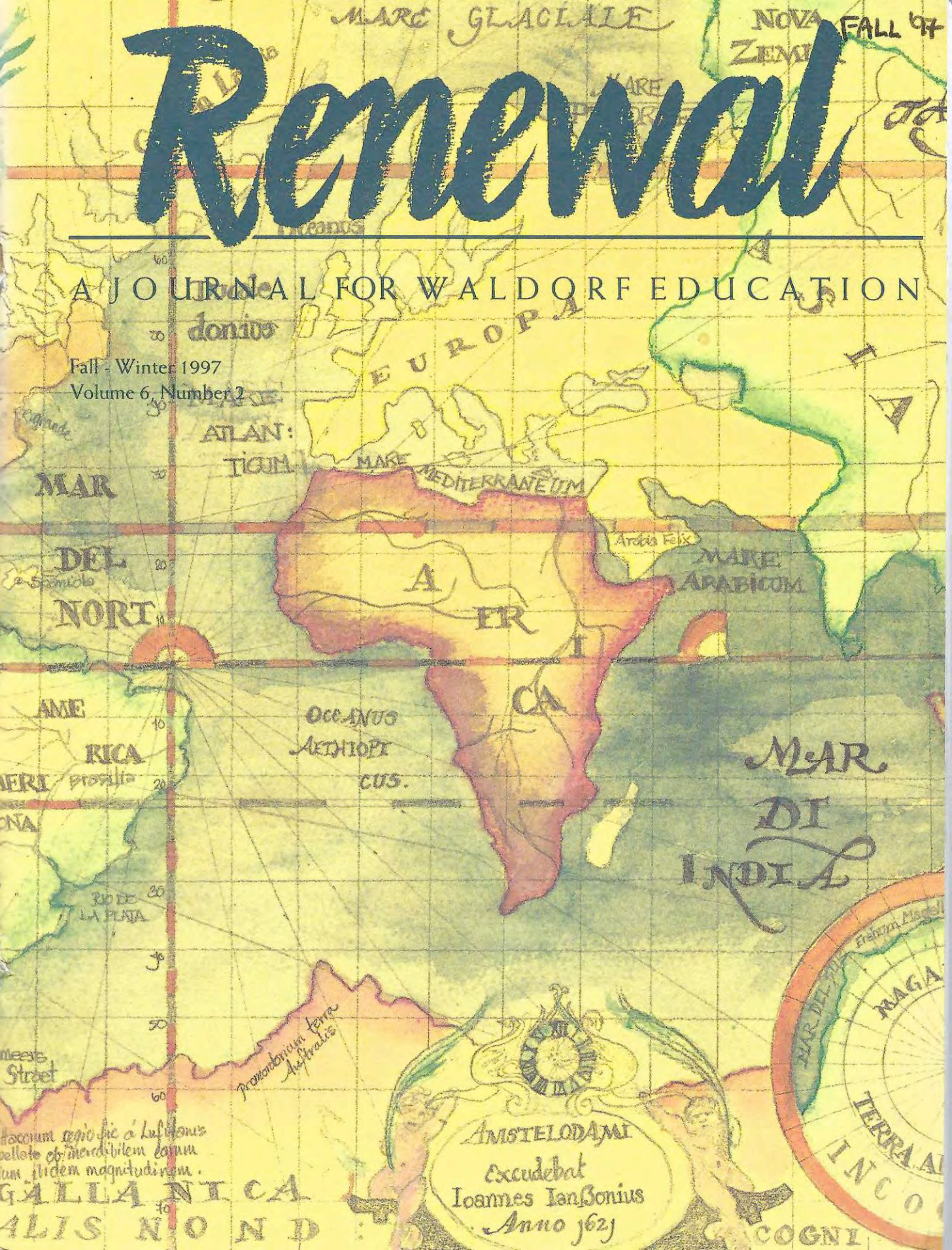


Renewal

A JOURNAL FOR WALDORF EDUCATION

Fall - Winter 1997

Volume 6, Number 2



A Wound Awoke Me

A wound awoke me.
Its bitter pain broke me
A pathway into the world
A passageway, so that I heard
In my heart when a wounded one
Spoke me
A soul-burdened word.

And a word woke me
To reach
Into the wounds of the world—

And the wounds
Became speech.

Christy MacKaye Barnes

Renewal

A Journal for Waldorf Education

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Editor's Column

By Ronald E. Koetzsch



Like other approaches to education, Waldorf Education teaches children to read, write, and do arithmetic.

It provides them, through the study of history, literature, geography, and science, with knowledge about human culture, past and present, and about the natural world. And it helps them to develop analytical, rational, and critical faculties.

But Waldorf Education also aims to nurture and develop the human imagination. And imagination—the ability to form vivid inner images based on sensory experience; to create new and original images; to recall, transform, and manipulate these images; and to use them to deal with the challenges and questions of human life—imagination, that delightful and precious human capacity, is the theme of several articles in this issue.

Carol Toole ("Beginning with Wonder and Experience") shows how in the kindergarten children can be introduced to the wonders of the natural world—and thus be prepared for the later study of science—without compromising their lively and vivid imaginative life.

David Adams ("Using Riddles in the Lower Grades") discusses how riddles can help third- and fourth-graders retain the imaginative vitality of the younger years and also help develop their emerging intellectual capacities.

Michael Preston ("Passion in Art and Science") deals with the study of science in the upper grades. Preston holds that the Waldorf approach—which brings first the direct experience of phenomena and only later deals with intellectual constructs about the phenomena—preserves and stimulates the imaginative faculty. Preston points out as well that the empathy and sense of wonder that belong to a healthy imagination also lie at the heart of artistic creativity.

