which follow the renunciation of the senses and freedom from illusion. ...⁴⁹

Shawn describes *Radha*’s difficult birth, but it went on to be performed more than 1500 times, and he rightly claims that it “marked an epoch in the world of dance.”⁵⁰ The success of *Radha* led to a whole cycle of “Oriental” dance-dramas. St. Denis always meditated before performing her sacred dances, but, like Isadora Duncan before her and Rudolf Steiner after her, St. Denis sought to imbue the arts of movement not just with spiritual moods and motifs: They all brought to bear a profound spiritual *thinking*. “We all need to be conscious of the eternal rhythm of life, that rhythm of spirit through which we may learn to move harmoniously and beautifully. I believe this rhythm is to be known and felt only as we spiritualize our thinking.”⁵¹ Like Isadora Duncan,

St. Denis hoped to guide herself and her audience to spiritual fulfillment and to revitalize dance by doing so. “I demand of dance,” she wrote, “that it reveal the God in man.”

she studied Cartesianism⁵² and rejected its central philosophical tenets: “For a long time we have lived constantly in two worlds, or supposed we did, in body and in spirit. But the new waves of vision that have come over the earth have shown us that in reality there are not two warring substances but only one, which is consciousness or mind.”⁵³ She sought to lift dance up out of its degradation as “conventionalized sex-expression” and “the tired business person’s amusement”; for her it was “a language and a hieroglyphic of divinity” that needed to be studied like a sacred text.⁵⁴

Having succeeded in New York, St. Denis decided to follow in the footsteps of Loie Fuller and Isadora Duncan by sailing for Europe in 1906. The reception in London and Paris was polite, but, as had been the case with Isadora Duncan, it was Germany, and above all Berlin, that received her enthusiastically.⁵⁵ Just as Loie Fuller and Isadora Duncan had turned the heads of the intellectual and artistic elites in Paris, Ruth St. Denis recruited the likes of Hugo von Hofmannsthal as friends and allies.⁵⁶

Upon returning to the U.S., St. Denis teamed up with Ted Shawn in 1915 to found a school in Los Angeles that they called “Denishawn.” It was small, but much more than a “dance school”; really, it was a kind of proto-Esalen at which many sacred arts and contemplative practices were cultivated, including “music visualizations”⁵⁷ that remind one very much of eurythmy:

We held steadfastly to the belief that Denishawn should be more than an institution, that it should be a philosophy. We wanted the school to be a stream of ideas. There were classes in music visualization and in the dance techniques of India, Japan, Egypt, North Africa, Java. We studied plastiques and dramatic gesture, based on Delsarte...⁵⁸

She sought to lift dance up out of its degradation... For her it was “a language and a hieroglyphic of divinity” that needed to be studied like a sacred text.

Shawn and St. Denis also co-founded Jacob’s Pillow in New York. Their students, notably Martha Graham and Doris Humphreys, would become the leaders of the next generation of American dance. But they would lead dance in a fundamentally different direction.

Back in New York, now separated from Shawn, St. Denis founded a Society for Spiritual Arts. The group attracted many important spiritual thinkers of the day, including Nicholas Roerich and Rabindranath Tagore. The great Sufi teacher Pir-o-Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan shared the stage with her during one of her performances of *The Yogi*. Like Steiner, she believed that because “a human being is indeed the microcosm, the

universe in miniature, the Divine Dance of the future should convey with its slightest gestures some significance of the universe.”⁵⁹ In 1938 she accepted an invitation to create one of America’s first dance departments at Adelphi College on Long Island—the same institution where a Waldorf Demonstration School opened in 1947, since renamed and now thriving as The Waldorf School of Garden City.

In later years leading up to her death in 1968, St. Denis gravitated towards a kind of spiritual drama that was increasingly (but never exclusively) Christian.⁶⁰ The Society of Spiritual Arts was renamed The Church of the Divine Dance, and there are many photos of her posing as the Virgin Mary. She created a “Rhythmic Choir” and sought to introduce dance into the rituals of the churches. What seemed like an innovation was—as Isadora Duncan and Rudolf Steiner and the other “R.S.,” Ruth St. Denis, understood profoundly and consciously—actually a return to the roots of religion in the ancient Mysteries and other forms of Oriental spirituality, all of which can be traced back ultimately to forms of ritual dance.

The second root

Greek drama is the second of the three roots shared by eurythmy and the “new dance.” Following Nietzsche’s supposedly unscholarly lead, Duncan, St. Denis, and Steiner intuited what mainstream scholarship has now belatedly confirmed: *They built their “new dances” upon the ruins of ancient dramas, because they understood that ancient drama had been founded upon ritual dance.* All four of these pioneers saw the clearest evidence of that ultimate foundation in the ancient tragic choruses. Hadn’t Aristotle himself asserted specifically that “tragedy originated with the improvisations of the ‘leaders of the dithyrambs’ [i.e., the dithyrambic dances]”?⁶¹ Nor did they fail to note that memories of those primordial choruses are present even in the modern language of theatrical dance: The dancers of the dithyrambs were trained by a *choragus* (whence the term “choreographer”), and they performed in the *orchestra*.⁶²

It is a testimonial to Isadora Duncan’s keen artistic and philosophical intuition that she insisted on dancing not the roles of the protagonists in her recreated ancient tragedies, but rather the roles of the chorus.⁶³ She followed Nietzsche in honoring Euripides’ last drama as having finally recaptured the original spirit of ancient tragedy, which Euripides’ earlier dramas had mistaken and very nearly destroyed. Duncan carried with her on her travels a copy of *The Bacchae*, and surely it is no accident that she had bookmarked a choral dithyramb celebrating unfettered movement:

Oh, they like a colt as he
Runs by the river,
A colt by his dam
When the heart of him sings,
With the keen limbs drawn
And the fleet foot aquiver
Away the bacchanal springs!⁶⁴

Contrary to the popular image of her as self-involved, Duncan’s approach to the revival of ancient tragedy was remarkably detached and objective. She felt no desire to dance the part of the suffering individual; “I do not try to represent Orpheus or Eurydice,” she wrote, “but only the plastic movements of the chorus.”⁶⁵

Balancing the Apollonian and the Dionysian

My contention is that the insights and ideals generated by this search for a deeper understanding of Greek drama are the defining characteristics of the “new dance” that was inaugurated by Laban, Steiner, and the three American pioneers, and I see them as the characteristics that distinguish it most sharply from the various forms of “modern dance” that followed. The most important of those ideals was a desire to balance the two archetypal principles that Nietzsche had identified in *The Birth of Tragedy* as “the Apollonian” and “the Dionysian.”⁶⁶



Duncan and Steiner refer to Nietzsche's archetypes explicitly, but the same balanced tension between the extremes of Socratic—which is to say, excessively rational—detachment and chaotic, unfettered Dionysian subjectivity was an ideal cherished by all of these figures, even if they chose a different idiom by which to express it. It is telling that the earliest Central European experiments failed to take hold longer term because they fell into one extreme or the other: Dalcroze's school at Hellerau into a pedantic, almost mechanical set of drills, on the one hand (too Apollonian), and, on the other, the (literally) naked self-expression encouraged at Monte Verità (too Dionysian). It was only when the more balanced and more spiritual visions arrived from America that the "new dance" began to take hold, and to ripen theoretically in the minds of Laban and Steiner.

Like the Enlightenment's Apollonian view of the Greeks that Nietzsche criticized as one-sided, the great European tradition of stage dancing had been reduced to the exclusively Apollonian traditions of ballet. Laban is explicit in rejecting ballet as inauthentic, as something detached from reality like the one-sided, floating, disembodied dream-world of the eighteenth-century Olympus derided by Nietzsche as a caricature of Greek culture: "Movements performed in ballet have lost their connection with the primitive drives of man to such a degree that we relegate them to a realm akin to that of a dream state"; ballet is like a harmonious dream in which "all fear of the struggle of life is dissolved into a smooth flow of effort as in elevation, floating or flying."⁶⁷ Hence "we must recover lost territory, and regain the knowledge possessed by our ancestors centuries ago."⁶⁸ Laban reminds us that it was only because Napoleon's armies brought back from Russia a Dionysian "feature of the dances of Tcherkess warriors"—toe dancing!—that classical ballet was "rescued...

from the danger of sickly sentimentality, and from a meaningless display of softly interwoven linear embellishments."⁶⁹

And so it was that the rebellion against ballet necessarily began as a search for the missing Dionysus. A late poem by Isadora Duncan ends with an explicit evocation of Dionysus as her muse:

O Dionysos, Porte-Flambeau,
Light me the way in flames — I S A D O R A⁷⁰

And was not Loie Fuller, who might seem the odd woman out here, really a kind of modern, whirling maenad? Was that not one source of

her mesmerizing energy? In the short run, the search led many to Dionysian excess, to one or another extreme, to Salomes and skirt dances and Monte Verità, but the great pioneers of the "new dance" quickly found their equilibrium again. Loie Fuller was a whirling maenad, but she was a *scientific* maenad—"electric Salome," as Garelick has described her so

memorably. St. Denis' *Radha* displays the process in nuce: Olympian detachment gives way to the sensuous riot of individuality, after which a new balance is achieved at a higher level. St. Denis found the balance in the precepts of ancient Hinduism. But it was also the secret of Greek tragedy that Nietzsche had rediscovered.

Again, it was Duncan and Steiner who pursued the balance between the Apollonian and the Dionysian most deliberately and most consciously. Hence I shall focus on them to clinch my argument that eurythmy is the rightful heir of the "new dance."

Isadora Duncan celebrated Zarathustra, Nietzsche's dancing Dionysus of a philosopher, and she adopted *The Birth of Tragedy* as her Bible, but, as we have seen, she was also exceptionally reflective and disciplined. Her personal life may have become scandalous after

The most important of those ideals was a desire to balance the two archetypal principles that Nietzsche identified as "the Apollonian" and "the Dionysian."

a certain point, but her artistry was balanced at all times. That was the secret of her power. Steichen’s famous photos of her on the Acropolis tell the whole story: maenad poses framed within the Apollonian temple; energy bound by order. By embodying fully the Classical ideal, she became a classic within her own lifetime.

Duncan wanted to create a counterpoise to modern subjectivity by rediscovering the macrocosmic perspective of the ancient chorus, which Nietzsche had identified as the balance between the Dionysian agon of the protagonist and Olympian detachment. The chorus expresses directly, and directs the audience in their need to express, the cathartic emotions

of pity and fear aroused by the spectacle. For Isadora Duncan, “dance is not about mere self-expression; it is about expression of the transcendent (‘something out of another, a profounder world’) through the self, which she conceptualized as not just the individual but the individual as interconnected with the cosmos.”⁷¹ Daly is eloquent in describing the secret source of Duncan’s fascination: “She presented to her audiences as an oxymoron: precise abandonment. She was ‘Art’ and ‘Nature,’ restraint and abandon—her very movement style was based upon control at the center and freedom of the limbs. Even the furies and the bacchantes, for all their passion, remained within a circumscribed vocabulary and floor plan.”⁷² The secret of her art, the reason she struck everyone as uncannily chaste and archetypal in her dancing, was her ability to balance the Apollonian and the Dionysian.

Nearly every history and every aesthetic treatise on the dance somewhere quotes Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra*. “Zarathustra is a dancer”; he is an ancient Greek reborn; for him, philosophy must learn to dance again, become itself a dance, and celebrate only gods who are dancers:

To a degree that even Duncan and Laban could not manage, Steiner really became Nietzsche’s dancing philosopher.

I would believe only in a god who could dance. And when I saw my devil I found him serious, thorough, profound, and solemn: It was the spirit of gravity—through him all things fall.

Not by wrath does one kill but by laughter. Come, let us kill the spirit of gravity!

I have learned to walk: Ever since, I let myself run. I have learned to fly: Ever since, I do not want to be pushed before moving along.

Now I am light, now I fly, now I see myself beneath myself, now a god dances through me.⁷³

As a young man, Steiner was drawn to Nietzsche, and the clearest reflection of that early attraction is his book of 1895, which begins with a surprisingly positive exposition of Nietzsche’s philosophical development.⁷⁴ But as his own career progressed, Steiner

became, paradoxically, both a critic of Nietzsche and himself the embodiment of *Zarathustra*. By inventing eurythmy, Steiner transposed his earlier philosophical teachings into art. *To a degree that even Duncan and Laban could not manage, Steiner really became Nietzsche’s dancing philosopher.*

The story of the earliest eurythmy lessons, given by Rudolf Steiner to Lory Maier-Smits, has been recounted well in English by Siegloch’s booklet, and even more concisely by Wolfgang Veit’s article in *The Journal for Anthroposophy*. The relevant documents and reminiscences are now available in English.⁷⁵ Hence there is no need to retell that story, but it is important to underscore the degree to which the birth of eurythmy was animated by the spirit of *The Birth of Tragedy*.

As part of the very first eurythmy lessons, Steiner gave Czerwinski’s history of dance to Lory Maier-Smits, and asked her to study the first chapter, which focuses principally on the dances

of the ancient Greeks.⁷⁶ Moreover, he asked her to pay particular attention to the drawings in the text, which seem quaint to us, but obviously spoke volumes to Steiner. The only way in which Steiner could have drawn so much from so little is because he had already assimilated Nietzsche's insights so fully.⁷⁷

One key to understanding Steiner's first steps in eurythmy, as it were, is to note that he divided the first two sets of lessons into a Dionysian course that brought the needed counterweight to ballet, followed by an Apollonian course to reestablish the balance at a higher level. And it is no accident that right from the beginning, Steiner employed eurythmy to represent otherwise unrepresentable scenes from Goethe's *Faust* and Steiner's own *Mystery Dramas*, scenes in which metaphysical forces contend with each other, or act upon or interact with humans in the spiritual world, because the central agon of those works is so much about balancing opposing forces, be they the red and the black sides of Mephistopheles in *Faust*, or Lucifer and Ahriman in Steiner's *Mystery Dramas*.⁷⁸

Eurythmy is ideal for depicting those struggles to maintain the golden mean so central to human nature itself, not just because it is sensory-supersensory, and not just because it is meant to be a direct representation of metaphysical forces, but also because eurythmy was itself born of a striving to achieve active balance between two extremes.

The center that held

The vital centering of the "new dance" we have described as the striving to balance the Apollonian and the Dionysian could not hold in the long run, and the original impetus was largely dissipated. A telling anecdote from the earliest phase of Laban's career as a choreographer already reveals one of the powerful centrifugal

forces that would prove to be the undoing of the "new dance." Mary Wigman was still Laban's student at Hellerau, but right from the start it was clear that she wanted to take dance in a different direction that was far more subjective. She herself recounts her execution of one exercise and Laban's heated reaction:

To point out the dynamic value of these movements they were given by him names like pride, joy, wrath, and so on. I needed little more than to hear the word "wrath" and I immediately threw myself into a colossal rage. The swinging virtually exploded in space. The endlessly repeated movements became more or less mechanical. I was simply delighted to do them once in a different, more personal way. Laban's wrath was even more vehement than mine. He jumped up as if bitten by a tarantula, hammered with his fists on the table so that the papers whirled around the room. He shouted: "You clown, you grotesque monster, with your terrific intensity you ruin my whole theory of harmony!" He was furious about what he called my super-self-expression, declaring that the movement itself was wrath and needed no individual interpretation.⁷⁹

Soon Wigman broke away from Laban, to pursue without constraint precisely the impulse Laban had criticized so harshly. She called it *Ausdruckstanz*, and she succeeded in displacing Laban's centered vision; soon she was the star, and Laban himself was eclipsed. Her iconic piece would be "The Witch's Dance," which she performed in a grotesque mask, and seated on the ground. Eventually Martha Graham and Doris Humphreys would rebel against their teacher Ruth St. Denis in similar ways. All three chose to plumb Dionysian depths, and the "modern

Eurythmy is ideal for depicting those struggles to maintain the golden mean so central to human nature itself, because it was itself born of a striving to achieve active balance between two extremes.

dance” they inaugurated gradually became something fundamentally different from the original impetus of the “new dance.”

For his part, Laban retreated from performance, and became more and more exclusively a movement *theorist* who sought to discover an almost Pythagorean conception of the dance as pure mathematical harmony. Schlemmer at the Bauhaus also gravitated towards the purely Apollonian pole. Inexorably, the center lost its hold: “On the one hand, in Oskar Schlemmer’s work at the Bauhaus, precedence was given to the exploration of space, the geometry of the body and clarity of movement, while rapturous Dionysian performances were evident in the self-expressive work of the vast number of amateur dancers and some of the *Einzeltänzer*. These were solo dancers who, especially in the pre- and immediate post-war period, toured Germany with work in their own style, some with little or no training.”⁸⁰ Later in his career, Laban’s principal interest became utterly Socratic: to *rationalize* movement—even in the industrial sense of that term.⁸¹ Laban’s other star student, Kurt Jooss, eventually retreated back towards the preponderantly Apollonian precincts of traditional ballet.

Loie Fuller created no school, Duncan died young and also had no immediate successor, and Ruth St. Denis’ best students moved in a fundamentally different direction, towards their own kind of subjective *Ausdruckstanz*. It would seem that the original impetus had no continuation. But my contention has been that it did—in eurythmy. *Eurythmy represents an important episode in the history of dance because eurythmy is the genuine heir to the “new dance” inaugurated by Fuller, Duncan, and St. Denis.*

Eurythmy represents an important episode in the history of dance because eurythmy is the genuine heir to the “new dance” inaugurated by Fuller, Duncan, and St. Denis.

Endnotes

- 1 Forthcoming as the Introduction to vol. 277c of *Rudolf Steiner’s Collected Works* published by SteinerBooks, *The Early History of Eurythmy: Notebook Entries, Addresses, Rehearsals, Programs, Introductions to Performances, and a Chronology: 1913–1924*.
- 2 Perhaps a reason for the neglect of Steiner is the one way in which he actually is unique within the history of dance: Steiner was a major choreographer and aesthetic theorist, and a great artist in multiple media, but unlike every other figure we shall discuss, he never was himself a dancer. Fortunately the situation is very different with regard to the reception of Steiner’s architecture. See the three-part bibliographic essay that is appended to forthcoming translations of CW 287, CW 288 and CW 289/290, which document the slow but inexorable process whereby Steiner has come to be regarded as a major architect. Indeed, Hans Scharoun has asserted that Steiner’s second Goetheanum is the most important building of the first half of the twentieth century.
- 3 Two prominent examples from otherwise unimpeachable studies: Annie Suquet calls eurythmy (translating from the French) “a mixture of dance, gymnastics and yoga” that is “practiced in a white tunic” [174] and involves “breathing exercises” [391], while Preston-Dunlop and Lahusen attribute “eurythmy [sic], a system of movement based on the rhythm and physicality of breath and words,” to “Steiner’s wife Marie” [47]—when it was clearly Steiner who inaugurated the new art of movement, and Marie von Sivers had not married Steiner yet when eurythmy was first introduced.
- 4 Cf. Raffe et al. generally, and Beth Usher’s claims not only that eurythmy arose exclusively out of “the artistic impulse which Rudolf Steiner gave at the Theosophical Congress in Munich in 1907,” but that “never before had an esoteric school given artistic expression to the content of spiritual teaching” [*Eurythmy: An Introduction*, 2]. Steiner himself argued exactly the opposite, that all the arts arose out of the teachings of the ancient Mysteries, and regarding dance specifically, Lucian was probably closer to the truth when he asserted in the 2nd century CE that there was not and never had been a spiritual teaching that did not involve some form of dance [Roseman 2]. Wolfgang Veit describes important parallels between

eurythmy and modern abstract painting [10], but his article also contains effectively no references to modern dance.