Christy Barnes ("For the Love of Literature") describes the many techniques she developed to preserve and develop the imaginative faculty in her high school students. Also, she points out that the imagination thus cultivated holds the promise of human progress, of the creation of solutions to old problems.

John Gardner ("Education in Search of the Spirit") argues that the preservation of the imagination—through an education that nurtures in a balanced way the intellectual, the affective, and the volitional—can lead to a new type of imagination-enriched thinking. This thinking enables the child to be "cool" (objective) about inner and personal realities and "warm" (empathetic) about the beings, human beings, and phenomena he or she encounters in the world.

Two articles deal with another important topic—parent-teacher relations in a Waldorf school. Parent Judy Chaves ("Can We Talk?") provides a parent's perspective in a heartfelt and beautifully written piece, while Roberto Trostli

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News From AWSNA

By David Alsop, Chairman

Several years ago, a very good friend of mine gave me a small sign to post on my bulletin board. It says, "A closed mouth gathers no foot." Generally, I consider this to be pretty good advice, especially when one is tempted to boast about one thing or another. Lately, though, I've been thinking about the necessity not to remain "closed mouthed," especially when challenged right down to the level of core values and principles. The Waldorf school movement is facing such a challenge today.

It is probably inevitable that in our times Waldorf Education would come under attack by a small but vocal group of individuals who subscribe to the "skeptics'" view of the world. If one's fundamental premise is that physical science will answer any and all valid questions, one may have difficulty with the concept of spiritual science. In fact, these skeptics do not consider it "scientific" to allow that the scientific method might also be applied to matters of spiritual research. That spiritual science may actually have any valid contribution to make to farming, medicine, education, or any other human activity is, to them, absurd, and the public needs to be protected from such foolishness.

When Waldorf educators use the word "spiritual" we do not mean "religious." The determined effort to confuse these two very different concepts has even led to the ridiculous assertion that Waldorf Education in the public sector is a violation of



the separation of church and state! What church?

As Waldorf educators, our premise is that all hu-

man beings are spiritual beings who exist before birth and after death, and that one of the primary tasks of the education of children (along with reading, writing, and arithmetic!) is to be mindful of the developing integration of the soul/spiritual part of the child and his or her growing physical body. This is religious? Indeed, one of the things that needs to be said more frequently is that Waldorf educators understand thinking as a spiritual activity, supported by the functions of the physical brain. Waldorf Education is concerned with enabling healthy individual human consciousness in the service of free spiritual activity in the adult human being.

It seems that perhaps the real issue is not the separation of church and state but the separation of school and state. If the state is incapable of distinguishing between spiritual activity and religion, then perhaps it could best concern itself with guaranteeing the right to an education for every child and leave the practice of education to educators. Waldorf educators, unlike some of our skeptical critics, trust the ability of parents to understand the needs of their own children—and to make appropriate choices.

PROFILE:

Christy MacKaye Barnes



Christy Barnes was born almost ninety years ago in Cornish, New Hampshire. She grew up in a home where poetry and the theater were living realities. She recalls:

My mother and father were consummate readers. Hardly a night went by without their reading aloud to us children. Our whole childhood was filled with poetry and the theater—we breathed that atmosphere.

Christy's father, Percy MacKaye—a well-known poet and dramatist in the early years of this century—believed in the art of the theater, with its social dimension, as a great educational force for humankind.

Our house was always filled with artists and actors—Rabindranath Tagore, Robert Frost, Vachel Lindsay, and Carl Sandburg came to see us.

During her twenties Christy went to Ireland, where she met William Butler Yeats and other luminaries of the Irish literary world. In the 1930s she went to Dornach, Switzerland, and studied the

art of speech formation, principally with Erna Grund, a leading actress of the Goetheanum stage group. Christy recalls:

Dornach was a stimulating place. There was a great coming and going of people from all over Europe. I received my confirmation as a speech artist from Marie Steiner. . . . I met Henry Barnes during this time, and we were married in 1939, three days after World War II broke out. We left Europe on June 1, 1940, on the last American boat out of the Mediterranean.

Christy was a class teacher at the Rudolf Steiner School in New York for a time, then became a high school English teacher there, pursuing this vocation with enthusiasm and inspiration for many years. Christy remembers:

When I began, Waldorf Education was so new in America that I had a free hand as to the curriculum. Many of the so-called Waldorf traditions, such as teaching Moby Dick in the ninth grade, I started in those years.

In teaching writing I tried to guide my students not toward self-expression but into the subtle and exact expression of the world about them. [I tried to help them realize] that the use of imagination is to see more deeply, truly, and comprehensively into life, to see in a deed its consequence, and in a human being his or her inmost nature.

In looking at the artists of today, I am grateful for those who want to help humanity. Artistic gifts deteriorate if they are not used for an ideal. True art demands tremendous discipline.

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LETTER:

I appreciate Editor Ronald Koetzsch's effort to clarify the role of religion in Waldorf Education (Spring-Summer 1997). Speaking as one who is not an anthroposophist but has been a Waldorf parent for three years, I would like to offer some additional observations.

1. Dr. Koetzsch describes Rudolf Steiner's worldview as "essentially a Christ-centered one," although expressing "an esoteric or cosmic Christianity quite different from that of most Christian denominations." Waldorf public relations, however, rarely betrays this fact. In speaking to Christians, we try to sound as Christian as possible, with esoteric and cosmic dimensions tucked safely out of sight. In speaking to those who are not Christians, we try to sound as liberal and secular as possible. Our effort to be nearly all things to all people is often neither accurate nor honest.