- 5 Raffe, 3.
- 6 Another important chapter in the early history of eurythmy involves the contributions of two Russian women, Margarita Woloschin and Steiner's future wife, Maria von Sivers. Eurythmy could have been born four years earlier, in 1908, when Steiner hinted that it might be possible to "dance" the opening lines of the Gospel of St. John, but, like Parsifal, Woloschin failed to ask the question, which left Steiner unable to act. Woloschin tells this story herself in her autobiography, *The Green Snake*. And it was Marie Steiner who first proposed to call the new art of movement "eurythmy," and contributed crucial guidance during its infancy. Steiner's "Russian connection" (which includes deep relationships with the expressionist painter Kandinsky and the Symbolist writer Bely) is a key to understanding the place of eurythmy within Steiner's aesthetics generally.
- 7 Cf. Cohen, *The Modern Dance*, 5ff.
- 8 Fuller even created a "Radium Dance" that simulated the phosphorescence of the element [Kendall, 88].
- 9 Cf. the warm reminiscence by the "Isadorable" Maria-Theresa, one of Duncan's many adopted daughters who was taught by her: "It would be impossible to do justice to her art in a brief discussion, but one may say that, although inspired by Greece in its obvious as well as in its deeper aspects, it had its roots in life itself. One may therefore call her art a form of 'natural dancing' which, essentially, is also Greek, expressed in the simplest of terms and depending on the artist's deep feeling for the intangibles of truth and the mysterious essence of nature" [Maria-Theresa, 235].
- 10 See, e.g., the account in Partsch-Bergsohn and Bergsohn.
- 11 Émile Jacques-Dalcroze (1865–1950).
- 12 Rudolf von Laban, later Rudolf Laban (1879–1958) was, like Rudolf Steiner, a German-speaker born in an outlying province of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and a neglected genius who is only beginning to receive the attention he deserves. With the possible exception of Steiner, Laban is the greatest theorist of human movement who ever lived.
- 13 See especially the studies by Sixten Ringbom in the appended bibliography.
- 14 Kendall, 56.
- 15 Loie Fuller (1862–1928) was an exact contemporary of Rudolf Steiner.
- 16 Lawler, 32.
- 17 Ibid., 38.
- 18 See especially Steiner's seminal lecture of June 24, 1924, in GA 279, *Eurythmy as Visible Speech*.
- 19 Suquet, 79.
- 20 See Garelick passim.
- 21 Veit, pp. 5 and 20. See also the discussion of Ruth St. Denis' essay "The Color Dancer" in Roseman, p. 107.
- 22 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O8soP3ry9y0>.
- 23 *Musique de vision ou musique pour l'œil* [Suquet, 86]. See Steiner's extraordinary cycle of lectures, GA 283, *The Inner Nature of Music and the Experience of Tone*.
- 24 Because Duncan rightly felt that neither still photos nor silent film in its still-primitive state could capture the nuances of her dancing, she did not allow any of her dances to be photographed or filmed. This means all we can do is try to reconstruct imaginatively from contemporaries' accounts. But there is also footage available of third-generation students who studied with Duncan's adoptive children. Anyone who wants to object immediately that such a style bears no relationship to eurythmy is invited to watch with an open mind the mesmerizing performance of Schubert by the American "Duncan dancer" Sylvia Gold (1923–2013), who taught in Concord, MA, available on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kq2GglMM060>, or the performance of the Adagio from Schubert's *Ninth Symphony* entitled "Homage to Apollo" by Lori Belilove & The Isadora Dance Company, also on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E_Ddz9eHkDk.
- 25 The older book on the history of dance by Czerwinski that Steiner gave to Lory Maier-Smits was a pioneering study, one of very few scholarly studies available before the turn of the century.
- 26 *Isadora Speaks*, ix.
- 27 François Delsarte (1811–1871) was a French singer who lost his singing voice, turned to acting, but was disappointed by the state of that art. He began his own rigorously scientific studies of human gesture and built them into a systematic teaching that was profoundly influential in the history of dance, even though Delsarte himself never published a full account of the method. Jowitt describes him succinctly as having "developed an intelligent and systematic way of analyzing posture, gesture, and vocal expression by linking these with corresponding mental and spiritual states, intending his system to serve professional orators, actors and singers" [78]. An excellent resource on Delsarte is the website of The Delsarte Project.
- 28 Quoted by Kirstein on p. 266.
- 29 Cohen, *Theatre Art*, 119.

- 30 Daly, 138.
- 31 Ibid., 142. Such accounts recall the descriptions that have come down to us of Steiner sitting like a modern sibyl, tracing the “eurythmy forms” in the folio balanced on his lap.
- 32 *Isadora Speaks*, 51.
- 33 Ibid., x.
- 34 Jowitt, 71.
- 35 “When I explained that I was a dancing girl on the Nile 10,000 years ago, and that my husband was then a soldier, and that we too were lovers and nearly renewing the ancient associations now again centuries later in the year 1921, then they think I’m crazy” [*Isadora Speaks*, 132].
- 36 <http://www.pitt.edu/~gillis/dance/isadora.html>.
- 37 Daly, 180.
- 38 A long excerpt is available in Cohen’s *Dance as a Theatre Art*, however.
- 39 Cf. Steiner’s basic exercises involving Ballen und Spreizen.
- 40 Daly, 78.
- 41 Ibid., 27.
- 42 *Isadora Speaks*, 15.
- 43 Ibid, 31.
- 44 “When a child of eleven, I was taken to see Mrs. [Genevieve] Stebbins in an unforgettable performance of Greek dancing. My whole artistic life was born at that hour. Therefore, I have always felt a deep debt of gratitude for the influence of Delsarte” [*Wisdom Comes Dancing*, 31]. She admired particularly Stebbins’ *Dance of the Day*, which was “based on ritual motions of Eastern religions which she had studied and come to admire” [Kendall 29].
- 45 Jonas, pp. 199-200. Roseman’s study includes a description of St. Denis’s later dance “The Mystery of Isis,” which was also called “The Veil of Isis” [94-95].
- 46 *Wisdom Comes Dancing*, 21.
- 47 Ibid., 23.
- 48 Ibid., 127–128.
- 49 Ibid., 190–191.
- 50 Shawn, 8.
- 51 *Wisdom Comes Dancing*, 21.
- 52 Isadora Duncan’s notes for her manifesto *The Dance of the Future* fall in her notebook immediately after many pages devoted to a thorough study of Descartes.
- 53 *Wisdom Comes Dancing*, 25.
- 54 Ibid., 18.
- 55 “The successes in New York, London, and Paris had all been but leading up to the great sensation she made in Berlin, and subsequently all over Germany. Perhaps no singer, artist, actor, or dancer has so completely captured the German people as did Ruth St. Denis. For two years without a week’s rest she dances, while success, honors, and fame were heaped upon her, and she would have remained indefinitely had she not hungered for her own country. A theatre bearing her name would have been built for her, if she would have agreed to remain five years more.” [Shawn, 14]
- 56 *Wisdom Comes Dancing*, 9–10. Hugo von Hofmannsthal (1874–1929) was a major Austrian poet, dramatist and essayist of the turn of the century. He was a culturally conservative neo-Romantic.
- 57 See St. Denis’s article on this topic in Cohen, *Dance as a Theatre Art*, esp. p. 130: “Music Visualization in its purest form is the scientific translation into bodily action of the rhythmic, melodic and harmonic structure of a musical composition, without intention to in any way ‘interpret’ or reveal any hidden meaning apprehended by the dancer.” Note that Cohen describes Laban also as (like Steiner) “a scientist by nature” who “began with motion rather than emotion” [122].
- 58 From St. Denis’s autobiography *An Unfinished Life*, quoted at Roseman, 99.
- 59 *Wisdom Comes Dancing*, 56.
- 60 St. Denis seems to have shared with Steiner an esoteric view of Christianity that transcends all traditional institutional contexts: “I passionately want religion to have all the principalities and powers, not only the science of the intellect and the sacrifice of the heart. I also want the church in its highest non-sectarian sense – Christ’s gospel of Life – to have the irresistible lure of beauty with which to heal and inspire the world” [*Wisdom Comes Dancing*, 51].
- 61 Lawler, 78. Cf. also Cohen, *Theatre Art*, p. 1: “The most widely accepted view of the origin of the Greek theatre traces it to the Dithyramb, a song and dance performance that was part of the spring festival of Dionysus... In 508 BC a contest in Dithyramb was inaugurated. ...Meanwhile, a form of spoken drama was developing at the Dionysian festival; and it too had its singer-dancers, in this case forming a chorus who reacted to and commented on the action with symbolic, stylized gestures known as *cheironomia*.”
- 62 Eventually this noun became a verb in Ancient Greek, *orchesthai*, meaning not just narrowly “to dance,” but rather to move rhythmically in a broad sense [Cohen, *Theatre Art*, 1].
- 63 “Duncan had spent years developing three full- or nearly full-length Greek tragedies: *Iphigenia in Tauris* (1914–1915), *Iphigenia in Aulis* (1905–1915), and *Orpheus* (1900–1915). For all three, she chose Gluck’s

eighteenth-century opera scores, liberally excerpting and editing them...In Gluck she felt she had found the spirit of the Greek chorus, 'its rhythm, the grave beauty of its movements, the great impersonality of its soul, stirred but never despairing.' In none of them did she ever portray any of the main characters per se" [Daly, 146].

64 Jowett, 89–90.

65 Daly, 148.

66 Robert Bly's study of the Grimm Brothers' tale "Iron John" is among many other things a penetrating exploration of the Dionysian archetype from the perspectives of Jungian psychology and cultural anthropology.

67 *Mastery of Movement*, 94. The chapter from which this quote is taken, Ch. 4: "The Significance of Movement" [90–105], offers many profound reflections that strike me as uncannily similar to Steiner's theoretical deliberations on eurythmy.

68 Ibid., 99.

69 Ibid., 146.

70 Quoted at the end of *Isadora Speaks*.

71 Daly, 136.

72 Ibid., 175.

73 *The Portable Nietzsche*, 153.

74 CW 5. Andrew Welburn's study offers many good insights on Nietzsche and Steiner. Another sign of Steiner's appreciation of Nietzsche – especially Nietzsche's "dithyrambic" side – is the number of poems by Nietzsche Steiner set to eurythmy, as evidenced by the programs below.

75 CW 277a, *Eurythmy: Its Birth and Development*.

76 Excerpts have been included in CW 277a.

77 It also helped that Czerwinski's study is surprisingly good: Although brief, his account compares well with much later scholarly accounts such as the classic study by Lawler.

78 On Steiner's uses and interpretations of Goethe's *Faust*, see CW 272 and CW 273. Steiner's interpretations of *Faust* in this volume, including the "rehearsed readings," will be discussed more fully in the Introduction to CW 273, which will attempt to situate Steiner within the history of scholarship on Goethe's *Faust*.

79 Sorell, 39.

80 Preston-Dunlop and Lahusen, 3.

81 See Laban and Lawrence, *Effort*.

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Human Conception: How to Overcome Reproduction?

A phenomenological approach to human fertilization

Jaap van der Wal

*In the very moment
that we became the Other
— JvdW*

Abstract

The phenomena of human conception as revealed during the last decades of research are reframed by a phenomenological approach (so-called dynamic morphology). Viewed and considered in this way, human conception appears not to be an act of reproduction. In the human process of fertilization a process of “de-biologicalization” occurs which leaves room for an act of incarnation in which spiritual energy may be able to bind to or manifest itself by means of physical (biological) substance. The consequences of this view with respect to the definition and quality of artificial conception are briefly discussed.

Introduction: The approach of dynamic morphology

The approach of *dynamic morphology* is rooted in the scientific tradition of phenomenology, in particular the Goethean phenomenological approach to living nature. Like the phenomenologist, the dynamic morphologist is interested in the perception of the language of shapes and forms of living organisms rather than in explaining those forms in terms of causes. He describes the form of an organism in its appearance in order to perceive the dynamics of the underlying formative gesture. Dynamic morphology may be applied not only to the appearance of living organisms as a whole, but also to the dynamics and gestures of the shape of organs and parts of the body within the framework of an organism. Often the morpho-dynamic gesture of a biological shape can be

recognized by the formative shaping gesture of the embryonic development and/or by the way the definitive form of an organ or part of a body is achieved in the adult organism. But such knowledge is not absolutely prerequisite for understanding the gesture that speaks through or is expressed by a form or shape.

The gesture that speaks through a form may be recognized by restating the underlying motion that is being expressed in the form by getting a sense of the movement instinctually, so to speak. In this way the gesture of form can be recognized as an internal motion or gesture, which means it is psychologically perceptible and imitable (capable of being imitated). This does not mean that the recognition of the morpho-dynamics of a given form has to be considered as a subjective action in the sense of being related to a personal and individual imagination that cannot be transmitted in an objective way. An example might help elucidate this. The containing character of the skull—by which it protects and shields a given content from the outer environment—can be recognized and accepted by everybody. The gesture of the form is evident in this case. The related mental act of recognizing this gesture may have aspects of an emotion rather than of a rational, objective fact, but this does not mean it is only subjective and therefore nonscientific.

Taken together it might be stated that dynamic morphology does not apply an analytic and anatomical process to describe shapes and forms. Instead, it tries to understand the gesture (*Gestalt*) that is being expressed by and through the form or shape in a more integrated and holistic way. Goethe himself referred to the perception and awareness of a so-called transcendental or supersensible (*sinnlich-*

übersinnliche) quality of the form. By this expression he meant that the gesture or forming language of a shape or form couldn't be placed in the Cartesian category of a sensorial perceptible entity (*res extensa*).

Since shape and form (i.e., gesture and dynamics) are recognizable at every level of nature and living organisms, the dynamic morphologist may perceive a similar or homologous gesture of form at the level of an organism as well as at the level of an organ, a tissue, or a cell. He may also recognize the gesture of a certain plant process in the way a given animal organ is *gesturing*. Goethe, for example, studied the basic morphic principle of *ballen und spreizen* (concentrating and diverging) in plants, but this gesture is also recognizable in mammalian embryonic processes. Considered as such, dynamic morphology constitutes a trans-disciplinary approach.

In this essay human conception will be described by means of a dynamic morphological approach. The aim here is to understand the essence of human conception in terms of motion and gesture. It will be shown that such an approach generates completely different ideas of what essentially is taking place during human conception, compared to the view resulting from a mechanically-oriented description of morphological and biological events.

To start with:

The dynamics of the human egg cell

The human egg cell (see figure 1) exhibits a number of features and properties that are basic to nearly every cell in the human body. The egg cell, however, is unique in the fact that it exhibits those basic and common properties in such a pure and fundamental way, nearly as an *archetype*.¹ The almost perfectly spherical shape of the egg cell is an example of this unique and basic property. No other cell in the human body exhibits the (mathematically absolute) spherical shape as perfectly as the egg cell. Normally body cells exhibit all kinds of shapes. This

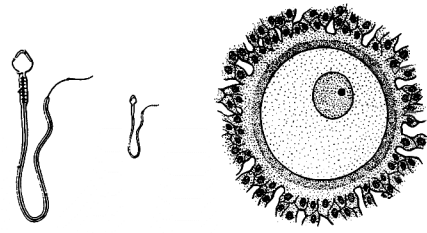


Figure 1. A sperm cell and an unfertilized egg cell (right). In the center a sperm cell on the same scale as the depicted egg cell.

phenomenon might be understood or explained by the fact that cells have certain functions that require certain shapes, but mostly it is due to their relations with other (neighboring) cells. In this respect, there exist cubic and cylindrical cells that form a limiting layer (epithelium), like cobblestones paving a road surface. Notice how neurons (nerve cells) have an enormous number of long extensions (axons and dendrites) to make functional networks via synapses with other neurons. Therefore it might be stated that the spherical shape of the egg cell is related to its **solitary** existence. The egg cell exists, so to speak, on its own; it is alone (all-one). The ovary is not made up of egg cell tissue or built up by egg cells. The tissue of the ovary has special cavities (follicles) in which the egg cells are stored separately and in solitude.

A spherical shape combines minimum of contact with the outside environment with maximum of volume and content. That is why a ball can be so easily rolled or moved. The spherical shape of the egg cell represents the quality of a world on its own. The egg cell has relatively a lot of inner space (content): Of all the cells in the human body, it has the largest volume. With a diameter of about 150 to 200 micrometers, it is very large compared to the average cell diameter of about 10 micrometers.² The ripened egg cell—as big as a grain of sand—is visible to the naked eye, an extraordinary feature for a cell. For the dynamic morphologist it is important to realize that the egg cell is not only large in the sense of quantity and measurement

but that it also exhibits the gesture of **being-large**. A characteristic of an egg cell is its potential to swell and enlarge its volume immensely during the ripening process: from 10 micrometers as a beginning (primordial) gamete to 45 micrometers at the end of the first phase of ripening and development until it reaches a diameter of more than 150 micrometers by the end of this ripening process. In other words, as it ripens the egg cell gathers a relatively large amount of cytoplasm, resulting in a relatively high ratio of nucleus to cytoplasm. This fact represents the gesture of being-large.

The next distinguishing characteristic of an egg cell is its **openness**, i.e., the egg cell intensively interacts and communicates with its environment. Right after fertilization the egg cell produces substances that affect its immediate environment (i.e., the mucous lining of the ovarian tube). This openness is demonstrated by the fact that the cell is very sensitive to noxious influences arising from its environment. It is a vulnerable cell, so to speak. Being open, being vulnerable may be recognized easily as an internal gesture and motion. One may feel and resonate with the gesture of an organism, which, on the one hand, is open in its interactive relationship with the environment while, on the other, remaining relatively vulnerable to influences and signals from that environment.

The other way round: Comparing and contrasting as a method

A traditional analytical and anatomical approach to a biological organism is to divide it into organs and body parts in order to describe them in more detail at the level of tissues and cells. By contrast, the approach of dynamic morphology always considers the shape or form of the organism in relationship to its environment (context), just as it studies the shape or form of an organ in the context of the whole organism,

and so forth. In this respect, approaching an organism through a process of *contrasting* is important. Within the whole of the organism we look for polar tendencies regarding form, for example the skull in contrast to the limbs or extremities. Contrasting is a kind of intensified *comparison*. As noted above, comparison reveals features that escape the observer who applies only the anatomical and analytical approach,

which by nature is reductionist and isolating. Taken out of context, certain features of an organism that may escape the observer's eye can more easily be discerned by a morpho-dynamic approach.

In any description of the egg cell involving contrasts, it is helpful to take its context into

account in order to become more deeply and essentially acquainted with the gesture of this cell. In the process and dynamics of conception, of course, the sperm cell is the right candidate for that! One can understand the morpho-dynamic characteristics of the egg cell by comparing it and contrasting it with the sperm cells, and vice versa.

The one to be met: Morpho-dynamics of human sperm cells

In the case of sperm cells, there is a tendency to use the plural when referring to them. This is based upon a particular feature of the human sperm cell: Unlike the solitary egg cell, a sperm is never on its own. The production of sperm cells in the human testis is characterized by the production of enormous numbers of cells. By contrast, the process of oogenesis (i.e., the process of ripening and production of egg cells) is characterized by a tendency of diminishing and reduction in number. During the fetal phase of a female, millions of egg cells are produced by means of cell division. But by the time of the female baby's birth, this number is reduced to about two million cells, and to only some several hundred thousand by the time the menstrual

cycle (menarche) begins. In a typical cycle, some ten to twenty egg cells may reach the final stage of ripening, but only one of them (very seldom two or three) is released (ovulation). The rest of the ripened cells disintegrate. In other words, the whole process of egg cell production and ripening may be described as a *converging* tendency (gesture). By contrast, the male process (spermatogenesis) exhibits a *diverging* tendency: Continuously enormous numbers of sperm cells are produced within the testis—millions per day, thousands per second! These huge numbers are also functional. Very many sperm cells will be sacrificed in the process of overcoming the anatomical, physiological, and biochemical barriers that a sperm has to face in order to finally make contact with an egg cell. The production of egg cells from the ovary is a process of titration (one by one), whereas the production of sperm cells in a testis is massive and explosive. These differences illustrate the polar opposite gestures of *one* and *solitude* in the egg cell versus *many* and *community* among the sperm cells.

As to their shape, the contrast between the two gametes is very striking (see figure 1). The egg cell has already been described as being purely spherical. On the contrary the sperm cell—with its total length of about 60 micrometers including the diameter of the head (about 3 to 4 micrometers at the most) and diameter of the so-called tail of no more than 1 micrometer—can be characterized as being a radial-shaped cell. In the sense of morpho-dynamics, the polarity here is clearly evident. The egg cell is a ball. Isn't the ball a form with (endlessly) many **non-visible** radii? The sperm cell, by contrast, brings the principle of radius **to appearance**. Later on, prior to and during conception, many sperm cells will converge and focus on just one egg cell. Don't they bring in this way transcendently (*sinnlich-übersinnlich*) a ball shape to appearance, with the sperm cells as visible rays of the sensorially perceivable manifestation of that ball? The sperm cells are making visible what is present in a non-

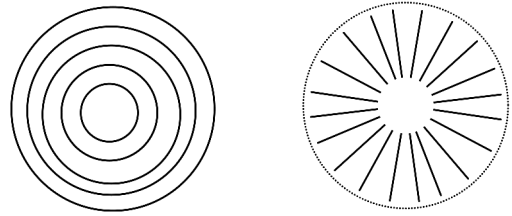


Figure 2. *Circumferences and rays: the two polar principles of the circle. On the left the morphological “egg cell principle,” on the right the morphological “sperm cell principle”*

visible way within the egg cell (see figure 2)!