2. The Christian elements that are part of Anthroposophy and Waldorf Education are likely to be unsatisfying to most Christians, and some would even be disturbing. Karma and reincarnation, for example, are Eastern ideas, not Christian ones. Christian theology teaches resurrection, not reincarnation, and most Christians would find the two ideas incompatible.

3. I assume it's true that "Anthroposophy is not taught in any Waldorf school." But anthroposophical ideas certainly inform Waldorf curriculum and

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Meetings With a Snake

By Stephen L. Talbott

A video or CD-ROM brings to the classroom almost promiscuously rich vignettes from nature—images and sounds that would otherwise remain unavailable to students. If the curriculum calls for nature studies, it seems niggling and petty to suggest that anything is missing from the remarkable video footage available today. What more intimate and revelatory window onto nature could there possibly be?

But now read a true story:

Yesterday my eleven-year-old son and I were hiking in a remote wood. He was leading. He spotted [a] four-foot rattlesnake in the trail about six feet in front of us. We watched it for quite some time before going around it. When we were on the way home, he commented that this was the best day of his life. He was justifiably proud of the fact that he had been paying attention and had thus averted an accident and that he had been able to observe this powerful, beautiful, and sinister snake.

Barry Angell, the father, then asks exactly the right question:

I wonder how many armchair nature-watchers have seen these dangerous snakes on the tube and said, "This is the best day of my life." [And Angell concludes:] Better one rattlesnake on the trail than a whole menagerie of gorillas, lions, and elephants on the screen (Talbott 1995, 160).

Virtually everyone, upon hearing this story, recognizes intuitively the dramatic difference for the child between the snake on the trail and a snake on the screen. It is a difference quite obviously containing profound implications for learning. Getting a clear grasp of the difference, however, is not easy. I would like to offer a few reflections upon the story.

Representational Images are Abstractions

First, it is often claimed that, whereas the printed word is an abstraction from experience—objective and indirect—the visual image is concrete, subjective, and immediate. In an extremely important sense this is false. Whatever we may think about the two-dimensional, decorative surface as such, something further needs to be said about the representational image: relative to what is represented, it is abstract in the extreme—reduced, selective, mostly emptied of meaning. To the

degree we substitute such images for the world they represent, we move with our consciousness down the same road of abstraction along which we were already traveling with the printed word—or, at least, down a parallel track.

Angell's son, in navigating a CD-ROM, would not be at risk of spraining a toe against the exposed roots in the trail. He would not find the tree trunks rough and creviced, but rather smooth as glass. The musty smell of moss and pregnant decay would not greet him. That fullness of being, which led the ancients to an experience of nature ensouled—of dryads and naiads, gnomes, and elves—and against which our Renaissance forebears shielded themselves by beginning to purge their sense experience, their language, and their images of all interior qualities—that fullness would not be there for the little boy. The slithery snake consciousness that looked out through those baleful, unblinking eyes on the trail do not look out through the illuminated pixels on his screen.

It is, in short, the difference between nature and a picture. After immersing ourselves so fully in a reality of pictures and training ourselves to see the world as we see a picture, it is not surprising that a particularly striking anecdote should be required to remind us of the difference between the two. But difference there is. On the trail the boy met something of his personal destiny—

a destiny that might have turned out very differently had he not seen the snake as soon as he did. If education is about anything at all, it is about helping us to meet, understand, embrace, and enlarge our destinies. This requires more than the visual and textual abstractions of an electronic global village; it requires a world.

Teacher-Mediated Education

The second thing I want to say about our story is that it points to the importance of a living and present teacher. Imagine that the boy's father had begun tormenting the snake, and that together they had thrown rocks at it, finally leaving it injured or killed. We can be quite sure that the boy would not have celebrated the best day of his life. In fact, assuming that all natural feeling had not yet been deadened within him, we can guess that he would have felt distinctly out of sorts by the end of the day.

Our real task is to raise mature individuals who will be able to decide what sorts of jobs are worth creating and having in the twenty-first century.

But that, of course, is not what happened. The father clearly felt wonder at the snake's presence, admiration for its beauty, grace, and power, and a receptive curiosity about its nature. Without this context, the boy's experience could not have been what it was. What counted was not only that he met a snake on the trail,

but that he found something of the snake's meaning in his father's responses. The boy learned about the snake by seeing its image, not upon a screen, but as reflected in the response of a living teacher.

To learn, a child must find an inner connection to the subject at hand. This is not the same thing as experiencing a "cool" sensation or a powerful emotional jolt. Screen images, as long as they are continually pushed toward the new and unexpected, readily produce such jolts. But the pleasure of mere unexpectedness is not the same thing as an inner connection. It is more like a drug that calls for a steadily increasing dose. On the other hand, a fellow human being with whom the child already shares an inner landscape can help the child spin the threads of meaningful connection to the surrounding world.

So there are two things in the educational picture we've been sketching, besides the boy himself: the world and a teacher. Interestingly, there is a modest but growing body of research about the influences that make people choose careers as environmentalists, naturalists, ecologists, and so on—careers suggesting a concern for the natural world. Louise Chawla of Kentucky State University, having recently reviewed this literature, reports a remarkable consistency regarding two of the dominant influences: wild places directly experienced (usually at a young age) and adult mentors (Chawla, forthcoming; see also Sobel 1995).

That is hardly a counter-intuitive finding. Yet it does raise serious questions about today's powerful drive toward technology-mediated education. Are we proceeding with our eyes wide open?

All Education Is About Our Humanity

When we think about the teachers who most decisively influenced us, what we remember above all is the teachers themselves, not some striking piece of information they conveyed. We saw in them what it meant to be a human being facing certain aspects of the world.

It is backward to say that we must develop young minds so that they can master particular subject matters—although nearly everyone who talks about developing human capacities yields to this utilitarian story in the end. Rather, we need particular subject matters so that we can learn yet further, from our teachers and from our own experiences, what it means to be human.