Describing the egg cell, it has already been stated that the spherical shape represents the spatial form with the least possible environmental contact. It therefore represents par excellence the shape that lends itself to being brought into motion (being moved). On the other hand, the radius-like shape represents the principle of motion and (self) mobility. The fact that the sperm cell is an **actively** moving organism (in opposition to an egg cell) is not actually surprising or unexpected for the dynamic morphological observer. It is precisely the flow of fluid within the ovarian tube—by which the egg cell is transported passively in the direction of the uterus—that provides the sperm cell the resisting stream it needs to exercise its potency to move. At the same time the flow of fluid directs and guides its movement.

The sperm cell is a very small cell (as shown in figure 1). As in the case of the egg cell, it is not the quantitative features that constitute the actual convincing argument for the dynamic morphologist to describe the sperm cell as small. The volume of a sperm cell indeed is very small: some 60,000 of them fit into a mature egg cell! By the end of spermatogenesis nearly all of its cytoplasmic content has been eliminated. This process therefore results in a cell with a cell membrane, a very small amount of cytoplasm, and mostly a nucleus as its cellular content. In other words, the dynamics of a ripening egg cell may be characterized as enlargement, swelling,

and diverging, whereas the formation of a sperm cell embodies the gesture of concentration and diminishing (losing volume). As in the case of the egg cell and its *being-large*, the signature of the sperm cell's *being-small* represents not merely a quantitative but also a qualitative characteristic, and therefore constitutes a morpho-dynamic gesture.

In this respect, what can be said about the relationship and interaction of the sperm cell and its environment? As one might expect, a remarkable polarity may once again be discerned. The egg cell actively and metabolically relates to its physiological context; the sperm cell on the contrary does not exhibit any metabolic exchanges or interaction with its environment. If the egg cell is described as *open* and *vulnerable*, the complete opposite can be said of the sperm cell. Apparently without any difficulty the sperm cell can survive all manner of mechanical and physical manipulations—for example, being centrifuged or frozen to more than 60° Celsius below zero—without any evident or notable damage. In terms of a morpho-dynamic gesture, the sperm cell may be characterized as a *closed* or *non-open* cell.

What is visibility? The question of contrast and/or polarity

By this juncture it may have become evident that there exists a contrast between the two gametes. But what actually is the nature of this contrast in terms of dynamic morphology? Are we dealing with a contrast or opposition or with a polarity? This will be made clear by means of the feature (gesture) of mobility that opens the perspective for a very special relationship between the two cells. Looking at it from the outside, at the level of extra-cellular mobility, the sperm cell may be described as *active* and *mobile*. The egg cell, by contrast, can be characterized as *passive*. When, however, the level of comparison is directed to the *intra-cellular* level—looking at it from the inside, so to speak—then the egg cell represents the *active* cell. This is in line with

its characteristic as a metabolically active cell interacting with its extra-cellular environment. The cytoplasm of the egg cell can be described as relatively mobile, in stark contrast to the intra-cellular inactivity of a sperm cell!

More than 90% of the content of a sperm cell is nucleus or DNA-substance. Moreover, the DNA in the sperm cell is structured—almost crystallized, one might say—by a process of strong dehydration. Within the sperm cell, pure form and structure dominate, whereas within the egg cell the activity of the cytoplasm is present. From the dynamic morphological view, something different is arising than simply an opposition: In gesture and behavior the cells are a polarity to each other. Essential features of a polarity are reversibility and inversion: in this case, external mobility with internal structure (of the sperm cell) versus external rest with internal activity (of the egg cell).

The polar character of the two human gametes can also be discerned by studying their behavior during cell division and ripening. In bisexual reproduction the egg cell undergoes two reduction divisions (*meioses*) in order to reduce the number of chromosomes to half the normal (i.e., diploid) number.¹ Generally as a result of cell division, two so-called sister cells are formed, both about as large as the so-called

mother cell from which they were derived. This is not at all the case resulting in the meiosis of the egg cell. In meiosis, the egg cell divides into one big voluminous “sister cell” (the actual *oocyte*) and an unusually small cell (the so-called *polar body*). The latter contains only the necessary half of the chromosomal substance and plays no significant role in the process of conception

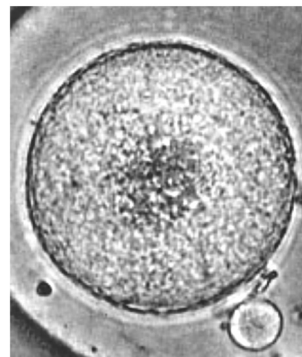


Figure 3. Egg cell (oocyte I) with a polar body just before conception

in humans as far as is known (see figure 3). From a dynamic morphological viewpoint this *behavior* perfectly suits the dynamics of *conservation of volume and content* (being-large), which has been described as one of the most significant characteristics of the egg cell. By contrast, the morpho-dynamic characteristics for spermatogenesis are *fragmentation* (being-many), division and reduction of volume (being-small). In such a context cell division seems a suitable gesture. Indeed, sperm cells do not resist the reduction divisions occurring during the production process. The two spermatocytes resulting from their meiosis are both equal in size. As noted earlier, the sperm cell strives for reduction in volume and for concentration. In the final stage of ripening from spermatocyte to the actual sperm cell (*spermatozoon*), it is biologically necessary that the sperm cell rid itself of superfluous cytoplasm. This process is completely in line with the signature and gesture of being-small.

As a rule, pathological phenomena confirm the essential characteristics of a normal, non-pathological process.³ In the ejaculated sperm of a healthy man, a large percentage of the sperm cells are malformed because attached to their necks is a relatively large sack of cytoplasm that greatly reduces the mobility of the cell. A sperm cell obviously will be handicapped if it preserves its cytoplasm, whereas for the egg cell this preservation of cytoplasm is a must, since it is a necessary condition for the proper functioning of the egg cell.

In this respect, the polar body of the egg cell (after the first meiosis) may be considered as a kind of strangulated sperm cell and the sack of cytoplasm of a malformed sperm cell as a kind of egg cell that should have been sequestered in the normal ripening process. The egg cell seems to preserve its signature by expelling or banishing the sperm cell principle. By the same token, the sperm cell reaches its proper being, functioning,

and character by a completely opposite morpho-dynamic process.

The dynamic morphological description of both gametes is not exhausted by the phenomena described thus far; many more characteristics of these two cells could be described. In each case the sperm cell and egg cell express the principle of polarity: In a given complex of features or gestures, the one cell is the complete *reverse and inversion* of the other one.

Periphery and center: Cytoplasm versus nucleus

Dynamic morphology searches for gestures of form, or gestural behavior. It may be obvious that the description provided here leads from the level of sensorial and observable, opposite and polar phenomena to the level of supersensory (*sinnlich-übersinnliche*) morpho-dynamics. Figure 1 can be characterized as being still an anatomical figure of the two gametes, while Figure 2 is an attempt to visualize the morpho-dynamics of sperm cell versus egg cell. However, it is only by means of dynamic morphology that one can see the oocyte in Figure 3 as *egg cellular* and the related polar body as *sperm cellular*. What could be the comprehensive characterization of both form gestures? One could make a long list of pairs of polar notions that characterize an egg cell respective to a sperm cell. For example: big/small, open/closed, active/passive, process/form, diverging/concentrating. One has to take into account that in these pairs of characteristics, each may be turned around and reversed, depending on the level at which the observation is directed.

Consider what has been said about external mobility versus internal mobility. All of these polar and opposite aspects are also aspects of so-called egg cellularity and sperm cellularity. The essential egg cell gesture and sperm cell gesture may be considered as being *the sum of*

In each case the sperm cell and egg cell express the principle of polarity.

all those aspects and gestures. But it also extends beyond them. For the next part of this essay, which will draw attention to the actual process of fertilization and conception, it is important to recognize the following comprehensive gestures as bio-dynamic. The egg cell and its gesture can be comprehensively characterized as *cytoplasm* and that of the sperm cell as *nucleus*. Features of the egg cell—such as openness, internal mobility, the pursuit of cell volume, and the interactivity with the environment—can all be comprehensively expressed and summarized as the *gesture of cytoplasm* or *cytoplasmicity*. As for the sperm cell, the gestures of concentration, the tendency to structuralize, to form closed spaces, and so on can be described or summarized as the *gesture of nucleus* or *nuclearity*.

Once both gametes were similar in gestures and morpho-dynamics. At the beginning of embryonic development, both cells were similar in shape and characteristics as so-called *primordial gametes*. Next, both cell types differentiated in opposite and polar directions and specialized (i.e., became one-sided), one as a cell with a cytoplasmic signature and one with a nuclear signature. It is obvious that these dynamic morphological descriptions are at odds with contemporary analytical and anatomical description. In the latter view both gametes are quite normal cells, each constituted of nucleus, cytoplasm, and cell membrane.

Maybe these elements of the cell are in different and various relationships, but each is unmistakably a variant of a normal cell. The polarity principle as described and suggested here can be seen and conceptualized only through a morpho-dynamic view. For the dynamic morphologist, therefore, the egg cell is to be characterized in its gestures and morpho-dynamics as a *sphere of cytoplasm* or *cytoplasmic body* and the sperm cell as a *nucleus* or *nuclear head*. The next section of this article deals with the phenomena of fertilization and conception as well as the gesture and morpho-dynamics of the

interaction between these cells at the moment of conception.

Mating dance: The pre-conception attraction complex

In humans, fertilization takes place in the ovarian (Fallopian) tube. Under normal conditions the egg cell arrives in the first (*proximal*) part of the tube directly from the ovary. In the meantime the sperm cells have completed a long journey via the opposite end of the tube, having been deposited in the female vagina and having swum all the way from the vagina via the uterus to the ovarian tube. Millions of them (more than 90% of the number present in the male ejaculate) have passed away or have lost their efficacy due to all manner of biological barriers encountered along the way (e.g., the sperm-hostile properties of the cervical mucus). Nevertheless, there exists a reasonable chance that both gametes will meet.

The same fluid stream (produced by the activity of hair cells in the tubal mucous membrane) by which the egg cell is transported in the direction of the uterus—slowly rolling along the numerous folds and niches of the tuba mucous membrane—provides for the sperm cells a kind of directive stream of resistance against which they exhibit their swimming behavior. Also the relatively large volume of the egg cell increases the opportunity for both cells to meet. Moreover, there exists a kind of chemo-taxis (i.e., a bio-chemically induced attraction) between both types of cells: The egg cell and the tubal mucous membrane excrete substances that attract and activate sperm cells. At the end, some tens or hundreds of sperm cells will actually reach the egg cell and organize themselves in a circular or radial orientation with their heads facing and concentrating on the egg cell.

At this moment so-called nutritive cells, the *corona radiata*, still surround the egg cell. From the evidence of *in vitro* fertilization procedures, it is known that in the next phase a so-called *pre-conception attraction complex* (PCAC) is generated for several hours (see figure 4). Under

the influence of the substances secreted by the egg cells and the nutritive cells, the sperm cells undergo important changes. For example, they lose their so-called

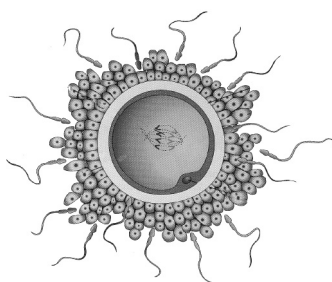


Figure 4. *Egg cell surrounded by sperm cells: pre-conception attraction complex*

acrosome (outside membrane). Without this happening, a sperm cell is incapable of fertilization. On the other hand the presence of sperm cells and related substances obviously evokes chemical reactions in the egg cell and its surrounding membrane (*zona pellucida*), making it more receptive to the eventual fusion of the two cells.

So it is obvious that this biological attraction complex is a necessary condition for the actual process of conception. Both egg and sperm cells seem to participate mutually in the chemical and biological conditions that lead to the decision whether or not a sperm cell will enter (fuse), and if so, where, which one, and when. In a very subtle, mutual process of encounter and exchange of signals and substances, both cells prepare for fertilization and conception.⁴

In the context of a dynamic morphological consideration, it is important to establish that now a biological entity is formed by an egg cell with some sperm cells (see figure 4). We are dealing with a *state of activity* that is more than merely a passive combination of two cell types. Specific interactions take place within this biological complex. It is a biologically active and interacting whole that is occurring here. Within the initial few hours of this complex, conception is possible, but whether this actually happens or not depends on a large number of subtle, reciprocal chemical interactions and exchanges.

It should be emphasized here that to describe this process as the penetration of a sperm cell

into the egg cell is clearly inaccurate. Only if the circumstances and conditions at a given moment and at a given place are appropriate can the fusion of egg cell membrane and the content of the sperm cell (nucleus and a small amount of cytoplasm with some important cell parts) take place. The continuity of the egg cell membrane is *never* interrupted or broken! The very common and somewhat aggressive image of a sperm cell penetrating the egg cell is not correct. In the pre-conception attraction complex there is no question of an active partner versus a passive partner, or of a penetrating versus penetrated partner, nor fertilizing cell versus fertilized cell. Rather both cells with their respective cell qualities play equal roles so that a subtle equilibrium of exchange and interaction is maintained. The morpho-dynamic process of fertilization is more akin to the gesture one may observe among animals in their mating behavior and rituals. In an extended process of exchanging signals of attraction and repulsion, a male and female animal circumambulate each other before copulation happens.

The very common and somewhat aggressive image of a sperm cell penetrating the egg cell is not correct.

This image, this gesture, of circumambulation becomes literally discernible in the movements (also observable during *in vitro* fertilizations) of the pre-conception attraction complex in that egg and sperm cells exhibit a tendency to rotate. The linear (radial) movement of the sperm cells turns into a spherical motion!

In order to understand what is being achieved during these first crucial hours, it is necessary to recall the strong polarity (inversion) of the sphere of cytoplasm (i.e., egg cell) versus the nuclear head (i.e., sperm cell). The power of attraction between these two types of cells is indicated on the physico-chemical level by their reciprocal biochemical interactions. From the point of view of the phenomenological observer, the attraction between these two cells should present no surprise.

To summarize: An egg cell is everything that a sperm cell is *not*. And vice versa. The anatomical, physiological, chemical, biological features of the egg cell may be characterized as the *absence* of the opposite of those features. In the egg cell sperm cellularity is most absent, at least at the sensorial level. One might state that a fulfillment or completion takes place when an egg cell encounters a sperm cell. What has been differentiated can now become reunified in that the sperm cell reflects to the egg cell what the egg cell is radiating transcendently and supersensorily (*sinnlich-übersinnliche*). The fact that both cells eventually meet each other is not serendipitous, but in fact reveals an intrinsic necessity or purpose. Both cells belong to each other; they *fulfill* each other. This is achieved quite literally in the pre-conception attraction complex in the way both cells and their respective qualities constitute a unified entity as a reciprocal polarity.

Exposition to a higher level:
Steigerung (intensifying)

Individually, both sperm cell and egg cell represent the polar one-sidedness of what is or once was the starting point for both cells, i.e., *a cell*. Both cells are differentiated from the same primordial gametes. In their characteristic one-sidedness, one of them is polarized into a nuclear head and one into a sphere of cytoplasm. In this respect both cells are at the end of development and therefore are dead. Both cells are specialized, each incapable by itself of providing the substrate for a new development. Only by their encounter, the meeting of both one-sided entities, can the substrate for a new development be provided.

This, however, should not lead to the false conclusion that at conception the beginning or start of life takes place. As to development, as to gesture, both gametes have come to an end, but biologically both are still *living cells*. The whole morpho-dynamics of conception, as described above, is to be understood within the domain of life, of living cells, of biology. A human conception

therefore does not mark the beginning of life; it marks the beginning, the *start of new development!*

What is the quality of both cells during those few hours, in a morpho-dynamic sense? To understand this thoroughly, the reader should consider the image of “the cell” as it is usually presented. Very often a model of “the cell” will appear on the first page of a standard biology textbook, since the cell is regarded as the foundation, the cornerstone, the basic entity of life on this planet. The cell is considered to be the archetypical entity of life. What becomes visible (or better: knowable) in a pre-conception attraction complex if one takes the egg cell as being a sphere of cytoplasm and the sperm cell as a nuclear head? When one turns the cell inside out, reverses or inverts it, so to speak, then the pre-conception attraction complex appears! In the current relations of living nature and biology (so of the cell), the nucleus should be in the center; now however, in the PCAC, the nucleus appears in the periphery. Normally *one* nucleus in the cell is present as the coordinating and

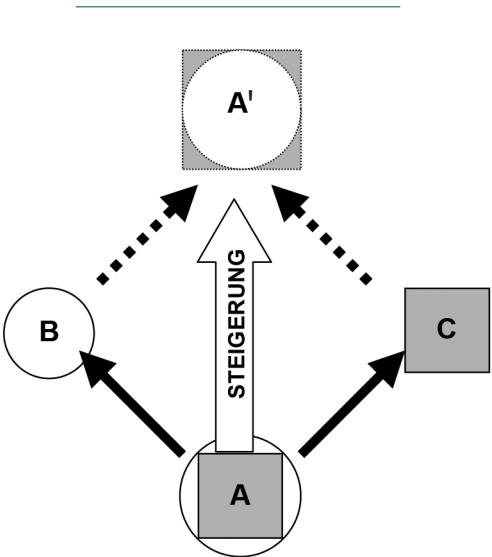


Figure 5. Schedule of a so-called “*Steigerung*” or functional elevation (synergy) in the pre-conception attraction complex. A: the level of the cell; B: egg cell as “cytoplasm”; C: sperm cell as “nucleus”; A’: the “turn inside out” of situation A on an energetically higher level; gray square: nucleus; white circle: cytoplasm

organizing center. Here in the PCAC however there are *many* nuclei present in the periphery, represented by the numerous sperm cells that group and gather themselves around a sphere of cytoplasm. Cytoplasm as a rule should be metabolically active around a nucleus. As a rule the nucleus should be the center of the cell structure. Now, however, nuclei (in the plural) are moving in the periphery, and it is a sphere of cytoplasm that represents a resting center around which things are turning and moving. As a rule the periphery of the cell should be an open boundary through which the cell is communicating and interacting with its milieu. In the pre-conception attraction complex, the situation is quite the reverse: The dynamic, active component formerly in the center, in the middle, is now in the periphery. The *closed* quality of the sperm cell (*cellularity*) is actively present. The complex as a whole seems to be a cell *involuted*: turned inside out and completely reversed.

Many more phenomena could be discussed at this point, but the aforementioned details will suffice since it should be clear by now that the pre-conception attraction complex is the complete involution—reversal and inversion—of *a cell*. In the hours before the actual conception, something is built, constructed, and achieved. This is not a matter of cell fusion in the sense of the mixture of two qualities on an energetically lower level. Something actively is achieved. During this achievement, the interactions between the normal and usual relationships of biology are transcended.

The whole process seems to be a kind of *de-biologization*: Normal relationships are reversed and turned inside out, usual biological relationships are lost or left behind. Goethe applied the term *Steigerung* (*intensifying* or *raising*) to situations like this. He meant that two polarities in their interactions bring to

light features that each term of the polarity on its own does not exhibit. Can we apply this phenomenological notion to the biological events taking place in the context of human conception? It may be stated that here *cytoplasm* and *nucleus* translate or raise (*steigern*) themselves to the level of *the cell* (which in fact also represents *a cell*).

But what a cell is being achieved here! A complete world upside down, inside out! The normal relationship of the sensible and perceivable order of things is turned upside down, turned inside out. That is why the neologism de-biologization

is applied here. The normal cellular biological relationship is reversed to its opposite. What should we imagine about this opposite? In the world of our senses and perceptions, the relationship of time and space is evident, it is *the way it is*. Everyone who takes the reality of an immaterial, spiritual dimension seriously can agree with the next logical consequence, which involves reversing the relationship between time and space itself. Considered in this way, the pre-conception attraction complex can be characterized as an opening of the usual and regular relationships of biology and life to their *opposite*, their *reverse*. It seems as if the *material* world and dimensions are being opened to their *spiritual* counterpart.