The informational content of our learning is almost never as important as the intensity and qualitative vividness with which we work over this content as we bring it to life within us, or as the degree to which we exercise and extend our capacities in doing so.

It is remarkable how forgetful of ourselves we have become. Messrs. Clinton and Gore—supported by high-tech corporations and far too many educators—drill into us that we must train children for twenty-first-century jobs. But that gets it backward. Our

real task is to raise mature individuals who will be able to decide what sorts of jobs are worth creating and having in the twenty-first century.

Content Versus Capacity

I need to address an apparent contradiction. On the one hand I've said that real content—the "world" rather than various abstractions—must be the foundation for education. But, on the other hand, I've claimed that inner activity and the development of capacities—not the imbibing of content—is what really counts.

When we think about the teachers who most decisively influenced us, what we remember above all is the teachers themselves, not some striking piece of information they conveyed.

However, there is no contradiction. The content mentioned here is essential—precisely because it provides first an attraction and then the resistance against which the student can exercise his capacities. Nor is the attraction a mere matter of entertainment. What attracts us rightly to the world is the fact that we meet ourselves and we meet real destinies there. That meeting is the condition for our development, educational or otherwise.

Yes, I can meet something of my destiny in front of a video screen. Computers, too, are part of the world. But what they give us, beyond their own existence as objects,

is a drastically reduced, abstract version of the rest of the world. If I develop repetitive stress injury (RSI) while trekking through the Sierras on CD-ROM, we should remember that I got my injury, not from the rigors of a mountain path and not from a snake bite, but from a mouse while sitting in front of a video screen. The two surroundings are as different as their consequences. *

This article is the introductory section of a longer piece that appeared in the Research Bulletin of the Waldorf Education Institute (March 1997).

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Education in Search of the Spirit

By John Fentress Gardner

The following is an excerpt from the introduction to Education in Search of the Spirit by John Gardner (Hudson, N.Y.: Anthroposophic Press, 1996). Because of length considerations some sections of the original text are not included. Two sections are summarized. The summaries appear in brackets.

Humanity consists of beings of body, of soul, and of spirit. We are clearly distinguished from the animals, who are also active and conscious, by the fact that our consciousness and activity can be united in a single point that represents complete presence of mind and, at the same time, total will to action. As human beings, we refer to this fusion of wide-awake consciousness and active will into a single point when the word "I" is used.

The present conflict between the subjective and objective approaches to education is fruitless, even destructive, and cannot be made productive until these approaches are no longer in opposition to one another.

This "I" is the basis of our freedom to choose and to control our behavior. It is the basis for moral responsibility and love. Our goal is to be fully present in awareness and wholly in control of our behavior. We may dream, as animals do, but we are not doomed to dream. Animal instincts may assert themselves in us; but we have at heart, little by little, the ability to purge ourselves of merely instinctive behavior. We would prefer at all times to know clearly what we are doing, and we would prefer to do only what we ourselves intend according to clear knowledge that will please

us permanently as well as momentarily. We would like our lives from moment to moment to be known and authorized by that part of our being which is forever

In the core of our being, we are eternal spirit. Inevitably, we strive to live from this spirit. Inevitably, the goal of the education we give our children is to help them activate this deepest center of being in themselves. We seek methods that show promise of being able to awaken, draw forth, and strengthen what lies in our children as the seed of all creativeness and joy in living.

But the spirit of human life on earth does not stand naked. It is clothed in powers of soul and works through these powers. The human being thinks, feels, and wills. These forces are not equally developed from the beginning, and eventually they must be yoked together according to free choice, since of themselves they do not pull in a single direction. They contrast with and even contradict one another in their workings. One force, that of thinking, leads us beyond ourselves; it opens up the laws of the world around us. The polar opposite of thinking is volition. In exerting the force of will, we assert ourselves upon or against the world. Feeling mediates between thinking and will. It heralds the message that the world will awaken in the self, and it prepares the deed that the self will imprint upon the world.

The instability of the educational method in America during this century can be accounted for by the fact that now thinking, now feeling, and now will has been taken in turn as the clue to good education. But of course they must all be brought along. When any one is neglected, disturbances appear in the souls of the children being educated. When these disturbances become obvious enough to disturb the general public, they provoke the demand

for a change in method.

What are vaguely called "traditional" methods have usually emphasized the objective aspect of experience. They address themselves to memory and the power of thought, for these record and grasp what is going on in the world. What, with equal vagueness, have been known as "progressive" methods have tended, by contrast, to emphasize the subjective aspect of experience: impulse and feeling. They seek to bring forward the child's self and ask children what they want to do, encouraging them to follow their own desires.

When formal academic learning has noticeably begun to put out the fire of enthusiasm in many students, it is only natural that some teachers should look for ways to rekindle it. And when the emotional or free, creative approach has shown signs of fanning the flames of subjectivity out of control, it has been only prudent for teachers to box the children firmly in again and give them objective work to do. In both student and teacher, the one spirit that stands behind the several soul powers requires these shifts from knowing to feeling to doing, and back again. The human self is not free, cannot be in control, when education develops soul powers one-sidedly. It is the very center of our humanity that requires and strives to establish in us the balance and harmony of functions. Integrity in either receiving or giving requires this condition of balance and poise in the soul.

Thus the dramatic reversals in education that have taken place every decade or so in this country, from the intellectual to the affective-active, and back again from the affective-active to the intellectual, are understandable. But they tend to extremes because they are a thrashing back and forth from one sick condition to the other. They are not healthy exchanges as in normal breathing, which finds it good to breathe out and then equally good to breathe in, but repudiations and revolts.