In this subtle equilibration of weighing pros and cons, of encountering, of meeting, the cellular biological dimensions may be opened up to the meeting, influence, and participation of a *third* dimension—third, in the sense that this could be the dimension of a new (yet to be born) human being, a spiritual being, a spiritual energy that may opt to make contact with this bio-substrate offered and opened up by two other humans.

This also means that this being is not forced: nothing *must* or *should*. Considered in this way, we are not dealing simply with a process of fusion

The fact that both cells eventually meet each other ... reveals an intrinsic necessity or purpose. Both cells belong to each other; they fulfill each other.

to a new dimension. Nor are we dealing merely with the fertilization of one (passive) element by another (active) element in the sense that sperm fertilizes egg or spirit fertilizes matter. Here conception takes place in the literal meaning of the word, not in the sense of *making* or *building* but in the sense of *receiving* and *accepting* (*con-cipare* = “to gather together, receive”). The essential morpho-dynamics of human conception is that during the so-called pre-conception attraction complex the necessary circumstances for potential fertilization are balanced and weighed so that the fusion of the two cell membranes can be undertaken. This takes place *before* the moment of fusion and represents a subtle interactive meeting in which all could happen but nothing has to happen. If the content of the sperm cell unites with the ovular cytoplasm, then within a few hours the fusion of the two (pro)nuclei follows, an event that usually is indicated as the moment of conception.

However, within the dynamics of the whole process as described here, the latter processes (fusion of the nuclei and so on) are to be interpreted rather as the result or *consequence* of conception, not as their cause! For at that very moment of fusion, the usual and regular biological relationships are restored and normalized. The fusion of the two gametes may be considered as the manifestation on a lower level (energetically) of a connection that evidently occurred between matter and mind, between spirit and matter just before that moment. The pre-conception attraction complex is a necessary but not sufficient condition for a kind of *vertical* conception, so to speak, an acceptance of spirit in and by matter.

In the conditions of a pre-conception attraction complex offered by a man and a woman, a third person, an other being may or can incarnate.

Human conception: Beyond the act of reproduction

In or during a pre-conception attraction complex, biological relationships are raised to a higher level of energy. These circumstances offer the right condition for a non-biological or immaterial principle to interact with the bio-matrix that is discussed here. We may be dealing with the dynamics of a vertical conception as

the link or interaction between mind and matter. It is an act of incarnation. This has the ethical consequence that we are not dealing with the dynamics of making a new human being, of making a child. In the conditions of a pre-conception attraction complex offered by a man and a woman, a third person, an other being may or can incarnate. A man

and a woman get a baby. They receive a child. This is not a matter of making or building. Rather, in the subtle equilibrium of interaction of this cell it is a meeting, an encounter, a reception that takes place.

There is good evidence that this way of conception is unique to the human being. In comparison to other primates and mammals, human reproduction is often considered as extremely crippled and inefficient in the sense of reproduction. The act of recreation of the individual, the recreation of a species—indeed, bisexual reproduction itself—is not at all an efficient method or way of reproduction. But this handicap is not specific to the human being as a species. The benefit of bisexual reproduction (in comparison to unisexual reproduction) makes possible genetic variation and exchange of genetic materials. The chance, however, that a human sperm cell will meet a human egg cell is relatively small, when compared to the situation among animals. Many so-called hazardous factors will determine whether or not fusion takes place. Moreover, in the human being many other thresholds need to be crossed

before a full-term newborn comes into being. For example only a relatively few embryos succeed during the process of nesting (*nidation*) actually to become implanted into the uterine mucous membrane. This and other barriers may be advanced as reasons for saying that the human being is a poor or inefficient reproducer. But in light of the way human conception has been described in this article, we may conclude that human conception in fact is not a matter of re-production. ***The human being does not reproduce itself.*** Two parents do not recreate themselves in their offspring and progeny. Every human conception is a matter of Three, of a third one. Every human being is a unique biography and individuality. Ultimately, we may say that in human conception, evolution culminates in a being that is able to escape reproduction or recreation of the species! The culmination of human evolution is conception of and into freedom.

Artificial reproduction technology (ART): What are we doing?

What about artificial human reproduction? What actually happens in an *in vitro* fertilization, in view of this essay? What happens during ICSI, a relatively new method of artificial fertilization in which a sperm cell is injected into the cytoplasm of an egg cell? The former method, the classical *in vitro* fertilization, can be interpreted as the forced manipulation of conditions **necessary but not sufficient** for a human conception. Obviously a pre-conception attraction complex can *function* under such artificial conditions.

The difference is time and place. One can compare the actual moment of *in-carnation* of a spiritual human germ by means of a pre-conception attraction complex to the process of someone awakening. In the latter case one speaks of a person returning into his or her body, at least from a phenomenological point of

view. Clearly we are able to rouse people at the moment we want by shaking them. We more or less force someone to return from sleep and absence. In this sense we are nowadays able to *shake up* the subtle biological conditions of conception in order to *wake up* a new human being. But also evidently there are less subtle ways to get people to wake up. Considered in this way, the ICSI procedure is a form of biological and

Two parents do not recreate themselves in their offspring or progeny. Every human conception is a matter of Three, of a third one.

conceptual violence. If one has the mind for it, one can observe how the egg cell initially resists the attack of the incoming needle. Suddenly the cell membrane (*zona pellucida*) collapses and the needle intrudes. Is this rape on a cellular level? Whatever the case, it is far removed from the subtle “are-we-going-to-or-are-we-not-going-to” dynamics of a pre-conception

attraction complex. Nothing of the subtle freedom and liberty so characteristic of a human conception is evident. In ICSI we are dealing with biological constraint and compulsion.

Of course, ICSI works. But, as the proverb says, “success does not prove correct understanding.” In about 10% of the ICSI trials, the procedure results in fertilization (conception). It is therefore beyond doubt that, in such circumstances and under such conditions, incarnation is possible. Considerations as to the quality of such an approach to the process of incarnation go beyond the scope of this article. Here the aim has been to explore the dynamics of the events involved in the process of incarnation during conception. The events cannot of themselves prove that conception involves also a vertical dimension of receiving and connection. Those open to seeing conception as a binding between matter and spirit, however, can find, if not proof, at least a scientific phenomenological foundation for this hypothesis.

Endnotes

- 1 Of course, genetically (i.e., at the level of chromosomes) the egg cell has to be distinguished from any regular body cell (somatic cell) by the fact that it (just like its male counterpart, the sperm cell) possesses only half of the regular number of chromosomes. But this fact is not of any importance for the dynamic morphologist who is concerned with describing the egg cell as a cell.
- 2 A micron is one thousandth of a millimeter.
- 3 In case of a polarity, the pathology of forms and processes often confirms the essential characteristics of the gesture in the normal process or in the normal shape. What seems to be sound and normal for the one pole is a handicap and pathological for the opposite pole.
- 4 It is for this reason that the biological complex at stake is indicated as pre-conception. Current biology usually indicates the moment of fusion of the two nuclei of the two gametes as the actual moment of conception.

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Heidi Drexel

The forest kindergarten movement has existed in Europe for decades but has only recently gained popularity in the U.S. It is spreading in the private sector of early education and influencing the educational methods of more traditional North American preschools. As a contrast to the push for early academics, these programs emphasize experiential and student-directed learning, play, and movement. In this sense, they fit into the traditional model of progressive education in the U.S.

Non-Waldorf forest kindergartens emphasize free play heavily, but are also likely to introduce topics related to science and nature study or ecology as part of their daily explorations.

When compared to state and other private schools, Waldorf schools in the U.S. have always devoted generous periods of time to outdoor play as part of their early childhood programs. In addition to the regularly scheduled time outdoors, many U.S. Waldorf preschool and kindergarten programs have additional days spent in the forest or on a farm. However, programs that take place entirely out of doors are new to the Waldorf school movement. This article will explore what this form of education has to offer our modern students and teachers, while also examining some of the challenges that these programs face.

In researching this topic, I interviewed several professionals who work in various outdoor Waldorf and LifeWays programs. Central to all of the conversations I have had about this topic is the effect of such a program on a child's process of incarnation. Teachers spoke specifically about the differences in the morning "breathing rhythm" of an outdoor program.

Outdoor programs have significantly more "out-breath" than traditional Waldorf early childhood programs.

The healthy alternation between in- and out-breath—between relative stillness and activity—is one of the essential elements of Waldorf early childhood classrooms. However, there are varying ideas about what makes for a healthy rhythm. There is no doubt that outdoor programs have significantly more "out breath" than traditional Waldorf early childhood programs. Some teachers I spoke with felt that this was

a necessary antidote to our modern culture or was simply the natural state of childhood. Others felt there was need for greater subtlety in assessing this question.

Another important theme that arose during my conversations was how an outdoor program changes the teacher's experience of her

work with parents and children. This is an issue of great import, considering the strong connection that exists between young children and their teachers. The mental and emotional state of teachers has a profound, albeit subtle, effect on the children in their care. Lastly, this article considers other topics central to Waldorf early childhood education, such as the festival life of the school, artistic work, and the nature of free play.

Variations in experiences of free play

The teachers I spoke with agreed that modern children, particularly urban children, do not receive sufficient time to explore freely in nature. Forest kindergartens offer this kind of experience in abundance. In an outdoor program, free playtime takes on a different tone. There are no toys or playthings; children must find these for themselves among the debris and plant life that nature makes available. In this way, the

forest experience offers excellent opportunities for children to develop individual initiative and strong imaginative capacities. Several of the teachers I spoke with observed that children's play changes when they are deep in nature. The relative openness of the outdoors affects the types of games that children play and how they play them. While children must make playthings out of the most basic resources, their play also tends to be more movement-based, or larger in gesture, than their indoor play. One teacher described this difference by saying that in the outdoors children's "out-breath" is bigger than is possible indoors.

During such outdoor play, teachers noticed fewer conflicts than they observed indoors and play took on more variety and creativity. They also noticed children breaking from play habits and friend circles that existed in the classroom. Teachers noted fewer disciplinary issues, too, particularly with the older six-year-olds.

It was noted that, with fewer transitions in the morning from one activity to the next, children's play was deeper, which I interpret to mean games lasted longer and took place with greater concentration. Some teachers also noted more rough-housing. With the additional space outside, teachers felt comfortable allowing such play, to varying degrees. While playing in the forest, children experience a higher degree of being trusted. They are not always as closely watched as they would be indoors. Children are allowed to play more wildly, but without disrupting others (for example, gun play). It was often mentioned that boys are able to engage in these types of activities, to which they are naturally drawn, but which have to be censored in other settings. Risk-taking is also a natural part of the outdoor play experience, and

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During such outdoor play, teachers noticed fewer conflicts than ... indoors, and play took on more variety and creativity.

children in such programs are encouraged to find their way into the play atmosphere, developing individual risk-management skills. There is plenty of climbing, running, balancing, building, and other large motor and strength-building activities. [See Joan Almon's article, "The Value

of Risk in Children's Play" in the Spring/Summer 2014 issue of the *Research Bulletin*, Vol. XIX Number 2 – ed.]

Controversy can arise surrounding rough-housing and its role in child development. This topic requires a great deal of attentive observation on the part of the teachers. The case is often made that boys, in particular,

require such play to properly release energy and find their way in the social world. However, children interpret this kind of play in a wide variety of ways, so it cannot be said that rough-housing is always healthy or always disruptive and unhealthy. Teachers must work to read the mood of the play to know when, whether, and how to intervene. They must know their students well enough to determine quite firmly where the boundaries are to be drawn. A particular question for teachers to ponder in relation to this issue is: *How do I support the moral development of*

the children and their developing sense of the other, and at the same time give them space to find their own way with their peer group? It is the teacher's job to create a safe, supportive classroom community. Since these types of situations can create conflicts among the parent

group, regular and clear communication with them about the school's values is also essential.

Expansion and contraction

As mentioned earlier, outdoor programs offer abundant expansive, or out-breathing, activities. However, in the programs I observed, times of

free play are interrupted by mealtimes and, in some cases at least, by circle time and movement rituals that lead the children from one play area to another. These transitions create opportunities for moments of in-breathing, albeit on a smaller scale than would be the case indoors. Such transitions are also moments that allow the teacher to connect individually with students during care activities. For example, hand-washing before snack can still be done with the kind of quiet, loving attention that is typically practiced indoors. Such a moment allows teacher and student to slow down and connect. Especially in winter, this moment of soul warmth, experienced together with warm water when possible, adds a balance to the ruggedness that comes with a morning spent outdoors.

Like indoor programs, forest kindergartens often include a work component. In the outdoors, work is physically more laborious—stacking wood, lifting, shoveling, and raking. Work of this nature requires the children's will forces to be more focused and concentrated. These activities require a great deal of strength, which helps to bring children more fully into their bodies. In this respect, real work and sustained walking can help to balance the exorcising effect of free play in the wilderness.

In outdoor programs, small motor activities are generally de-emphasized. Crafting, painting, sewing, and working with beeswax are rarely—if at all—part of the daily schedule. Programs that include circle time may offer some small motor activities, but this activity tends to be relatively brief and is mostly a group activity, which is a quite different experience from quietly painting or sewing. There are varying opinions on the necessity of such work in the kindergarten.

The question was raised by more than one teacher whether some indoor kindergarten classrooms offer too many small motor activities. Teachers ask themselves whether the Waldorf movement in general has become too focused

on creating objects that can be sent home as proof of a child's engagement in the classroom. Some teachers who work in more traditional Waldorf settings report feeling pressure to have their children create products for their parents. Many individual schools and teachers have been working to bring into focus what really serves the needs of young children.

As forest kindergarten students leave their programs and enter the elementary schools in growing numbers, it may become clearer whether something is missing as a result of the relative expansiveness of the forest curriculum. In my view it is unlikely to be a particular skill, since young children easily find their way into handwork, painting, and drawing in the

elementary school. It is rather a question of whether this kind of indoor activity develops something in the children that days spent in a forest setting does not. It is a question that each school has to answer individually.

It is very possible, of course, to find work for the children in the outdoors, as already mentioned, and artistic work certainly does not have to disappear when the program is held outside. If the school cultivates a strong relationship to the seasonal festivals, for instance, there will always be things to create and rituals to prepare in anticipation of these special moments. The integration of these seasonal crafts and arts into an outdoor curriculum seems to me an essential component, offering children the opportunity to process artistically their many experiences of nature's seasonal changes.

Practical considerations

Spending an entire day outside with children presents the teacher with many challenges. These range from carrying all supplies (including food, dishes, camp stove, a toddler potty, etc.) in backpacks to the play destination, to supervising up to 200 acres of farm and forest. In most cases this type of program requires a great deal

These activities require a great deal of strength, which helps to bring children more fully into their bodies.

of practical preparation and forethought, but ultimately the teachers I spoke with felt that it takes no more preparation time than is required of a teacher in a more traditional program.

Farms and gardens require year-round care, and wilderness spaces, to a lesser degree, also need to be maintained. For programs that own such a space, this year-round commitment needs to be considered.

One teacher cited the helpfulness of the point-periphery meditation¹ in developing a healthy relationship to the wide-open space she and her students occupy. In the forest, the teacher's presence must reach farther than the walls of a classroom. She needs to have her "I" reaching out to children who might be quite a distance from her. Children also need to develop a relationship to non-physical boundaries. Teachers and students create a kind of home within the woods, erecting invisible boundaries inside their permissible play area. One teacher felt that this particular meditation helped her to develop a relationship to the boundaries she created for the children out of doors, as well as to feel her awareness stretching far enough to encompass all of the children in her care wherever they were in the play space.

Another teacher shared that the experience of warmth has to come more from the teachers rather than from the space itself.

Of course, children have their warm clothing and sometimes hot water bottles, or even fire and warm food, but the sense of warmth goes well beyond its physical expression. In the outdoor classroom teachers have to work harder to create moments of soul warmth. One teacher noted that children who come to her program from an all-day outdoor program seem to have "thinner skin" and "need a sheath of warmth" wrapped around them. Teachers who work outdoors, then, must find replacements for the indoor experiences that foster this feeling more easily. One way to

accomplish this is to create moments of warm connection during care-giving activities. It would be easy in an outdoor program for some of these activities to fall by the wayside or be pushed more quickly into independence. But activities such as hand-washing, hair brushing, or dressing offer important opportunities for the teacher to envelop the children in her warmth and presence. Planning such moments in the daily rhythm also allows teachers a scheduled time to observe each student.

Imitation and the outdoors

Teachers I interviewed spoke positively about the experience of working outdoors, saying it improved their teaching and their strength for the work. They did not seem to mind the extra practical requirements of their programs, perhaps because they felt their work with the children flowed more easily. Several cited how being outdoors was nourishing for them, supporting the peaceful mood they wished to cultivate. They felt that spending the day outdoors had a positive

effect on their pupils because they were less stressed and more engaged than they might be in a different setting.

From this we can also see that outdoor programs may suit certain teachers better than others. When we consider how much children absorb through their imitative capacities, we

can appreciate the importance of the teacher's overall mood and attitude toward her work. Teachers who feel enlivened by further time outdoors will be able to pass that refreshment on to their students.

The practical work of the teachers in the forest kindergarten is quite different from the knitting, sewing, and cooking tasks that teachers are working on indoors. Outdoor work tends to be more physical while still requiring careful, purposeful attention. Teachers may be chopping wood, clearing brush, gardening, pruning, and

Even though the work is different, it is still important for teachers to consider the gesture with which they complete their tasks.

whittling. The children then have different work to imitate in their play, which will also contribute to the mood and energy of their outdoor play. Some teachers certainly appreciate this shift in their daily work, as well as the chance to move away from more traditional gender roles.

Even though the work is different, it is, of course, still important for teachers to consider the gesture with which they complete their tasks. The gesture of chopping wood is essentially different from, say, the gesture of kneading bread. Chopping wood has significantly more intensity. The teacher who is aware of these qualities will be better able to balance them with the attention and mood she brings to her work. Outdoor classrooms offer a wide range of work possibilities allowing for a balance between expansive and contractive work on the part of the teacher.

Working with parents

Additional challenges arise for forest kindergarten programs concerning communications with parents.

Depending on the location, different safety needs arise. Parents must be well informed and committed when it comes to proper clothing. Teachers need to be especially well informed about first aid, the specific dangers of their region, and proper protocols in case of any emergency.

A few of the teachers I spoke with noted that American parents are often more likely to worry than their European counterparts. Parents may not be comfortable allowing their children to play in the rough-and-tumble manner allowed by some outdoor programs, or may feel concerned about the risks inherent in natural play areas. It is essential that teachers inform parents about the nature of all elements of the program and that parents are completely on board with them.

Parents have to be willing to take on additional work such as tick checks, washing muddy clothes every day, and providing multiple sets of outdoor gear.

Parents also have to be willing to take on additional work such as tick checks, washing muddy clothes every day, and providing multiple sets of outdoor gear. Otherwise such a program cannot function properly. It is essential that forest kindergarten teachers are clear, careful communicators and that paperwork is properly addressed.

Some schools offer an outdoor element in their parent-child classes to begin this education early and help families develop a comfortable relationship to nature. Many parents may not have experienced such relationships in their youth, and it may take extra effort on their part to learn how to connect their own young children with the wilderness. School-sponsored family nature walks are an effective way to encourage early outdoor experiences. Families with these background experiences are more likely to structure their home lives in a way that is in harmony with the children's school experiences.

It is important to note that forest programs have to take care in their selection of eligible children, since they need to be mature enough to handle the additional freedoms and responsibilities these programs afford. Teachers must be careful during the initial interview process to ensure that a child is capable of participating without putting anyone in danger. Without the presence of a fenced-in play area, teachers must depend more on children to be aware of invisible boundaries and to be careful around heavy or sharp tools and fires.

Wilderness, farm, and classroom

It is important to distinguish between the experience of a forest program and a farm or garden program. In the forest, children experience nature that has been only mildly affected by humans, if at all. In the garden or on the farm, children experience humanity's

transformation of nature. Indoors, children experience most fully the effects of human culture and influence on the natural world.

Waldorf preschools and kindergartens aspire (through their architecture, painting, and wall decorations) to create an indoor atmosphere that nurtures and supports the development of the young child. Nature is nurturing in her own way, but indoor spaces imagined, designed, and created by humans offer something different.

Here arises yet another question

to be considered carefully and thoughtfully by each school faculty:

What does our indoor space offer our students? Is it necessary? What does the forest or farm experience offer in contrast, or in addition?

Ideally children will have the ability to experience all three of these stages of transformation: wilderness, garden or farm, and indoors.

Unfortunately, many modern indoor spaces are created with a more utilitarian intention rather than a spiritual or developmental one. Generally it is less expensive to ready an outdoor space for use by the children. However, teachers who work entirely outdoors may consider the benefit of simple structures like forts, lean-tos, or houses built of branches. Such houses give children the chance to retreat a bit from the expansiveness of nature and come to a more inward mood. Most indoor classrooms have a cuddly corner for children who want to step out of the play for a quiet moment. Some children will need to retreat more than others, and having such a place available can be helpful. A structure that is built with care and attention to detail will have something uniquely human to offer the children.

Conclusions

Many people within the outdoor school movement suppose that young children will have an easier time transitioning to an indoor elementary school classroom after their forest kindergarten years because these children will

have had time to move, develop their initiative, and learn self-control. It's hard to assess the truth of these suppositions because forest kindergartens have been operating in this country for only a few years and because there is such wide variation in individual children. In juxtaposition to this view lives the concern that children will not learn how to be in a classroom and will require a greater adjustment period as they enter a more traditional program. For the

moment, the most pressing question remains: Does a forest or farm program help children to incarnate properly in their early childhood years? We want our children to reach age seven inwardly prepared for the tasks of the middle years of childhood.

Forest and farm schools offer greater out-breathing and a different kind of structure. Waldorf educators

know that part of their task is to teach their students to properly breathe in the broadest sense of the word. It is the teachers who bring form to the day to help children find their way to in-breath and out-breath. In a program with less structure, children may be left free to find their own rest and movement in their play. Different children have differing needs for finding balance. Some need help to overcome excessive rigidity; others need to find their way to more form. It falls to the teacher's wisdom, born of her observation and meditative practice, to create a structure that provides the proper balance for the children in her care. An outdoor program has its own challenges and gifts, but the essentials of the task of education remain unchanged. The teacher must reflect, adjust, and study to understand fully the needs of her students.

We ought not to see the forest kindergarten movement simply as a solution to the negative effects that modern society visits upon our young children. Sometimes we hear the argument that children's needs will be met only by a return to the ways people lived and interacted many years

We want our children to reach age seven inwardly prepared for the tasks of the middle years of childhood.

ago. However, our students are modern children, and while we can create such atmospheres within the controlled space of our schools, we need to look also at the bigger context within which our students live. In my opinion, increasing outdoor time alone is not enough. While it may help to lessen some of the symptoms students are showing as a result of the challenges of the modern lifestyle, it isn't necessarily going to meet their deeper soul and spiritual needs. For that, we need teachers who are paying attention and asking the right questions. There is no doubt that these schools, and schools that have expanded their outdoor time, are offering something relevant and meeting a need that lives in their communities. But, in the end, it is not the details or location that count so much as what takes place each day between teacher and student. This is where education lives.

Endnote

1. Rudolf Steiner, *Education for Special Needs*, GA 317 (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1998), pp. 177–78.

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Photo courtesy of Mary O'Connell, from her *LifeWays* book *Home Away from Home*

Charter Schools in Relation to the Waldorf School Movement

Gary Lamb

Introduction

The introduction of publicly funded charter schools has blurred the distinction between public and non-public education in the United States. Charter schools exhibit an assortment of outer features attributable to both public and private schools, some of which previously were marks of distinction between them. So too, their rapid growth has had a negative impact on the levels of enrollment in both local public and private schools. Some people view this as simply the side-effects of necessary change as parents exercise the opportunity to express their wishes for their children.¹ Others take the view that charter schools are a corporate, philanthropic, and government-financed Trojan Horse whose effect, if not its intended purpose, commercializes and extends market thinking into all aspects of education.

This paper compares charter schools with traditional public and private schools and outlines their history and the reasons for their phenomenal growth. It also examines the relation of education as a whole to the realms of politics and business and offers some thoughts on what all this may mean for Waldorf education.

Similarities and differences between local public, public charter, and private schools

The terms *private* and *independent* apply to schools that are non-public or non-state and are primarily, if not wholly, funded through their own resources rather than government tax dollars.²

An *independent school* is usually viewed as a subset of private schools or private education. However, state education agencies do not generally distinguish between private and independent schools and typically use the

terms non-public or private for any school that is not part of the public education system. What makes an *independent school* a unique subset of private schools is normally based on the legal structure of the school itself. An independent school is specifically a not-for-profit organization that has its own board of directors or trustees and its own administration. *Private schools* also include schools that are partly or wholly under the control of a for-profit corporation or a not-for-profit faith organization such as a church, parish, or synagogue. In the Catholic tradition, a private or non-public school that is part of and run by a church or parish is called a *parochial school*. Most independent schools tend to be secular, but a private religious school can qualify as an independent school if it has an independent legal structure and administration.

Although private schools are subject to varying degrees of state regulation regarding such things as graduation requirements and teacher certification, they generally enjoy greater freedom from state control than local public and charter schools. They establish their own admissions criteria,³ develop their own educational goals, curricula and assessment methods, and use secular and non-secular viewpoints, or even explicit religious doctrine, in their instruction.

Public *charter schools* are a relatively new form of *public school* with features similar to traditional local public schools. Both:

- Are funded primarily by tax money collected and disbursed by multiple levels of government: local, state, and/or federal.
- Are tuition-free for parents.
- Meet the same legal requirements regarding the principle of the separation of church and state in relation to curriculum.

- Have open admission criteria similar to traditional public schools. They may not deny admission to any eligible applicant provided there is space for that student within the school's capacity.⁴ (However, charter schools may have certain allowable admission preferences, such as for siblings of enrolled students or children of full-time faculty.)
- Are required to adhere to the same educational goals, curriculum standards, and testing requirements set by the federal, state, and/or local public school districts.

Even though charter schools are public schools, they are also distinct in several ways:

A local public school is run by a school district, which is either an independent special-purpose government (often with the powers of taxation and eminent domain) or part of a school system that is an agency of local or state government. In contrast, charter schools can sometimes, according to state law, be operated by a local school district or a separate legal entity, such as a not-for-profit organization, for-profit business, teacher union, or institution of higher learning. The applying entity negotiates a contract (charter) with a local public school district or agency authorized by the state to grant charters in order to operate as a public school.

Whereas families are required by law to send their children to a local public school based on their legal residency unless a legal alternative is found,⁵ public charter schools are schools of choice. Enrolling a child in one is an elective decision by parents and based on space availability.

Charter schools have the option to provide a distinctive curriculum or environment not offered by the local school district, or to serve a specific student clientele. Some charter schools provide a curriculum that specializes in a certain field—for example, arts, mathematics, or vocational training—or incorporate educational methods traditionally found in independent schools, such as Montessori or Waldorf. Others attempt to

provide a better, more cost-effective general education than the nearby local public schools.

If the number of applications exceeds the number of available places, charter schools (unlike local public schools) are required to use some form of lottery selection, and children not selected can be placed on a waiting list.

Residency requirements by charter schools vary widely according to state law or the stipulations of the school's charter. They range from requiring or prioritizing residency in the local school district to allowing residency anywhere in the host state.

Charter schools may be granted freedom from certain local and state requirements such as teacher licensing, unionization, and scheduling. In exchange the schools are held to stronger accountability requirements based on student scores on state-mandated standardized tests. In theory, this means a charter school is more likely to face closure than a local public school as a result of poor student test results.

Confusion and controversy

National opinion polls have recorded a shift in public attitudes regarding charter schools over the last three years (2012–2014), from uncertainty and confusion to polarization and controversy as these schools gain more public exposure and exert greater impact on pre-existing forms of public and private education. National polls conducted by Education Next show gains for both support of and opposition to charter schools between 2012 and 2014: From 16% to 28% among opponents and from 43% to 55% among supporters—while the percentage of adults who had not made up their mind dropped from 41% to 18%.⁶

Misconceptions about charter schools are not surprising, given that charter school laws vary from state to state. Moreover, the academic requirements that apply to charter schools have evolved, particularly in relation to the testing requirements attached to state and federal government funding. Adding to the

confusion is the use of terminology traditionally reserved for independent schools, including the words “independence” and “freedom.” For instance, public charter schools are often called “independent public schools”⁷ that enjoy “freedom” from certain regulations, or they are simply referred to as being “independent schools.”

Further confusion arises from the fact that, similar to independent schools, some charter schools operate as not-for-profit entities as described in the previous section. But unlike traditional independent schools, they contract with the state to operate as public schools.⁸

Sources of controversy and opposition

Controversy and opposition regarding charter schools arises from a variety of concerns and situations:

- Closure and reduction in enrollment for both public and private schools in the vicinity of charter schools
- The potential disruption of the two-party political system. This is due to the fact that most charter schools are non-unionized, and teachers unions are a major supporter of the Democratic Party.
- The increasing influence of major foundations operating from a free market viewpoint that promotes pro-charter-school public policy

Growing charter vs. declining private school enrollment

The first public charter school in the United States was established in Minnesota in 1992. Since their inception, charter schools have experienced rapid growth. Currently 41 states have charter school laws with a total enrollment of approximately 2.5 million students. This is 4.2% of all students.⁹ In the last five years, their enrollment has grown 80% and the number of

public charter schools has increased by 50%. In 2013–2014, charter school waiting lists exceeded one million students. In approximately the same time period, private schools in the U.S. accounted nationally for about 5.5 million students, or 10% of all students and have experienced a 9% decline in enrollment.¹⁰

In the last five years charter school enrollment has grown 80% and the number of these schools increased by 50% [while] private schools have experienced a 9% decline in enrollment.

The accelerated growth of charter schools is the result of a confluence of factors that include:

- The national panic about the quality of U.S. education spawned by the 1983 report “A Nation at Risk” issued by the Reagan administration, in which an apparent decline of U.S. world dominance was portrayed as a national security issue and blamed on our failing public education system.
- The ensuing push for national educational goals, standards,

and testing by the federal government, big business, and numerous think tanks following the release of this report.

- Federal funding of charter schools through the Clinton administration’s Goals 2000 Act, the Bush administration’s No Child Left Behind Act and the Obama administration’s Race to the Top competitive funding program.
- Promotion and funding of standards-based education reform and charter schools by major foundations, including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Eli and Edy Broad Foundation, and the Walton Family Foundation.¹¹
- The growing frustration of parents with the quality of public education, especially in communities of color.¹²
- The growing numbers of families unable to afford tuition due to a general economic decline and rising tuition costs at independent and religious schools.
- The growing number of Waldorf and Montessori educators seeking more

economically and socially diverse student bodies than is possible in tuition-based independent schools.

- The desire of corporations to open up the new and scaled-up education markets made possible by the creation of national common core learning standards and standardized testing.

Education reform since the 1983 “A Nation at Risk” report

To understand the potential long-term impact of charter schools on both traditional public and private education, it is important to consider them in the context of federal education reform since the early 1980s.¹³ Historically, the beginning of the current wave of education reform is rooted in the 1983 report with the alarmist title, “A Nation at Risk.”

In 1981, in response to a “widespread perception that something is seriously remiss in our educational system,” President Reagan created the National Commission on Excellence in Education under Education Secretary T.H. Bell. Mandated to identify the problems with American public education and suggest solutions, the commission published its findings eighteen months later as “A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Education Reform.” It describes a national education crisis primarily in terms of economic decline, education mediocrity, and war:

Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world. ...The educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people.... If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war.

This apparent national crisis demanded, in many people’s minds, national solutions.

This apparent *national* crisis demanded, in many people’s minds, *national* solutions. In 1989, President George H.W. Bush initiated a national education summit attended by the state governors. The first six of the current eight national educational goals to guide the reformation of American education were endorsed at that time.¹⁴ Subsequent national educational summits were chaired by one CEO of a major corporation and one governor, and attended by the state governors and a leading CEO from each of the states. The summits were instrumental in developing and endorsing the framework of curricula standards and

testing incorporated into a multi-pronged and integrated strategy to achieve national educational goals. Since the federal government has no constitutional power over

education, states were “encouraged” to embrace the federally recommended standards and assessments through:

- Regulations attached to federal funding programs.
- Publicity and lobbying efforts led by the National Business Roundtable.¹⁵
- A non-government coordinating organization called Achieve, Inc.,¹⁶ funded by corporations, foundations, and government.

In addition to creating “voluntary” national testing requirements linked to “voluntary” national curriculum standards and testing goals, the federal government was instrumental in coordinating an integrated, multifaceted strategy to ensure that schools used the newly developed standards for curricula and “high stakes” standardized tests. This strategy included:

- Emphasizing a performance- or outcome-based system based on student test scores, rather than simply relying on adherence to rules and procedures.
- Using a rewards and punishment approach in which teachers and schools would receive

financial incentives for students achieving testing score goals on the high stakes standardized tests and suffer penalties for failure to achieve them.

- Promoting competition between schools, placing emphasis on student test scores by publicly reporting school-by-school aggregate student test results and ranking the schools according to these results.
- Providing schools and teachers with greater control over instructional technique and local management of schools to support the achievement of the desired test score outcomes.
- Promoting technology as an essential tool to achieve these national educational goals.

All presidential administrations since 1983 have linked their funding programs to the national goals, standards, and testing requirements. These include: G.H.W. Bush's America 2000 Act; Clinton's Goals 2000 Educate America Act; G.W. Bush's No Child Left Behind Act; and Obama's Race to the Top contest.

Charter schools and their connection to federal education reform

The origin of the charter school concept is attributed to Ray Budde. In his paper, "Education by Charter," published in 1974, Budde suggests restructuring local school districts in which "groups of teachers would receive educational charters directly from the school board" and take on the main responsibility for instruction.¹⁷ Budde maintained that creative change in public education needed to come from the teachers themselves at the local level. Initially, there was no interest in Budde's charter concept, and he dropped the idea until his paper was republished in 1988 during a tidal wave of reform efforts following the release of the "A Nation at Risk"

report. Shortly thereafter Albert Shanker, head of the American Federation of Teachers, began promoting the charter concept. In doing so, however, he extended Budde's idea of teachers taking over and running school programs to include unions creating new schools within, and sanctioned by, the local districts and utilizing their existing facilities.¹⁸

Education reformers in Minnesota took up these ideas of Budde and Shanker, envisioning a framework of state policy and the possibility of schools being authorized by the state as well as local boards.¹⁹ Minnesota passed the first charter school legislation in 1991, and the first charter school was opened in 1992. Consistent with the national outcomes-based reform efforts described in the previous section, the schools were called "outcome-based schools" rather than charter schools.

California, the state with the largest number of charter schools these days, was the first to use the term *charter school* when it passed its charter school law in 1992. Introducing the law, Senator Gary Hart²⁰ stated that the primary reason for promoting charter schools was to thwart a voucher ballot initiative "that would entitle parents to send their children to any school—public or private." He also suggested that "teachers should be at the center of the charter school movement."²¹

Instead of this much more diverse landscape of education under equal opportunity, a very different landscape is beginning to emerge under current education funding practices.

In 1993, six more states passed charter school laws. And in 1994 Bill Clinton included federal funding of charter schools in the re-authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Goals 2000 Educate America Act, or ESEA). The Act provided for "the establishment of high-quality, internationally competitive

content and student performance standards and strategies that all state and local education agencies [which includes charter schools] will be expected to achieve."²² Charter schools were

seen as a way to develop innovative methods to achieve the new and evolving national goals and standards as measured by student performance on standardized tests and to spur on traditional public schools as a result of competition from charter schools.

With subsequent re-authorizations of the ESEA under the George W. Bush and Barack Obama administrations, hundreds of millions of dollars have been allocated to charter schools.²³ The Obama administration added a new funding program entitled Race to the Top, a contest in which states compete for a portion of \$4 billion in prize money by developing and committing to, among other things, innovative ways to implement federally endorsed testing standards and to increase the number of charter schools.

Enrollment impact of charter schools on private schools

The rapid growth of charter schools within the public school system has created increasing tension between charter school and private school advocates due to the migration of private school students to charter schools. Two recent studies have now confirmed this trend.

Abraham M. Lackman, scholar-in-residence at the Albany (New York) Law School's Government Law Center, asserts that the proliferation of charter schools in New York has significantly affected the state's Catholic schools, leading to enrollment decreases, precarious finances, and closures. He estimates that each new charter school in New York will draw approximately 100 students from private schools.²⁴

A national study on the impact of charter schools on private school enrollments, commissioned by the CATO institute and conducted by Richard Buddin, education policy expert and former senior economist at the RAND Corporation, concludes that while most students are drawn from traditional public schools, charter schools are also pulling large numbers of students from private schools and therefore present a potentially devastating impact on the private

education market. Private school enrollments are much more sensitive to the impact of charters in urban districts than in non-urban districts. Overall, about 8% of charter elementary students and 11% of middle and high school students are drawn from private schools. In highly urban districts, private schools contribute 32, 23, and 15% of charter elementary, middle, and high school enrollments, respectively.²⁵

Private foundation support of charter schools

Philanthropic sources provide about \$4 billion dollars a year to support education in the U.S.²⁶ "An increasing number of foundations such as Gates, Walton, and Broad family philanthropies have poured more than \$600 million into charter schooling."²⁷ They all share the same market ideology for education based on choice and competition, and the same instruments for improving education: charter schools, high-stakes standardized testing of students, pervasive use of technology in the education process, and merit pay for teachers based on student test scores.²⁸ The "echo effect" of the philanthropic priorities and market philosophy of these major foundations sways other foundations in a similar direction. Thus, funding for education research not in harmony with this mindset is exceedingly difficult to find.

Evolution of charters

The original charter concept involved small, teacher-run schools contracting with local school districts. These semi-autonomous "incubator" public schools were to be freed sufficiently to experiment and infuse public education with innovative reforms from within the public education system so as to improve academic performance. This was seen as essentially a progressive picture of renewing public education.

In the 1990s, the charter school movement came under the influence of more market-oriented ideology through organizations such as the National Business Roundtable and a variety

of conservative think tanks, foundations, and politicians influenced by them.

With this shift, charter schools were posited as alternatives to and in competition with traditional public education rather than as a stimulus for innovation. This market-oriented view of charter schools was favored by both Republican and Democratic administrations at the federal level.

A third phase of the charter school movement came with the transition from the Bush administration to the Obama administration and its \$4 billion Race to the Top competition in which states would compete for multi-million dollar grants from the federal government. The grants favor states that will pass charter school legislation and those that will remove any cap on their limit.

The charter landscape

Stand-alone non-profit charter schools make up nearly two thirds (64%) of the charter school landscape, with the remaining 36% divided between for-profit Education Management Organizations (EMOs) and non-profit Charter Management Organizations (CMOs). The number of students attending for-profit EMO-run schools is about the same as those attending non-profit CMO run schools: 463,000 and 445,000 respectively (2011–2012).²⁹

Stand-alone non-profit charter schools vary in philosophy and intent, serving a special focus such as art, business, a particular cultural group, or an underserved population. These schools are initiated in a variety of ways by former public school educators frustrated with bureaucracy, former independent school educators seeking to serve a more economically or culturally diverse student population, or private school parents seeking an alternative to local public schools and relief from the burden of paying tuition while paying taxes to support public schools.

For-profit EMOs strive to take advantage of the education market afforded by charter schools for the benefit of their investors. Since their

driving motivation is to generate a profit for their investors, they often own and operate several or even dozens of charter schools in order to reach a profitable scale of business using the same business model for all of them. In addition to operating and managing their own schools, they sometime provide administrative services for school districts on a fee-for-service basis.