[The scientific, materialistic worldview is to blame for this. It does not accept the reality of spirit in the world nor in the individual. It sees the world as a cosmic machine and the human being as a biological machine, an animal. The scientific worldview is the basis for most modern education.]

The present conflict between the subjective and objective approaches to education is fruitless, even destructive, and cannot be made productive until these approaches are no longer in opposition to one another. We must learn to find that which is objective in the very heart of the subject, and that which is subjective in the very heart of the object. Only in this way can we convert a stalemate into a creative process. . . .

What every human soul would really like is to find a loving, creative Selfhood somehow out there in the world, and a wise and noble Order here within itself. Then the individual could feel sure and capable within, and at home and beloved in the world. But while new educational methods have at last been developed that are capable of giving students this twofold healing experience, these methods require a spiritualized world conception. They call for a new theory of knowledge to support new insights into both world and self. To find God once again in both the human soul and the processes of nature requires a further evolution of thinking ability that can carry cognition beyond the ordinary limits of knowledge.

We should be warm toward the world, however, not because it can supply our selfish needs but because in and of itself the world is filled with beauty, wonder, and revelation.

[Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner developed just such a theory of knowledge and applied it practically in an approach to education. Steiner's advice about how to apply his general counsel about balanced human development to the present educational dilemma may be briefly summarized.]

To achieve an ardent, creative response to life, without losing a firm hold on objective knowledge, skills, and discipline, a student needs to reverse the usual attitudes. According to Steiner, we must learn to be warm toward the world rather than warm about ourselves, and cool about ourselves rather than cool toward the world.

Let students be asked to take up facts and ideas about the natural world, the lore of science and history, with feeling as well as

thinking. Let students pour creative power into observation of the world, identifying intimately with each thing observed: assessing and reproducing, as it were, these things within their own will. Let each form, color, and tone awaken within them a distinct, active feeling; and let such feeling go on to express itself through moral and artistic deeds.

Let the individual student learn to regard personal preferences, private needs, and desires from a certain distance. Never let the student be turned off to the world; rather let her or him be turned off to things that concern only the self. We do well to see ourselves as others see us, and to value our own affairs no more highly than others do. We should strive for objectivity above all concerning ourselves, since what is of greatest value is the element within us that determines, with absolute impartiality, the objective value of things. This is unbiased thought and the power of reason. In our inner life, desires should not dominate; thinking should be foremost, especially the thinking directed toward other beings.

Contemplation of nature in the right way takes us out of ourselves, a thing for which we long; and self-forgetful love, in turn, fills our inner emptiness.

The thinking that results from this change in attitude will not be ordinary thinking—bloodless and abstract—but will begin with empathy and will actively involve the soul. It will not seem at first to be thinking, but thinking will be the natural flowering of what it is. It will be feeling, but feeling that is disciplined and articulated by strict adherence to the qualities of existence that have awakened it. Feeling so directed will eventually transform itself into objective thought, and such deeply grounded thought will be all the more powerful, resonant, and creative for having been long in gestation.

Impersonal logic serves especially well when applied to [our own] personal feelings. And personal warmth never serves better than when it helps us to become intuitive concerning

others. We should be warm toward the world, however, not because it can supply our selfish needs but because in and of itself the world is filled with beauty, wonder, and revelation. Contemplation of nature in the right way takes us out of ourselves, a thing for which we long; and self-forgetful love, in turn, fills our inner emptiness. To share cognitively and compassionately in the existing creation always charges the personal soul with new creative power.

Only in the human soul can [the phenomena of the world] reveal the inwardness of their nature, which is rooted, like our own, in the divine ground of being. By outward observation we know ourselves to be body, but through inward activity we prove to be soul and spirit. Similarly, insofar as we look at nature from the outside, we confront only bodily processes; but through the whole-souled kind of thinking that love has transformed to intuitive vision, we can begin to discover personality and meaning in all phenomena. We are then on the way to finding God in the world, and it is this experience alone that has power to satisfy and empower, to summon and release, the divine creativeness in ourselves.

Educators who have confirmed for themselves this theory of knowledge will no longer have to oscillate and alternate between academic-traditional and affective-progressive methods. They can do full justice to both the human self and the world in every aspect of teaching, whether their initial emphasis is cognitive or creative. ❀

John F. Gardner has been an anthroposophist since 1933. From 1949 to 1974 he taught and was faculty chair at the Waldorf School of Garden City (New York). He was instrumental in building the school into a twelve-grade institution. Also, Mr. Gardner started and directed the Waldorf Institute for Liberal Education, a masters degree program at Adelphi which trained Waldorf teachers. In the 1970s he was president and then board chairman of the Myrin Institute for Adult Education in New York City. He was also the leading founder of the Council for Educational Freedom in America. Mr. Gardner's writings include, besides Education in Search of the Spirit, American Heralds of the Spirit and Youth Longs to Know. The latter will be published in 1997 by the Anthroposophic Press.

From Journalist to Waldorf Teacher

By Lynda Smith

For seventeen years—from the time I graduated from the University of Kansas with a degree in journalism to the week before I began a practicum at the East Bay Waldorf School three and a half years ago—I worked as a newspaper journalist. I worked primarily as an editor at such newspapers as *USA Today*, the *Miami Herald*, and the *San Francisco Chronicle*. For about half that time I loved my work. It satisfied, I think, the idealism and the activism of my twenties.

Recently I looked back on my previous work and began to realize that there are more similarities between teaching in a Waldorf school and working as a newspaper

editor than I ever realized. Both professions have at their heart strong ideals that, much of the time, may be underserved but that in both cases have to do with freedom. In the journalistic sphere, it is political and social and cultural freedom that are served. In Waldorf Education it is spiritual freedom. The impulse to serve led me to both journalism and teaching, but I believe my work now represents an evolution of that impulse.

Another similarity is that each profession has to do with "story," the creation of and communication of story. As an editor, I assigned stories to writers, edited stories, occasionally wrote stories. At their best, those stories helped readers navigate their

complicated lives; provided pictures of the inner workings of the institutions that influenced their lives; or helped them in practical ways, for example by offering tips on finding a good day care center or a reliable home remodeler. Sometimes, those stories even inspired a new outlook, shifted a perspective, or softened a prejudice. At their worst, those stories trivialized suffering, turned human beings into compilations of statistics, generalized, titillated, and distracted.

Now, as a teacher, I am still a trafficker in stories, but the stories are very different. The stories I tell today are not communicated for anonymous masses, but for twenty-six particular fourth-graders. These stories are not filled



with statistics, facts, and corroborating quotes from experts. The fairy tales, legends, fables, myths, and stories I have told and am telling are true and living pictures. Their purpose is not to make the children better consumers or even better citizens. The purpose of the stories is to enliven the imaginations of the children; to provide in an exquisitely subtle way an experience of transcendence, of the divine origin of all life; and to help the children find meaning and order in existence. And, of course, the stories are told, not read aloud, not read by the children from xeroxed pages. The stories are told, because in that exchange of speaking and receiving, there is communion.

My work and relations with colleagues in Waldorf Education also represents an evolution from what I experienced as a journalist. In my newspaper work, the writers and editors regularly gathered around a large oval table for story meetings, where we would brainstorm story ideas. We would go around the circle, and each writer or editor would suggest two or three story ideas that arose out of his or her experiences or reading. (For the first several years I was in journalism, we were guided by what we believed the reader *ought* to know. Sometime in the early '80s, that guiding principle changed to what the reader *wanted* to know, thereby sacrificing the highest, the essential, for the popular.) After the story meetings, the section editor would choose his or her favorite ideas and assign writers to

them. Thus the creative work fit into an old, hierarchical structure. The authority, the boss, made all the decisions.

Also, we were all members of a union, the Newspaper Guild, which meant we followed decades-old rules about how long we worked, what constituted a legitimate need for time off, even what activities outside work were deemed acceptable.

To love—I am learning—is not a feeling, not a sentiment. It is an activity that requires daily diligence and discipline. It is, I believe, pure attention to the other, so that the individuality of the other, the "I am," is allowed to speak.

Today, as a Waldorf teacher, I work under no such hierarchy, no such contractual rules. I still sit in a circle with my colleagues every week, but decisions are made differently. There is no boss; we are each our own boss. Decisions often arise, not exactly out of consensus, but out of our efforts to discern and express the essential, whether in looking at a child in a child study, evaluating a colleague, or considering a policy change.

Though I loved much about journalism, I knew I would leave it when I had my son twelve years ago. I had the experience then that I'm sure many other parents have also had. I could no longer distance myself from the suffering of others, especially

children. When seeing a starving child on the news or a homeless child in his mother's lap in Union Square, it was as if I were seeing my own son. Somehow, in loving my son, I was mysteriously loving all children. It became no longer enough just to see the world through the glass wall of journalism. I had to act.

My son, of course, led me to Waldorf Education. When he was in the first grade I began the teacher training program in San Francisco. It was through this training and, later, through my work with my students, that I began to get a glimmer of understanding of what it means to love a child. To love—I am learning—is not a feeling, not a sentiment. It is an activity that requires daily diligence and discipline. It is, I believe, pure attention to the other, so that the individuality of the other, the "I am," is allowed to speak. It is the extinguishing of one's own prejudices, sympathies, antipathies, expectations, so that "Thy will, not my will, is done." In a seeming paradox, one has to become supremely sovereign in one's self to extinguish self.

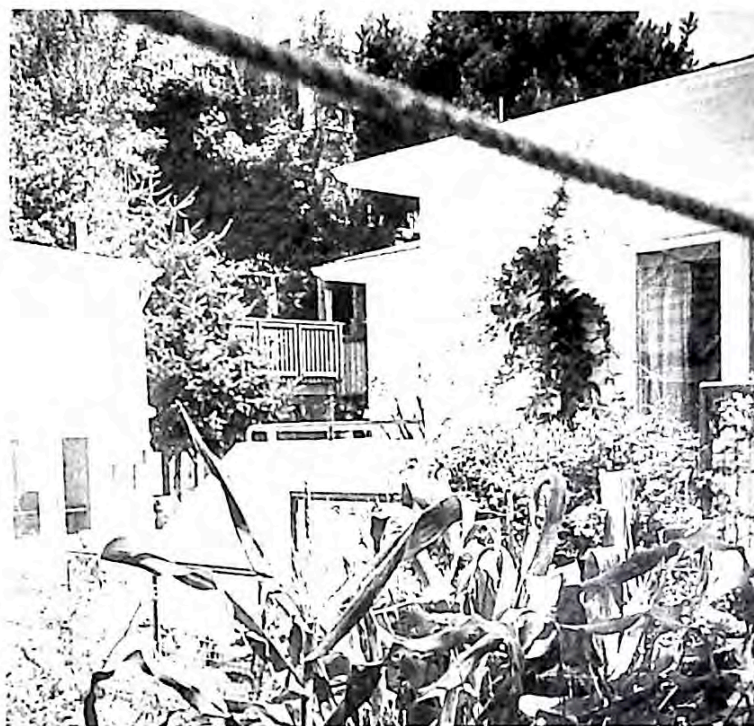
The question, of course, is how does one do that? Leonardo said that "Great love is the daughter of great understanding." So, to love, we must understand. What is to understand? I think it is—again—to discern the essential from the nonessential. That discernment arises from the disciplined practice of observation. Through observing and treasuring the particularities of each child, we may gradually come to know how

to approach him or her. Through the inner activity of recreating a child's stance, gaze, speech, laugh, I can hope to invite a third to come between us—an inspiring being who perhaps will grace me someday with a whisper, a hint of what this child is really asking of me.