Non-profit CMOs typically work on a franchise basis, rather than owning their affiliates. They tend to be inspired by educational theory or method rather than employing a market rationale or profit motive in the educating of students and administering of schools.³⁰

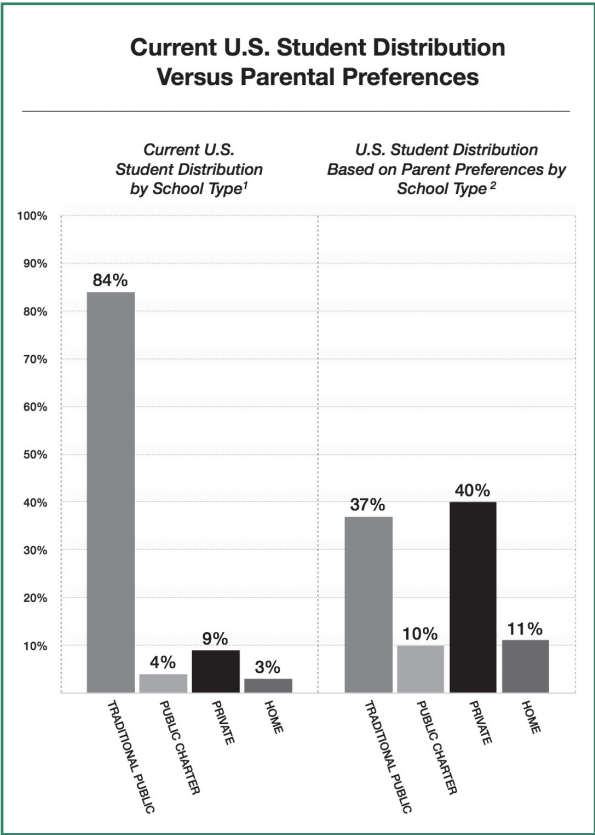
Charter school growth in the context of parental preferences

As previously mentioned, charter schools experienced an 80% enrollment growth rate during the same time period in which private school enrollment declined by 10%. As already mentioned, the charter school waiting list is estimated at one million students. Recent studies indicate that charter schools are draining significant numbers of students from both traditional public schools and private schools. These facts suggest that charter schools may be on a trajectory of rapid expansion while traditional public schools and private schools are facing significant declines.

However, there is another side to this story. In a recent study on school choice, common core, and standardized testing by Braun Research, one of the questions posed to over 1000 adults across the United States was: “If it were your decision and you could select any type of school, what type of school would you select in order to obtain the best education for your child?”³¹ The preferences expressed by these respondents are radically different from current K-12 enrollment rates. Based on these surveys, the extrapolated enrollment distribution in the U.S. would be:

Private schools would *increase* from 9% to 40%, Charter schools would *increase* from 4% to 10%, Home schooling would *increase* from 3% to 11%, and Traditional public schools would *decrease* from 84% to 37%.

In the scenario where all parents are given the equal opportunity to choose any type of schooling for their children, charter schools would more than double, *but this would be in the context of even greater increases in home schooling and private education.* This situation, however, is possible only when all families have the financial resources to choose from among them.



¹U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics
²Based on a national survey conducted by Braun Research of 1007 adults in response to the question: *If it were your decision and you could select any type of school, what type of school would you select in order to obtain the best education for your child?* (2–3% of adults were undecided.) Paul DiPerna, “2014 Schooling in America Survey: Perspectives on School Choice, Common Core, and Standardized Testing,” Indianapolis: The Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, June 2014

Instead of this much more diverse landscape of education under equal opportunity, a very different landscape is beginning to emerge under current education funding practices in the U.S —namely, one in which charter schools continue to gain favor among politicians, corporations, and philanthropists and rapidly increase as a result, while private schools are for the most part priced out of existence, homeschooling remains a fringe, outlier activity (or becomes absorbed into the charter school network), and the traditional local public schools are largely shunned in favor of charter schools.

Comparing charter school and traditional public school student test scores

According to the National Education Policy Center’s review of the most recent national charter school study (2013), the difference in student test scores between traditional public schools and charter schools is “trivial,” showing a difference of less than one hundredth of one percent.³²

Summation

The following is an abbreviated summary of charter school developments outlined in this paper. It will serve as preparation for some concluding thoughts, which will be directed primarily to those familiar with Waldorf education:

The original concept of public charter schools focused on locally authorized, teacher-run schools that empowered teachers to find ways to bring innovation into public education.

There was no interest in the charter school idea until a national education reform effort, encouraged by the federal government and heavily influenced by corporate CEOs, took root in the 1980s and 1990s.

Backed by federal, state, and philanthropic funding, charter schools have experienced phenomenal growth, while drawing significant numbers of students from both private and public schools.

Charter schools (originally called outcome-based schools because of their emphasis on student outcomes measured by standardized test scores) are an integral component in a national education reform strategy that is based on standardized high stakes testing, common core learning standards, the pervasive use of computer technology, and merit pay for teachers tied to student test scores.

A large amount of philanthropic funding of charter schools is for franchised-based, not-for-profit education management organizations that oversee numerous schools as a way to standardize and replicate useful practices on a large scale (commonly called *scaling up*).

Charter schools are held to equal or greater accountability standards than local public schools based on student test scores.

Even though there is some evidence that charter schools outperform local public schools in certain geographic areas, overall there appears to be little evidence that charter school students have significantly surpassed local public school students on standardized tests.

While charter schools are enjoying significant growth and large waiting lists under current public policy conditions, there are studies that indicate that most parents, if they had the financial resources to do so, would prefer to send their children to private schools or have them home schooled.

The major philanthropic foundations, led by the Gates Foundation, operate out of an economic market ideology, channeling virtually all of their education funding into the dominant national education reform efforts, which they have been instrumental in creating.

Additional observations and concluding thoughts

For the purposes of this paper, we will provide some additional observations and concluding thoughts pertaining to the Waldorf

school movement and its struggle to find a balance between educational opportunity for all families and educational freedom for schools and educators. Most of the observations in this section are based on my own experiences as a parent, teacher, administrator, consultant, and researcher within the Waldorf school movement over a 20-year period.

The challenge of charter schools for the Waldorf school movement

The first foray of Waldorf-based education into the U.S. public school system started in 1991 with the opening of the Milwaukee Urban Waldorf School. It started with 350 students, about 90% of them African American. It was launched with considerable help from veteran independent Waldorf school educators and received generous donations of classroom supplies from numerous independent Waldorf school communities. In 1994, the first public charter school, Yuba River Charter School, employing methods inspired by Waldorf education, was established in Nevada City, California. There are now approximately 40 public charter schools employing methods inspired by Waldorf methods in the U.S.³³

Relations between charter schools using methods inspired by Waldorf methods and independent schools belonging to the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA) have been strained. There are a number of controversial points: the migration of students and faculty from independent Waldorf schools to public charter schools; the conversion of independent Waldorf schools to charter schools; AWSNA's decision to limit its membership to independent schools and teacher training institutes; the protracted negotiations over the use of the term "Waldorf" between the Alliance for Public Waldorf Education and AWSNA, which holds the service mark rights for

There are now approximately 40 public charter schools employing methods inspired by Waldorf education.

the use of the names “Waldorf” and “Steiner”*; and the question of whether the public charter school movement in general is a step toward, or a major threat to, educational freedom as outlined in Rudolf Steiner’s ideas on a threefold social organism.³⁴

Parent perspectives

The financial strain of paying tuition has become unbearable for a growing number of independent school families, and consequently they have withdrawn their children. Many families avoid applying to an independent school due to concern about rising tuition costs. For some, a charter school incorporating the Waldorf approach is an attractive alternative in such situations. Though some parents may feel the Waldorf curriculum and its methods are compromised in a public school setting, nevertheless they will view a charter school as offering a more attractive option than a traditional public school devoid of any Waldorf educational ideas. For many new parents, whose only schooling reference point is a traditional public school, a charter school inspired by Waldorf methods is often perceived as a great improvement over the local public school.

Occasionally, a group of parents at an existing independent Waldorf school tries to convince the school leadership to convert the institution to a charter school or simply shut down the existing independent school and replace it with a charter school. Another option is to leave the independent school and open a charter school inspired by Waldorf methods in the same locale. The initiative to explore various charter school options in times of financial stress may also come from the independent school’s board of trustees.

The ensuing discussions frequently lead to deep divisions within the independent school community, which can become polarized around issues of freedom and affordability. Opposition to such changes often comes from the faculty who do not want to compromise the creative freedom and individual accountability they enjoy in an independent school.

All of these options result, at a minimum, in a number of families withdrawing from an independent school and enrolling their children in a charter school. In addition, independent schools, should they remain in existence, face ongoing competition from local charter schools for future enrollment while remaining at a significant financial disadvantage.³⁵

If parents had the financial circumstances to choose between a charter school and an independent school—that is, to make a decision based on the school’s individual merits, not on the cost of attending it—the school most valued would be the one most likely to thrive. As previously mentioned, recent studies suggest that, if a variety of schooling options were within financial reach of all families, the landscape of U.S. education would change dramatically in favor of private education.

Teachers’ perspectives

Public charter schools can be appealing to independent schoolteachers who would prefer working for a higher income and more employee benefits than what most independent schools can offer. Even so, some former independent schoolteachers, who switch to teaching in a charter school, find the pressures of standardized high stakes testing and common core state standards challenging. And in the end they leave. For others, the benefits outweigh whatever compromises may be necessary. Another factor that influences some teachers in choosing to teach in a charter school is the possibility of implementing what they consider to be the ethical and social ideal of offering government-supported tuition-free Waldorf education.³⁶

*On March 22, 2015, the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America and the Alliance for Public Waldorf Education announced in a joint letter that a license was signed by the two organizations, which “empowers the Alliance to use the mark ‘Public Waldorf’ with acknowledgment that it is a service mark owned by the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America and used pursuant to a license.” In addition, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed “that affirms and articulates some of the many ways the two organizations and our respective members can collaborate.”

For those who value both Rudolf Steiner's views on education and social life, it is important to note that he spoke of the destiny relations between teachers and students as being of the highest spiritual order.³⁷ Consequently, the decision about where and for whom a teacher offers his or her services is a highly personal one, and cannot be the subject of other people's judgments. This is equally true for parents in choice of school for their children. Steiner also stated that it is a necessity for education to gain freedom from the control of the state, which is heavily influenced by political and economic interests. Not to do so, he warned, would mean humanity would suffer grave social consequences.

Long-term perspective for independent education

Although there will be legitimate personal reasons why parents and/or teachers choose a charter school for their child or their profession, in the long term there must be grounds for concern, not merely for the long-term viability of independent Waldorf schools or traditional public schools, but also that the field of education will become completely dominated by political coercion, economic thinking, and moneyed interest groups to the detriment of students and social life as a whole.

Charter schools are appealing from a certain perspective and may offer some parents a viable alternative for their children's education. However, they are embedded in a massive attempt at reforming American education that has been strategically designed and systematically implemented since the early 1980s. This reform effort is led by a collusion of powerful political, economic, and philanthropic interests spearheaded by people with the best of intentions. Nevertheless, this effort is based on a materialistic view of education and

... [T]his reform effort is based on a materialistic view of education and child development and dominated by market-orientated thinking and methods.

child development and dominated by market-orientated thinking and methods, including standardization of learning goals and testing, the collection of personal data for marketing purposes (data mining), and business-like efficiency through a pervasive use of technology with little or no concern for potential health effects on the rising generation.

Previous education reform efforts were not coordinated at a national level and therefore left considerable room for pockets of resistance. Many simply waited until the reform efforts inevitably proved ineffective and were tossed aside in favor of a new round of reforms.

The current national reform effort, which features charter schools as a key vehicle for change, is totally different. Presidential administrations, Congress, state education departments, governors, CEOs, media, and major philanthropists are now working in concert to a large degree. To be sure, there is considerable resistance to these education reform efforts, including parents who are protesting the implementation of common core state standards, school administrators' who are creating petitions condemning state standardized testing, and state law suits that are being launched against the federal government.

In the long run, to simply support or oppose charter schools on a personal basis is a distraction from much larger issues, which involve the cultural evolution of humanity and even the very survival of our planet. The same powers and types of thinking that stand behind the current education reform efforts are the very same powers and types of thinking that have brought on the multiple crises that we are now facing: financial, environmental, and political.

Most of the complaints about the current reform efforts are quickly characterized as being mainly problems of implementation or inadequate preparation. But more preparation

and better implementation will not fix the real problem at hand. Our education reform efforts are in the hands of people who have little or no experience in education and have other priorities and agendas than the education of children.

A study of recent Gallup polls reveals that

the very professions in which the public has the least trust and which have the least experience in education are the professions that are now directing education policy—namely, politicians, CEOs, and lobbyists.³⁸

While it is important to do everything possible to resist and counter the more harmful effects of high-stakes testing, common core state standards, and student data mining, it is also an urgent matter to create forums for educators, parents, and students—regardless of school affiliation—to develop a new imagination and to work together to develop alternatives.³⁹

A good starting point for building this imagination can be found in a talk given by Heinz-Dieter Meyer, Associate Professor of Education Administration and Policy Studies at the State University of New York at Albany, entitled “Managerial Accountability and the Misrecognition of Educational Knowledge.”⁴⁰ Meyer argues that education is being driven by a managerial model of accountability used by industry, in the belief that education is a well understood technology. In contrast, he maintains that education is a highly complex practical art, the knowledge and skill of which can be best transmitted by experienced practitioners. From this idea he develops a common-sense vision of experienced educators elevated to a position of “pivotal authority for education. This would allow building a self-governed, professional accountability system on the basis of collegial self-government and peer review.”

With such contemporary words we can experience ideas based on real educational

phenomena and a glimmer of what must be, regardless of personal opinion, regarding schools. Otherwise, the Waldorf school movement will be continually distracted by internal conflict, while the political and corporate forces in education become all the stronger.

The very professions in which the public has the least trust and which have the least experience in education are the professions that are now directing education policy – namely, politicians, CEOs, and lobbyists.

Endnotes

1 Whether the migration of students from traditional public schools to charter schools has a positive or negative effect on the children who migrate and the children who are left behind is the subject of much debate both philosophically and in practice, typically along political lines.

The political left portrays local public schools as egalitarian and culturally diverse, and argues that the rapid growth of charter schools draws significant financial resources from them. Furthermore, commentators

of this persuasion point to studies that show that students on the whole do not perform better than students in traditional public schools. (“Charter Schools Are Improving, a Study Says,” Motoko Rich, *New York Times*, June 25, 2013, p. A15)

In contrast, defenders of the political right refer to studies that show students in charter schools doing better than local public schools, and argue that competition forces the traditional schools to improve. (“No Child Left Behind: New Evidence That Charter Schools Help Even Kids in Other Schools,” <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748703574604574499592392782438>, Nov. 4, 2009).

- 2 With the growth of government-funded voucher programs in various states, this may change. For a list of state voucher programs, visit <http://www.edchoice.org/School-Choice/School-Choice-Programs>.
- 3 A private school admission procedure is based on a non-compulsory, mutually accepted agreement between the school and the parents of a child admitted to a school. Typically, this agreement is for one school year.
- 4 There are claims that some charter schools exclude certain types of students. See, for instance, Stephanie Simon, “Class Struggle—How Charter Schools Get the Students They Want,” *reuters.com*, 2013.
- 5 In addition to charter schools, other options for families, if they can afford them, are home-school programs, private schools, public magnet schools,

or a move to another school district. Occasionally adjacent school districts allow transferability between them.

- 6 Source: Education Next polls (2012 and 2013) administered under the auspices of the Harvard Program on Education Policy and Governance (PEPG), http://educationnext.org/files/EN_PEPG_Survey_2012_Tables1.pdf and <http://educationnext.org/the-2013-education-next-survey/>.

- 7 A recent Google search for “independent public schools” yielded 55 million results.

A specific example of blurring the distinction between a traditional independent school and a public charter school at the government level can be found in Florida’s Department of Education, which lists charter schools under the Office of Independent Education & Parental Choice.

- 8 Another layer of confusion seldom mentioned has to do with the term *chartered* schools vs. *charter* schools. The term “chartered schools” can refer to what are commonly called public charter schools, or it can refer to non-public or private schools. For example, former Minnesota State Senator Ember Reichgott Junge, author of *Zero Chance of Passage: The Pioneering Charter School Story*, uses the term “chartered school” throughout her book in describing the history of the first “charter” school law passed in Minnesota in 1991. Interestingly, the law itself did not refer either to charter or chartered schools, but to “outcome-based” schools. In contrast, the New York State Board of Regents uses the term “chartered school” when referring to a non-public private school, and the term “charter” when referring to a public charter school: NYSED: Frequently Asked Questions about Charter Schools in New York State, <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/psc/charterfaq.html>.

- 9 Source: National Alliance for Public Charter Schools.

- 10 Sources: National Center for Educational Statistics, and capenet.org.

- 11 Michael Fabricant and Michelle Fine, *Charter Schools and the Corporate Makeover of Public Education*, New York: Teachers College Press, 2012, p. 29.

- 12 Ibid., Chapter 2.

- 13 For more federal education reform following the “Nation at Risk” report, see Gary Lamb, “Alliance of Government and Business Seeks to Mold American Education,” Philmont, NY; *The Threefold Review*, The Margaret Fuller Corp., 1992–1993, No.8; and Gary Lamb, *The Social Mission of Waldorf Education*, Part II, Fair Oaks, CA: AWSNA Publications, 2004.

- 14 The eight national goals published in the Goals 2000: Educate American Act in 1994 were:

- 1) All children in the U.S. will start school ready to learn.
- 2) The high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90%.
- 3) All students will leave grades 4, 8, and 12 having demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, the arts, history, and geography, and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our nation’s modern economy.
- 4) United States students will be first in the world in mathematics and science achievement.
- 5) Every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
- 6) Every school in the United States will be free of drugs, violence, and the unauthorized presence of firearms and alcohol, and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.
- 7) The nation’s teaching force will have access to programs for the continued improvement of their professional skills and the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to instruct and prepare all American students for the next century.
- 8) Every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children.

- 15 Gary Lamb, *The Social Mission of Waldorf Education*, Fair Oaks, CA: AWSNA Publications, 2004, Chapter 9. See also the website www.businessroundtable.org.

- 16 www.achieve.org.

- 17 Ted Kolderie, “Ray Budde and the Origins of the ‘Charter Concept,’” *Education Evolving*, Center for Policy Studies and Hamline University, St. Paul, MN, June 2005. Kolderie is referred to as the godfather of the charter(ed) school movement in the early 1990s.

- 18 Shanker and the American Federation of Teachers withdrew support of charter schools when it became clear they were going to compete with the existing public schools rather than becoming a mechanism of inner renewal headed by teachers.

- 19 Ember Reichgott Junge, *Zero Chance of Passage*, Edina, MN: Beaver’s Pond Press, 2013, Chapter 3.

- 20 Not to be confused with the former presidential candidate of the same name from Colorado.

- 21 “We were convinced that the voucher initiative should not be taken lightly. It was almost like playing Russian roulette with public education, except instead of having a one-in-six chance of being hit by a deadly blow, the odds were closer to 50-50.” Sue Barr and Gary K. Hart. “The Story of California’s Charter School Legislation,” *Phi Delta Kappan*, 78.1 (Sept. 1996), p.37.
- 22 See *The Social Mission of Waldorf Education*, p. 65.
- 23 The EASA (No Child Left Behind) expired in 2007 and was never reauthorized under the Obama administration, due to contentious debate of what was of value in it. Since then, implementation of the No Child Left Behind has simply been extended without amendments and subject to the interpretation of the Obama administration.
- 24 Herb Lackman, “The Collapse of the Catholic School Enrollment: The Unintended Consequence of the Charter School Movement,” Albany, NY, *Albany Government Law Review*, 2012, http://www.albanygovernmentlawreview.org/Articles/Vol06_1/6.1.001-Lackman.pdf.
- 25 Richard Buddin, “The Impact of Charter Schools on Public and Private School Enrollment:” Washington, DC, Cato Institute Policy Analysis 707, 2012. <http://www.cato.org/publications/policy-analysis/impact-charter-schools-public-private-school-enrollments>.
- 26 Source: c.news21.com/katie-big-education.html (University of Southern California).
- 27 Op. cit., Fabricant and Fine, p. 29.
- 28 Joanne Barkin, “Got Dough? How Billionaires Rule Our Schools,” *Dissent Magazine*, Winter 2011, <http://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/got-dough-how-billionaires-rule-our-schools>.
- 29 “Profiles of For-Profit and Nonprofit Education Management Organizations: Fourteenth Edition, 2011–2012,” National Policy Center, School of Education, University of Colorado Boulder.
- 30 Examples of for-profit EMOs are: EdisonLearning, National Heritage Academies, and Mosaica Education. CMOs include Green Dot and Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP). Stand-alone charter schools include those that use Montessori and Waldorf methods.
- 31 Paul DiPerna, “2014 Schooling In America Survey: Perspectives on School Choice, Common Core, and Standardized Testing.” Indianapolis, The Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, June 2014.
- 32 These statistics are cited not because they deserve greater attention than other valid and important evaluation metrics, including parent and student satisfaction, but rather because they are used as the main yardstick by which charter schools are evaluated.
- 33 Source: www.allianceforpublicwaldorfeducation.org.
- 34 Rudolf Steiner, the founder of the Waldorf school movement, maintained that a healthy social life includes three independent sectors: cultural, political, and economic. Each one is vitally important, and no one of them should dominate the other. Education, in this view, is part of an independent cultural life.
- 35 As a consultant, I have been contacted by independent Waldorf schools in California, Arizona, and Wisconsin to help them work through such situations. In all these cases the primary factor for parents’ choosing a charter school was financial.
- 36 See, for example, Liz Beaven, “Independent or Charter School? Study of Teacher Choice: Part 1,” *Research Bulletin*, Vol. 18, #1, http://www.waldorflibrary.org/images/stories/Journal_Articles/rb18_1beaven.pdf and “Independent and Charter School? Study of Teacher Choice: Part 2,” *Research Bulletin*, Vol. 18, #2, http://www.waldorflibrary.org/images/stories/Journal_Articles/rb18_2beaven.pdf.
- 37 See Gary Lamb, *Wellsprings of the Spirit*, Fair Oaks, CA: AWSNA Publications, 2007, pp. 44–55.
- 38 See “Education Renewal Based on Trust and Experience,” a blog article by Gary Lamb posted on the Avalon Initiative website on January 13, 2015, <http://edrenewal.org/education-renewal-based-on-trust-and-experience/>.
- 39 See the mission statement of the Avalon Initiative at <http://edrenewal.org/mission/>.
- 40 Heinz-Dieter Meyer, “Managerial Accountability and the Misrecognition of Educational Knowledge.” Paper presented at the Conference on Philosophy of Education, Azim Premji University, Bangalore, India, May 14, 2014.

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Standing for the Children in Our Care

Ruth Ker

How can Waldorf early childhood educators, fortified by current research, face the trend toward accelerated academic instruction and advocate instead for healthy, child-directed play as the essence of age-appropriate education? Even a glimpse into research on this topic over the past four decades will fortify those who wish to stand for the needs of young children who are crossing the transformational threshold of the six/seven year change.

During my Waldorf early childhood training, I was greatly inspired by an article published in 1977 in the influential news magazine *Der Spiegel*.¹ This article, brought to our attention by Joan Almon at the Alliance for Childhood,² discussed a longitudinal research project conducted by two universities in the North Rhine-Westphalia district at a time when the German Educational Council was advocating for the introduction of “early learning programs.” This study followed the progress of children “in their total development” from the age of five to ten in 50 play-based kindergartens and 50 early learning programs. A comparison of these two groups was later published under the title “The Kindergarten Year,” showing that “the children initiated early into the ABCs later ranked—not only in mathematics, writing, and spelling but also in industry and oral expression— behind those who, as five-year-olds, had only played” in their kindergarten settings. The report on the study, which was characterized as extraordinarily careful, had immediate consequences for German educational policy: The German authorities canceled plans to lower the age of mandatory schooling by a year and discontinued early learning programs the

“The children initiated early into the ABCs later ranked ... behind those who, as five-year-olds, had only played...”

following year. Needless to say, this study is very supportive of Waldorf pedagogy.

Since then many more published studies have come to the same conclusion: Children in a play-based program progress with more stamina long-term and also tend to have the capacity to have continued interest in learning in their later years. As well, there is a body of evidence to support the argument that an early introduction of didactic curricula may increase anxiety and have a negative impact on the child’s self-esteem, may contribute to a lack of motivation to learn, and may even contribute to higher risk

of attempted suicide (Uphoff & Gilmore 1986; Elkind 1987; Brenitz & Teltsch 1989; Crossner 1991; Thompson, Barnsley, & Dyck 1999; Gagne & Gagnier 2004, among others). And yet, early childhood educators still feel pressure from policy-makers, licensing authorities, and government agencies to “make the children ready for school.”

It’s interesting that Finland, which consistently ranks at the top of all OECD³ countries for educational attainment and has one of the highest per capita numbers of PhDs in Europe, is currently among only six European countries (also including Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Sweden) that mandates the start of formal schooling for children aged seven.

We all know what happens to a spring bulb that is forced to flower in mid-winter. How often have we seen a plant of this kind shoot up and then topple over after a brief period of flowering? Many longitudinal studies, such as the 2005 HighScope Perry Preschool Project and the 2007 Suggate research into early reading, have shown that this phenomenon of “hot-housing”

exists also in the education of young children. In general, children who have been exposed to early math and reading curricula and to early school entrance tend to “droop” by the time they reach grade four and beyond. Indeed, the very word *curriculum* stems from a Latin word for *race course*? Is our culture compelling our children to race to the finish line?

Another longitudinal study, “The Longevity Project,” was based on a group of over 1000 California children born early in the last century. Dr. Howard S. Friedman, a professor of psychology at the University of California, Riverside, and his colleague Margaret L. Kern “gathered follow-up data from the Terman Life Cycle Study to examine how age at first reading and age at school entry relate to grade school academic performance, lifelong educational attainment, midlife health and mental adjustment, and longevity across eight decades. Early reading was associated with early academic success, but less lifelong educational attainment and worse midlife adjustment. Early school entry was associated with less educational attainment, worse midlife adjustment, and most importantly, increased mortality risk.” Dr. Friedman, the lead researcher of this project, was quoted as saying in a May 2012 press release in England:

In our work on The Longevity Project, an eight-decade study of healthy aging, we were amazed to discover that starting formal schooling too early often led to problems throughout life, and shockingly was a predictor of dying at a younger age. This was true even though the children in the study were intelligent and good learners. I’m very glad that I did not push to have my own children start formal schooling at too young an age, even though they were early readers. Most children

“We were amazed to discover that starting formal schooling too early often led to problems throughout life, and shockingly was a predictor of dying at a younger age.”

under age six need lots of time to play and to develop social skills and to learn to control their impulses. An overemphasis on formal classroom instruction—that is, “studies instead of buddies,” or “staying in” instead of “playing out”—can leave serious effects that might not be apparent until years later.

Another document submitted to the Association for the Professional Development of Early Years Educators was written by Dr. David Whitebread and Dr. Sue Bingham, researchers from the department of education of the University of Cambridge in England. In their conclusion, they say:

The model of “readiness for school” is attractive to governments as it seemingly delivers children into primary school ready to conform to classroom procedures and even able to perform basic reading and writing skills. However, from a pedagogical perspective this approach fuels an increasingly dominant notion of education as “transmission and reproduction” and of early childhood as preparation for school rather than for life.

They go on to say that, in their extensive research, “the curriculum centered approach” and “the idea that rushing young children into formal learning of literacy, mathematics, etc., as young as possible” are misguided. This leads to a situation where children’s basic emotional and cognitive needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, and the opportunity to develop their meta-cognitive and self-regulation skills, are not being met. Of course, mention is made in this article of the value of play, indoors as well as outdoors. Some studies show that children, especially boys, are able to learn better after exposure to outdoor play.

In short, a broad array of studies confirms that an earlier-is-better approach to the academic instruction of young children is misguided and will not make a positive difference in the long term. As caregivers and educators of children from birth to seven, we must not be swayed by the tide of opinion insisting that children enter school at an earlier age. We must take a stand for the sake of the children in our care. In order to protect childhood in our time, we are being asked for much more than we were in the earlier years of our practices. For their sake, it's imperative that we know about mainstream research that corroborates the practices of Waldorf education.

In many ways, the pedagogical understandings of Rudolf Steiner are just coming of age. As professionals working with young children at this pivotal time, it's important that we prepare ourselves to influence the future of childhood in the best possible way. In order to bridge and offer our sound understandings, it behooves us to also learn some of the modern ways of speaking about early childhood. Familiarity with words like these will help us to be understood in the mainstream debate:

- Self-efficacy (need for feelings of competence)
- Self-agency (autonomy)
- Relatedness (warm and loving relationships)
- Meta-cognitive (knowing about knowing—knowledge about when and how to use particular strategies for problem solving, as in learning through play)
- Multi-sensory learning (“Neuroscience research shows that all learning depends on neural networks distributed across many regions of the brain. Consequently, the wider the range of types of experience, repeated practice, and activity with progressively

increasing challenge, the deeper and more secure the learning”—again, qualities demonstrated in self-directed play. See Goswami and Bryant, *Children's Cognitive Development and Learning*)

In 2011 the provincial government of British Columbia decided that all kindergarten children should go to school for full-day programs. At first many of us in the independent schools and Waldorf schools thought we had no choice but to comply. Then we began a conversation, bolstered by research, with government officials

and advocacy groups to press for the rights of parents to choose between full-day and part-day programs. As a result, the right of parents to place their children in half-day programs was granted. By taking the time to learn mainstream language and speak up for the needs of the children and their parents, we were able to protect the early childhood environments of many children.

Below are listed the studies referenced earlier as well as a few more studies on the topic of school readiness. These could be particularly helpful when considering kindergarten/first grade placement. Rather than listing the references below alphabetically, I have ordered them chronologically to demonstrate a steady stream of support for Waldorf perspectives on the healthy development of young children. (I encountered research dating as far back as the 1930s, but for the sake of brevity I have selected only some of the works available from the 1980s onward.) This work can help us to champion the thought that, when it comes to early childhood education, better late than early!

The HighScope Perry Pre-school project (listed below), for instance, compares the outcomes of children who participated in different types of early years provision. Researchers found that although direct

A broad array of studies confirms that an earlier-is-better approach to the academic instruction of young children is misguided and will not make a positive difference in the long term.

instruction methods of teaching seemed to give some children initial advantages in terms of their early reading and numeracy, the HighScope children who had been in “social constructivist” learning environments showed significantly more positive results over the long term. By age 15, the direct instruction group participants were showing signs of having become “disaffected” with learning, presenting more psychological and social problems than other groups, and reading only half as many books.

A partial list of studies on the topic of school readiness

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By age 15, the direct instruction participants were showing signs of being “disaffected” with learning, presenting more psychological and social problems, and reading only half as many books.

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- Suggate, S (2007). Research into Early Reading Instruction and linked effects in the development of reading. *Journal for Waldorf/Rudolf Steiner Education*, 11 (2), p.17. (This study, comparing children who did not start learning to read until they were seven with children who started at the age of five, found that by the age of 11 there was no difference in reading ability between the two groups.)
- Hirsh-Pasek, K. and Golinkoff, R.M. (2008) “Why Play=Learning.” In R.E. Tremblay, R.G. Barr, R.DeV. Peters and M. Boivin (eds). *Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development*. Montreal: Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development Press.
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This list is by no means complete. And despite all of this research, there is still a strong push to accelerate children into capacities that are not resonant with basic developmental milestones. Some critics argue that this pressure is economy-driven, while others say it is based on decisions made by policy makers who haven't done their research. In spite of the PISA⁴ research showing that children who enter school at age seven have a better success rate than those who enter earlier, even the Scandinavian countries, who in the past have honored this age seven entrance, are having to face government legislation that encourages earlier entry into formal schooling. Many European Waldorf schools have introduced the practice of having a "zero class" where children can have play and limited focused, creative learning activities from as early as five, in some countries, and six in others.

In brief, we have a huge body of research that supports the practices of Waldorf early childhood education. Let this closing verse, attributed to the celebrated Waldorf teacher Herbert Hahn, have the final word:

Remember daily,
you are continuing
the work of the spiritual worlds
with the children.
You are the preparers of the path
for these young souls,
who wish to form their lives
in these difficult times.
The spiritual worlds will always
stand by you in this task.
This is the wellspring of strength
which you so need.

Endnotes

- 1 *Der Spiegel*, Number 20, 1977, pp. 89–90.
- 2 Alliance for Childhood, www.allianceforchildhood.org.
- 3 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is an international body of 34 countries that helps governments tackle economic, social, and governance challenges of a globalized economy.
- 4 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) is an international study launched by OECD in 1997. It aims to evaluate education systems worldwide every three years.

Ruth Ker worked for eight years in the field of *Early Childhood Education* before becoming a founding teacher and pioneer of Sunrise Waldorf School on Vancouver Island, BC, in 1980. She is the co-director of the West Coast Institute for Studies in Anthroposophy, where she participates in the training of early childhood teachers. She is editor of and contributor to *You're Not the Boss of Me*, a book about the older child in the kindergarten.



Core Principles of Waldorf Education

Two Contributions to the Study of Core Principle #3

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.*

The Grade School Years

James Pewtherer

*A*s a child steps across the threshold from the nurturing routines of an early childhood space into the world of school, something new is now possible. It is at this time that the growth forces which had formed the young child are freed in some degree for use in a new way. At around age seven, those forces have completed a crucial phase of building the child's physical body and its organs. It is a foundational principle of child development and anthroposophically-informed education that these forces should not be called on prematurely for intellectual pursuits before this cycle of growth is complete. The aim is to ensure that a strong, healthy physical body will be there as a foundation for the child's entire life before these growth forces begin to be redirected in service of focused cognitive activity.

Working with these freed-up forces, the class teacher now gradually weans the child from pure imitative learning. In its place, the child delves into the world of images, where the imagination leads over into understanding. The children hear a beautifully told story or see a chalk drawing on the board and begin to separate themselves from these inner and outer pictures, becoming independent observers. They should love what they see, but now with more distance than the kindergarten child. At this age, the child can begin to put those pictures into a context, or what

we call "understanding." This understanding, however, is more than abstract intellectual knowledge. Instead, it is understanding saturated with rich feelings that run the gamut from excitement to sadness and joy. In this way, the learning during the years of the elementary school should never become dried out and dead. The gradual separation of "self" from "world" must not make the child feel isolated from the world. Instead, at the end of a lesson, the child should be left with the enthusiastic feeling, "That was so interesting and exciting! I want to learn more!"

Developmentally appropriate learning during this second seven-year period depends upon loving one's teacher, loving to learn, and finding beauty in every situation. It is up to the teacher to provide guidance as artist, scientist, and beloved guide. These qualities in the teacher cultivate in the child a feeling life that in turn develops a trust in his or her own heart-borne judgment. This is one of the imponderables that grows imperceptibly during these elementary years. It leads the children to know that their own heart is able to give them a hint as to the right way to act in a given situation. This is a matter of cultivating authentic sensibilities; feelings that will help children develop a moral compass rather than maudlin sentimentality. It is the teacher who guides this development through his or her relationship to the individual child and the class as a whole, ideally over a span of eight school years.

During the initial phase of this seven-year period, for instance in the first grade, the teacher may tell a story of four animals who decide to unite in seeking a new life for themselves in the town of Bremen. The child can see that each animal has its one-sidedness, in that the donkey is good at one thing and the cat at something else. But when the animals join forces, the child sees how their collaboration

leads them to succeed where they would have failed on their own.

Once the story has been told, and the children have been able to sleep on it, they re-create it by retelling it out of their own internal,

imaginative pictures. Then, in a completely non-didactic way, a conversation ensues based on their simple observations about how one of the characters acted or the way things worked out in the end. Inherent in such a story is also a living picture of how the human being combines many of these traits to become truly human. Yet such a concept would not be spoken. Rather it would stand there, ready for the children to draw upon it then or at some later time.

The middle years of the elementary school time provide still more illustrations of this developmental approach. One of these arises in arithmetic when working with common fractions. By their very nature, numbers are abstractions in that they take the child from a consideration of objects (e.g., apples) to “counters” that stand for the objects (e.g., fingers, strokes on a page, etc.) and finally to symbols (4 or 57 or 2398).

Imagine, then: How does a ten-year-old in fourth grade make sense of a fractional (broken) number which has a 3 over a 4 ($\frac{3}{4}$) or a 5 over a 16 ($\frac{5}{16}$)? And then how does the child make sense of a concept that the “4,” in the first example, is a bigger number than the “16” in the second one?

Here the sure-handed teacher leads the children through all sorts of cutting-out exercises and practices with regular paper shapes or

blocks of wood or slices of pizza. We take them apart and put them together; we try to combine equal and then different “sizes” (denominators) and different quantities (“numerators”) of the fractions (3 fourths and 1 fourth; then 3 eighths and 5 eighths; then 1 fourth and 1 eighth, etc.). Stories are invented to illustrate the use of these pieces in addition to games that require

putting together or taking apart these pieces to make mixed numbers and/or find common denominators.

Only then can the abstraction of number have a sufficient foundation in experience to allow the child to feel comfort and

success in working with these abstractions and in further computations with them.

Towards the end of the elementary years, the subject of modern history provides the teacher with yet another opportunity to give the children a chance to experience themselves as stepping into the stream of human society. Biographies of larger-than-life personalities such as Gandhi, Mother Theresa, and Martin Luther King are joined by those of little-known heroes such as “Wild Bill Cody” (who survived the Nazi concentration camps) or the Japanese engineer who in 2013 led his workers out of the horror and sure death of the tsunami-stricken Fukushima nuclear power plant. Inventors, natural scientists, astronomers—individuals in virtually every walk of life—can provide examples of what it means to learn about oneself and the world so as to rise to one’s true humanity.

In these upper-elementary history classes, the students widen their focus from their own (often egotistical) concerns at this age to their place in the world. The teacher uses the subject matter to awaken them to humanity’s charge to become part of the solution to what ails us in society today. They have experienced the range of gifts and challenges embodied in their long-time classmates as well as their own communities. Out

Developmentally appropriate learning during this second seven-year period depends upon loving one’s teacher, loving to learn, and finding beauty in every situation.

of this, they are coming to feel their individual responsibility to take initiative and help others in their community. They also come to see their enhanced effectiveness when working together with a healthy group of peers.

Again, the aim is to teach so that these older children are moved to want to do something out of their own initiative, even if they haven't yet developed the analytical ability to stand back, see, and then understand what is called for out of the whole context. That awareness will come

in high school. Here, the task of the class and subject teachers is to keep them inspired and working to develop their own knowledge of self and world. The point is that they come to feel more inspired to want to learn and to work for positive change in themselves and the world. The curriculum and the love and respect of the children for their teachers provide the means to educate the growing human being at this stage of development.

The High School Years

Douglas Gerwin

Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice.

— Robert Frost¹

In a lecture entitled “Education for Adolescents,” Rudolf Steiner describes how, from puberty onwards, “latent questions” begin rising in the minds of young adults concerning all aspects of life in the world. Steiner says that the teacher must help adolescents articulate these questions—without, however, falling into the trap of answering them—“so that riddles arise in their youthful souls.”²

If riddles do not come to consciousness in the growing teenager, then the soul forces that would normally give rise to these life questions run the risk of being diverted in two directions: toward a lust for the erotic or toward a lust for power. In other words, with puberty a creative urge awakens in teenagers that can realize itself in both senses of the verb “to conceive”—that is, in the capacity to give birth to abstract ideas as well as the capacity to create new human life. Starting with this age, we are able to conceive our own thoughts no less than our own offspring. If these burgeoning powers of abstract thinking—

a thinking saturated, to be sure, with deep feeling and yearning for ideals—are thwarted, then they may be redirected to one or the other form of lust.

Though they share a common origin, the lust for the erotic and the lust for power manifest themselves in the human soul as opposites. The lust for the erotic may be felt as erupting out of deep and mysterious depths, like a volcano overwhelming the conscious mind with feelings that carry the searing heat of desire:

From what I've tasted of desire
I hold with those who favor fire.³

By contrast, the lust for power may be felt as a powerful intellectual force of cognition descending as though from above, taking hold of our will with an icy calculating intention born of cold hatred.

But if it had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate
To say that for destruction ice
Is also great
And would suffice.⁴

Generalizations are risky, but boys are probably more likely to divert this creative intellectual energy into a pursuit of the physical eroticism, girls into the pursuit of psychological power. You will more often discover pornographic

magazines hidden beneath the beds of the boys, for example, than of the girls, and the legion of X-rated sites on the Internet is far more geared to lure male than female visitors. On the other side of the sexual divide, the sometimes catty and even cruel behavior more typical of young adolescent girls may be understood as an expression of a lust for power.

It is important, though, to remember that both erotic and power lusts originate in the same capacity of soul—namely, in the capacity to conceive. In this context, one may ask how this capacity can be exercised without being prematurely drawn into physical expression or behavioral perversion.