I am not able to do all this. I hold this as an ideal, that which propels me forward and helps me endure the long hours, the difficult phone conversations with parents, the painful encounters with my own limitations.

Accompanying this work always is the potential for egotism. It is there in any spiritual striving and any intent "to serve." Last year I used with my class a little story called "The Gift of the Lynx," about a wise hermit whose wisdom and healing powers were sought by many. One day a lynx showed up at his door with her little one at her side. "Please, please, help my child. She is blind and I fear that she will die if she cannot see to defend herself." The hermit spat in the little one's eyes, and for the first time, she looked around, and then scampered away. A few days later the mother lynx returned to the hermit with a gift—the skin from a young lamb. The hermit saw, not far away, the slain, still trembling lamb and, next to it, a crying old woman.

"How could you do this?" demanded the hermit of the lynx. "Did you not see that this lamb was this old woman's only possession?"



The garden and courtyard of the San Francisco Waldorf School.

"No, I did not see," said the lynx. "I am so very sorry. I did not think through my actions."

Although the hermit received many gifts from grateful people he had helped—toys, clothes, bread—he always gave everything away. The lambskin was the only gift he kept.

"Why?" I asked my students. After many wonderful responses, one little girl said: "He kept the gift as a reminder. Sometimes in trying to do good, we do harm." Indeed, and I added: "In trying to be selfless, we are sometimes selfish."

In my work as a teacher, if I think that my loving presence will change my children's lives for the better, I am not free, nor am I leaving them free. If I observe or meditate on a child with the expectation that I will

solve the riddle of this child, I am not free. There must be no expectation of an outcome. I must just pay attention, pure and simple. If I think that Waldorf Education is the only answer, if I work out of a zealous fervor, I am unbalanced, unfree. We walk a fine line, we Waldorf teachers. We must walk with certainty, trust, steadfastness—but also with humility, and the awareness we have only just begun to learn and to love. *

Lynda Smith is now teaching fourth grade at the San Francisco Waldorf School. She received her teacher training at the San Francisco Extension of Rudolf Steiner College while working as an editor at the San Francisco Chronicle. This article is based on a talk she gave in the spring of 1996 at a conference titled "Toward Healthy Waldorf Schools," sponsored by AWSNA and held at Rudolf Steiner College in Fair Oaks, California.

Using Riddles in the Lower Grades

By David Adams

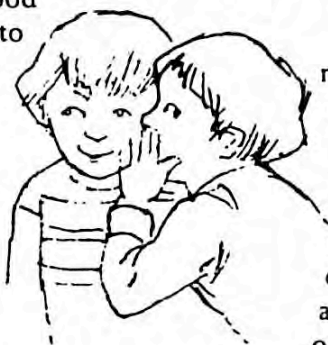
*As I went through the garden
gap,
Who should I meet but Dick
Red-Cap!
A stick in his hand, a stone in
his throat,
If you tell me this riddle, I'll
give you a goat.*

What child can resist the challenge of a good riddle? Sure, trying to guess riddles can be fun, but can riddles also be "good" for children? I certainly think so, at least with the right kind of riddle. As a Waldorf class teacher and music teacher, I often used riddles and found them to support some of the basic goals of Waldorf Education in the early elementary grades. By the way, if you haven't yet guessed the traditional riddle above, the answer is *a cherry*.

As far as I am aware, Rudolf Steiner, the founder of Waldorf Education, never said anything about using (or not using) riddles when working with children in the lower grades. However, he did have much to say about the importance of developing the powers of imaginative thinking that begin to emerge in the child around the time of the loss of the first baby teeth. In

1923 he said:

All the forces working through the child after it has passed through the change of teeth are striving toward an inwardly mobile imagery, and we support this picture-forming element if we use a pictorial approach in everything we bring to the child.¹



The kind of riddles I want to draw to your attention are not those intellectual riddles based on oral or literary puns or on other advanced,

clever humor (e.g., "Why did the chicken cross the road?", "How many Waldorf teachers does it take to screw in a light bulb?"), or other types of faddish "joke" riddles mocking an ethnic minority, other specific group, or individual. Nor do I mean the traditional kind of rhymed intellectual or arithmetic puzzler ("As I was going to St. Ives, I met a man with seven wives. . .").

To appreciate the pictorial quality really appropriate riddles can inspire, it is useful to go back to the imaginative style and feeling of a common type of older riddle that has been handed

down in oral tradition. Consider the following; the answers are at the end of the article.

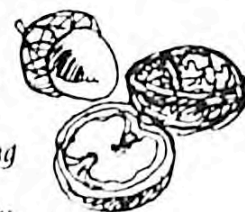
*Thirty white horses upon a red
hill,
Now they tramp, now they
champ,
Now they stand still.*

*On yonder hill there is a red
deer.*

*The more you shoot it, the
more you may,
You can't drive that red deer
away.*

*Old Mother Twitchett has but
one eye
And a long tail which she can
let fly,
And every time she goes over a
gap
She leaves a bit of her tail in a
trap.*

*As soft as
silk,
As white as
milk,
A very strong
wall
Covers me all.*



These riddles use language to build up vivid mental images—or at least to challenge children to find the unspoken mental picture that correctly matches all the descriptive features of the riddle. Through meter and rhyme,

these verses also bring in a rhythmic or musical element appropriate for elementary age children.