Here Rudolf Steiner points to the redemptive value of beauty for engaging the erotic sense before it is diverted into the sensual and to the value of deeds of altruism in harnessing the lust for power before it is turned to selfish purpose. Ultimately, lusts of any kind stimulate a craving that can never be satisfied. In contrast, experiences of beauty and altruism yield nourishment that is deeply and lastingly satisfying. [I wonder if prophylactic can be deleted without losing the meaning. Condoms are often called prophylactics!]

For insight into the more general latent questions that live just below adolescent consciousness, we may turn to the Waldorf high school curriculum and the riddles it can inspire. In their specifics, these questions will take on an individual character in the mind and heart of each teenager who poses them. But in general it is perhaps possible to identify four simple yet archetypal questions that are bound to arise, and which the Waldorf high school curriculum is designed to address at each level of a student's four-year high school career.

Each year of the Waldorf high school curriculum embodies, in broad strokes, an underlying question or theme that helps guide

students, not just through their studies of outer phenomena, but through their inner growth as well. These themes and methods are adapted to each specific group of students and take account of the fact that teenagers mature at varying paces—hence the “broad strokes.” And yet, one can identify struggles common to most any teenager. Even though adolescents pass through developmental landscapes at varying speeds, they all nonetheless will cover similar terrain.

Grade Nine

As freshmen plunge into the high school, they are also plunging with new intensity into the materiality of their bodies—with the unfolding of puberty—and into the immateriality of abstract thinking. There is tension in this opposition, often struggle, and occasionally even revolt.

The ninth grade curriculum is designed with these tremendous developmental changes and struggles in mind. It allows the students to see their inner experiences reflected back to them in outer phenomena. In physics, for instance, students study in thermodynamics the opposition of heat and cold; in chemistry, the expansion and contraction of gases; in history, the conflicts and the resulting revolutions in the United States, France, Russia, China, and Iran; and in geology, the collision of plate tectonics.

Through the chaos and tension of these struggles, students are summoned to exercise powers of exact observation; in the sciences, to describe and draw precisely what happened in the lab experiments and demonstrations (without, adding, from the outset, an overlay of theoretical explanation); in the humanities, to recount clearly a sequence of events or to describe the nature of a character without getting lost in a plethora of details. The objective here is to train in the students powers of exact observation and reflection so that they can experience in the raging storm of phenomena

Experiences of beauty and altruism yield nourishment that is deeply and lastingly satisfying.

around them the steady ballast of their own thinking. Strong powers of wakeful perception form the basis for later years of study, well beyond high school.

One may summarize the content and approach of this freshman curriculum with the underlying question: **What? What happened? What's going on here? What did you see and hear?**

Grade Ten

Emerging from the turmoil of grade nine, the tenth grader may begin to discover a certain balance point between the violent collision of opposites. Physically, the boys may achieve a steadier gait as their legs thicken and catch up with their oversized feet, while the girls may appear more poised and upright. Mentally, the sophomores may begin to bring a certain order to the confusion of their thoughts, a calming mid-point to the turbulence of opposites.

The curriculum responds to this search with subjects that incorporate the comparison and balancing of contrasting opposites: in chemistry, the study of acids and bases; in physics, the principles of mechanics; in earth sciences, the self-regulating processes of weather patterns; in astronomy, the co-equality of centripetal and centrifugal forces; in embryology, the play of masculine and feminine influences.

Through the study of balance in natural and human phenomena, students can begin to find their own fulcrum. In so doing, they are called to exercise powers of comparison and contrast, weighing in the balance contrary phenomena to determine their value and significance, as well as their origin.

Students may discover that in this balancing of opposites, new forms can arise—in clouds and tides, or in planets and solar systems, or in male and female sexuality. This discovery may in turn prompt the desire to explore the origins of things, to find the source of these forms in the beginnings of the universe or of history or of human language. In other words, the study of

ancient times can now be taken up at a deeper level.

One may summarize the themes of this grade with the underlying question: **How? How does this relate to that? How do these contrasting phenomena interrelate? And how did they come about?**

Grade Eleven

As adolescents enter the second half of their high school career, generalizations about their development become increasingly difficult. The strokes must grow ever broader. “Sweet Sixteen” and beyond, however, is a typical time of newfound depths to the inner life of thoughts, feelings, and deeds. Deeper—and more individualized—latent questions may begin to burn. This may be the year in which students feel the urge to change schools or even to drop out of school altogether. In these inner promptings, a new and urgent voice speaks: “Leave behind what you have been given and get on with your own journey!” Outer statements of growing independence (already visible in earlier years) may also abound—in dress, hairstyles, the pursuit of part-time jobs, and what used to be the most exciting and sometimes premature token of maturity—the driver’s license.⁵

The curriculum for the junior year allows students to cut free to a greater degree from their peers and set off on their own uncharted course into the invisible recesses of life within. The junior year curriculum could be characterized by this theme of “invisibility”: namely, by the study of those subjects that draw the student into areas not accessible to the experience of our senses. Such a journey requires a new type of thinking—thinking no longer anchored in what our senses give us—as well as a feeling of confidence that this type of thinking will not lead us astray.

In literature, this journey to an invisible source is captured in the main lesson blocks devoted to the Grail legends and to Dante’s *Divine Comedy*. Other subjects, however, call

upon similar powers. In chemistry, the students enter the invisible kingdom of the atom (invisible because, by definition, one cannot “see” atoms). In physics, they explore the invisible world of electricity (which we can perceive only in its effects, not in its inherent nature). In history, they relive Medieval and Renaissance times in which men and women set off on individual quests and journeys to destinations unknown (and, in some cases, unknowable). In projective geometry, we follow parallel lines to the point they share in the infinite—a point which can be thought even though it cannot be pictured.

In short, like the horizon that beckoned to Columbus, calling him to venture beyond its visible edge, the dimensions of the classroom during the junior year are vastly enlarged to embrace the furthest reaches of the student’s own imagination and interests. In all subjects, the student is launched into more ambitious, individual projects and research assignments.

These voyages to the invisible landscapes pose an underlying question intended to strengthen the student’s powers of independent analysis and abstract theorizing. The question is: **Why?** *Why are things this way? Why did the events of history take this or that course?* And even deeper “why” questions—*Why am I here?*, questions of destiny, life’s meaning, social responsibility—may find their way into the classroom at this age.

Grade Twelve

The twelve years of Waldorf education can be compared to a giant cylindrical tower set in a vast expanse of landscape. One can imagine children entering at the ground level of this tower. In first grade and beginning to climb an interior spiral staircase of eleven turns. At each level (or floor) of the tower, they can look out through a window that gives a partial perspective of the surrounding landscape. Some curricular “windows” are set above one another, at different levels of the spiral staircase. For example, the “windows” for grade seven and for grade eleven look out at the same

landscape but from different heights. [Note: this is not quite accurate, even as a summary comparison.]

Approaching the twelfth grade level, the seniors push open a trap door in the roof of the tower and step out onto an open terrace. Now, for the first time, they can survey the full panorama of the landscape that they previously glimpsed on the way up through eleven preceding perspectives. In other words, the senior year is intended to be the gradual synthesis of the education—the great stock-taking and preparation for the next stage in learning—and also, the fully conscious placement of oneself in the center of this panorama.

“Point” and “periphery” are the complementary perspectives for this year. The senior curriculum serves both by offering subjects that synthesize many themes—world history, architecture, *Faust*—and relate these themes to the centrality of the human being. To the same end, the students study the relationship of the human being to the varied animal kingdoms (zoology). They read the Transcendentalists, Russian novelists, such as Dostoyevski, and other great thinkers and writers who have wrestled with the question of our place in the world.

Assignments increasingly call upon the students to integrate what they have studied, to synthesize disparate disciplines in an attempt to address the underlying question of the senior curriculum: **Who?** *Who is this being that is called Human?* And ultimately—*Who stands behind the outer play of events and natural phenomena, integrating them in a synthesizing whole?*

In this sense, the curriculum of the twelfth grade not only recapitulates the themes of the four years of high school, but also returns to the place where the Waldorf curriculum began in grade one—with the image of the whole. Now, however, the difference, one hopes, is that the student will truly “know the place for the first time.”

In summary:

Grade nine, by training powers of *observation*,
speaks to the underlying question: **What?**

Grade ten, by training powers of *comparison*,
speaks to the underlying question: **How?**

Grade eleven, by training powers of *analysis*,
speaks to the underlying question: **Why?**

Grade twelve, by training powers of *synthesis*,
speaks to the underlying question: **Who?**

By means of these broad and archetypal questions, high school students are invited to explore the fathomless riddles of their surroundings and of their own existence, starting in the breadth of the outer world—the world of “What Is”—and culminating in the depths of the inner world—the world of “Who Is.” Ultimately it is these questions that will guide them in the pursuit of their creative conceptions, both intellectual and sexual.

Endnotes

- 1 Robert Frost, “Fire and Ice” in *Complete Poems of Robert Frost* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), p. 268.
- 2 Rudolf Steiner, “Education for Adolescents” (21 June 1922), reprinted in *Genesis of a Waldorf High School: A Source Book*, ed. Douglas Gerwin, 3rd edition (Fair Oaks, CA: AWSNA Publications, 2001), pp. 3–6. This lecture should not be confused with the lecture cycle which Rudolf Steiner gave to the Waldorf teachers a year earlier and which was initially known as “The Supplementary Course” (because it followed up on the lecture course entitled *Study of Man*) and which has since been published under various titles including *Education for Adolescents* (Hudson, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1996).
- 3 Robert Frost, *Complete Poems*, p. 268
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Whereas the receipt of the first driver’s license used to be perhaps the most important rite of passage for the adolescent, nowadays in the age of Internet and virtual friendships, somewhere between a quarter and a third of eligible teenagers are foregoing the option of getting their driver’s permit. Instead, they rely on their parents—or on rides arranged via social media—to get around.

Report from Waldorf Publications

Patrice Maynard

As we settle into our new place as the publishing arm of the Research Institute for Waldorf Education, we are engaging and collaborating with people from around the world who write, publish, appreciate Waldorf education, and support education in many ways, especially through the medium of books.

Douglas Gerwin's long-awaited compendium, *Trailing Clouds of Glory: Essays on Human Sexuality and the Education of Youth in Waldorf Schools*, is finally in the hands of all schools, and our work now is to get it into the hands of educators and parents everywhere to stimulate discussion and provide new perspectives on this delicate and powerful topic.

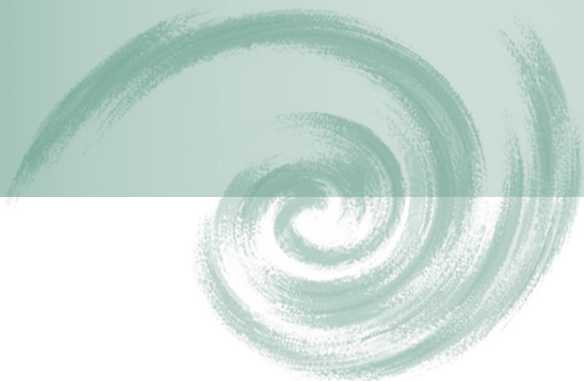
Frans Lutters' book, *The Grail Mystery and the Seven Liberal Arts*, is also now in our schools. It goes deeply and succinctly into our connections with the courts of Charlemagne and the Virgins of the Grail: Grammatica, Rhetorica, Dialectica, Arithmetica, Geometria, Musica, and Astronomia. Both of these latest books from Waldorf Publications help shed new light for parents and teachers on the sacred task of raising children.

At long last the beautiful reader for first, second, and third graders, *The Sun With Loving Light*, is being stitched together as a hard-bound edition. A soft-bound edition will follow. Stephen Bloomquist, four-time class teacher and current Leadership Council representative for the Northeast Region of AWSNA, is the creative and patient editor of this collection of poems, songs, and stories. This new version of a classic Waldorf text owes its inspiration to Hansjörg Hofrichter, a Waldorf graduate himself, who as a child enjoyed the first version of this reader, produced by the celebrated Waldorf teacher Caroline von Heydebrand under the title *Der Sonne Licht* (later brought out in English as *The*

Key of the Kingdom). It is thrilling to think that sets of these hard-bound readers on the shelves of each Waldorf school in North America will be connecting first graders around the world.

Assessment for Learning in Waldorf Classrooms, a five-year research project led by Helen-Ann Ireland and Sara Ciborski, with funding from the Waldorf Educational Foundation, has been accepted for publication by Academica Press. This constitutes our first peer-reviewed research project to be published beyond our own immediate circles. This project will help Waldorf class teachers delineate systematically their methods of setting educational goals, the benchmarks they develop towards those goals, and the techniques used to assess attainment of the goals on individual and class levels. Linda Williams, PhD, a class teacher at the Detroit Waldorf School, has written the required commendatory preface for the research.

The Avalon Initiative, another research project of RIWE involving Waldorf Publications, explores issues concerning freedom, funding, and accountability in education. This initiative has joined forces with two SUNY University professors who espouse freedom of teachers from government and corporate influences. These professors and the Avalon Initiative together are sponsoring a special gathering of teachers from both independent and public schools that will feature a presentation of the newly published research by Academica. Carol Bärtges, high school teacher, former class teacher, and graduate of the New York City Rudolf Steiner School, will be one of three panel members at the event. She will present a picture, documented by the research of Ireland and Ciborski, of how thorough assessment of students can be successfully undertaken without employing standardized testing.



Report from the Online Waldorf Library

Marianne Alsop

The Online Waldorf Library (OWL) had its busiest year in 2014 with a record 132,000 visitors to the website—well over 10,000 a month, and a large increase from 75,600 in 2013. It is indeed proving to be a useful tool for research by Waldorf teachers, college students, and parents around the world.

Our focus this year continues to be adding articles and eBooks translated into Spanish. Visitors will now find two specific categories on the Home page, one for *Libros en Español* and the other for *Artículos en Español*. We now have fourteen eBook titles in Spanish and twelve newly translated articles, seven of them from *Renewal* magazine on topics specific to early childhood development and education. With permission from the Alliance for Childhood, several of their excellent research articles have now been translated and posted on the OWL including “Crisis en el Kinder” (“Crisis in the Kindergarten”), “Ante el dilema de la pantalla” (“Facing the Screen Dilemma”); and “La crisis en la educación preescolar” (“The Crisis in Early Education”).

In our en Español eBook section you will find *Ilusión Educativa: Una Crítica al Uso de la Computadora en la Infancia* (*Fool’s Gold: A Critical Look at Computers in Childhood*). Further research articles on the young child in school, at play, and in the family are being translated now and will be added later this year.

The OWL continues to offer site visitors recent editions of national and international journals published about Waldorf education. Recently added is “The Beating Drum,” published by the Early Childhood Association of South Africa. Back issues of the *Research Bulletin*,

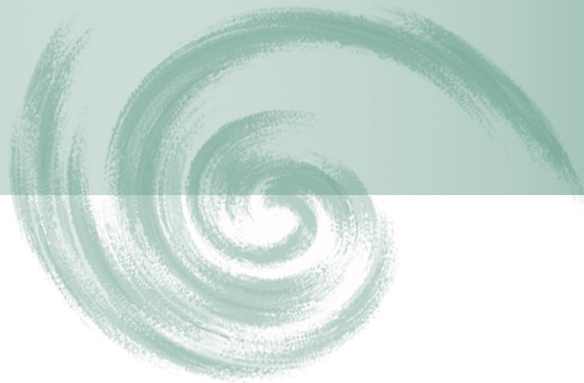
Gateways, Waldorf Journal Projects, Waldorf Clearinghouse Newsletter Archive, *Journal for Waldorf-Rudolf Steiner Education* (New Zealand), *Pacifica Journal Archive* (Oceania and the Far East), *Waldorf Science Newsletter Archive*, *Rundbrief/ Journal of the Pedagogical Section*, RoSE (Research on Steiner/Waldorf Education); and Association for a Healing Education, among others, are always available.

Since the start of this year, a number of Waldorf Publications have been added to our eBook section. These include *What Animals Say to Each Other* and *Brother Francis* by Jakob Streit, and *Topics in Math for the 11th Grade*, edited by Robert Neumann, and new, revised and updated editions of *A Context for Renewed Economics* by Michael Spence, *Norse Mythology and the Modern Human Being* by Ernst Uehli, *Morality and Ethics* edited by David Mitchell, and *Verses and Poems & Stories to Tell* by Dorothy Harrer.

More eBook titles are expected as we continue through this publication year, and all eBooks and articles may be downloaded at no charge.

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

Research Opportunities



Teachers are invited to participate in a couple of research projects currently underway. The first invitation comes from Patrick Wakeford-Evans, long-time teacher at Rudolf Steiner College, who writes:

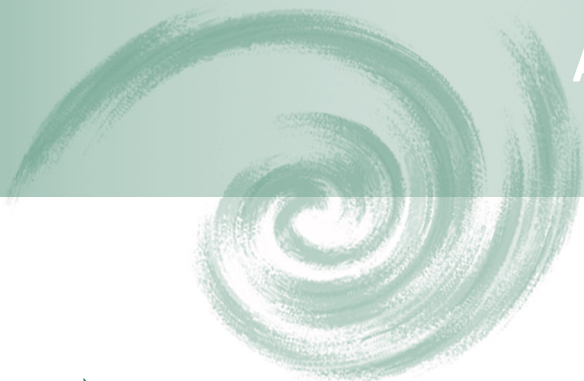
Please join my study exploring peak experiences in teachers during learning encounters with children. This phenomenon has been studied in artists, athletes, and musicians, but rarely among teachers. We all know that the meaningful encounters we have with children sustain us, as teachers, and give our lives meaning. I hope you will participate in this study, which is the basis for my doctoral dissertation. Follow the link below to my research website.

https://www.taskstream.com/ts/manager61/pwe_phd.

The second is a project sponsored by the Research Institute for Waldorf Education (RIWE) and coordinated by Elan Leibner, editor of RIWE's *Research Bulletin*:

Entitled "ActionWave" this project is an investigation of a method for creating systematic, rhythmic intervals of (intensity-modulated) activity and recovery, based on the research of cardiovascular surgeon Irving Dardik. In the context of Waldorf education, this project will attempt to codify "breathing" in the classroom through sequences of mostly higher-than-average-intensity action, followed by complete recovery. The first phase of the study has returned largely positive results, and we are looking to enlarge the number of teachers willing to try this methodology in their classrooms. Modest stipends are available for teachers participating in this research. For more information, contact Elan at:

waldorfresearchbulletin@gmail.com.



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 computers and the effects of media on children, alternatives to standardized testing, physical health and psychological wellbeing of students, science teaching with a phenomenological approach, the role of the arts in education, and the philosophical underpinnings of Waldorf education.

As a sponsor of colloquia and conferences, the Research Institute brings together educators, psychologists, physicians, and social scientists for discussions on current issues related to education. RIWE publishes a *Research Bulletin* twice a year and prepares educational resources, including collections of eBooks and articles (a growing number of them newly translated into Spanish). Many of these publications are available without charge on the website of the Online Waldorf Library (OWL), a virtual library created and managed by the Research Institute: www.waldorflibrary.org.

In 2013 the Research Institute took over the publications arm of the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA) and re-branded it as Waldorf Publications. It includes resources for teachers and administrators, readers and children's books, collections of plays and poetry, science materials and kits, science and math newsletters, inspirational essays, proceedings of colloquia, and a range of publicity materials about Waldorf education. It also carries

books published by the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America (WECAN) and the Pedagogical Section Council (PSC) of the School for Spiritual Science, as well as AWSNA's twice-yearly magazine *Renewal*.

As an initiative working on behalf of the Waldorf movement, the Research Institute receives support and guidance from the PSC and financial support through the following organizations:

- Astoria-Stiftung
- Foundation for Rudolf Steiner Books
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- Marshall and Margharite McComb Foundation
- Rudolf and Clara Kreutzer-Stiftung
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- Sprout Foundation
- Waldorf Curriculum Fund
- Waldorf Educational Foundation
- Waldorf-Stiftung

The Research Institute is a tax-exempt organization and accepts contributions through its annual giving campaign and special appeals.

Summary of Activities Supported by the Research Institute

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A think tank for questions of freedom in education

COLLOQUIA (with published proceedings) on teaching:

- Chemistry
- Computer and Information Technology
- English
- Life Sciences and Environmental Studies
- Mathematics
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Survey of Waldorf Graduates
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Projects

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