I have come to feel that such riddles are directed toward a particular period in child development—those few precious years when the child is no longer in the largely imitative, movement-oriented phase of the first six or seven years of life nor yet quite on the other side of that great divide of the nine-year-old change, after which the child experiences a sharper distinction between self and world, between inner and outer experience.

A new imaginative or pictorial thinking comes gradually to birth around the beginning of the change of teeth, and the child is hungry for mental images to work with. At the same time, a new blossoming of the feeling life is tied to a natural affinity with rhythm of all kinds. It is between these twin pillars of imagination and rhythm that the riddles I am suggesting find their home.

Riddles can be helpful for stimulating those children who do not live strongly or freely enough in their imagination and mental imagery. This unfortunately characterizes all too many children in today's world of ubiquitous electronic visual media and external advertising images. Deluged and overstimulated by countless strong, preformed images, many children today have not been adequately stirred to develop their own inter-

nal image-making powers. Such children are eager to take up the challenge of solving riddles, but they will be able to figure them out only through active mental picturing. In general, such riddles also exercise children's abilities to create relationships between visual observation, mental picturing, and verbal description. Besides being helpful in the children's development, riddles are fun!

At the end of this article are examples of rhyming riddles I composed, primarily for several different second-grade classes (often under extreme time pressure and sometimes even spontaneously "in the moment"). I recommend that these riddles be sung and that the number of guesses be limited. I usually told the answer after three guesses had been made. I often used riddles as a focusing activity or as a transition device to create a bridge from some other, primarily verbal, class to music class. To make the link to music clearer, I sang the riddles in an improvised pentatonic melody. For another purpose, the riddles can be spoken, although I always sensed a higher interest level in the children when I sang a riddle.

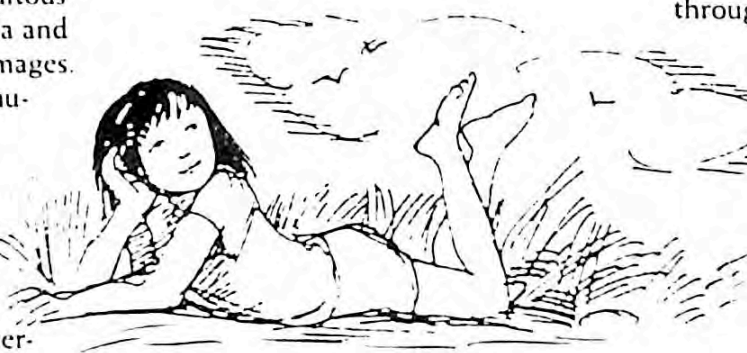
I want to share these

riddles primarily as examples of the kind of materials especially suited to children in grades one through three. My hope is that they will stimulate other teachers or parents to create their own riddles for specific groups of children. There is nothing more effective, both in educating and parenting, than something adults have created themselves and can present to children as a personal gift filled with the afterglow of their own inner work and life energy. This is actually more important pedagogically than the poetic, musical, or literary refinement of what is created—although the latter is not unimportant.

Solving riddles provides children with early experience using imagination in a problem-solving mode. To solve the riddles, children must usually be able to metamorphose and combine the pictures given in the riddle to define the single item that is the correct answer. This activity encourages flexible thought processes as well as mobile perceptive powers—in teacher as well as child! Sometimes I have been surprised when children came up with perfectly correct answers to my riddles that differed from the answers I intended. This can reinforce another common insight conveyed in Waldorf Education—usually through arithmetic

work—that there is not necessarily only one solution for a given problem.

In this



sense, work with riddles can make a small contribution toward a related goal of Waldorf Education in the early grades, described by Steiner as follows:

*We must not chain children's minds to finished concepts, but give them concepts capable of further growth and expansion. . . . But this can be achieved only by an imaginative approach in all subjects, certainly up to the twelfth year.*²

Taking a somewhat larger view, I foresee two longer-term benefits from work with riddles in the beginning elementary grades:

- It prepares students for later challenges of life where imaginative solutions will be needed for many new problems we cannot yet foresee;
- It helps carry the rich, active imaginative powers of the first two grades across the Rubicon of the nine-year change, after which the child experiences a greater separation between inner self and outer world and, sometimes, more self-consciousness about imaginative play.

Supplemented by the other riches of Waldorf Education, work with riddles can play its own small part in leading students toward a more conscious use of imaginative thinking, a capacity teachers generally hope to see developing during the high school years.

I have "child-tested" the following riddles in grade two and a bit in grades one and three, but I imagine they could also be enjoyable and helpful to fourth- or fifth-graders. The somewhat loose

compositions of meter or measure and the forced rhymes of some of these riddles require a bit of flexibility in the speaker or singer. Test your own imaginative powers and then check the answers at the end of the article.

First I was yellow, I was yellow all right.

Then I was turned to snowy white.

I jumped and jumped when I grew hot,

And the more I jumped, the bigger I got.

With a long, skinny body,

I have straight blonde hair,

But people turn me upside down

And drag me everywhere.

Round and round

I spin and spin

The more I turn

The further I'm in.

Our house is shiny red from the outside,

Our house is soft and white on the inside.

I and all my brown brothers live in the middle,

And it is a very nice place for us to hide.

Long and bent and soft,

We are just like each other,

We're two small, warm houses

For five little brothers.



I have long legs and pointed feet,

Get two from one where my legs meet.

Tall I am,

With a flat, pointed head

Into the earth I dig my bed.

If you tie me up

I'll hold my breath

If you set me free

*I'll shrivel to death. **

Answers to the riddles:

first set: teeth and gums / the sun / needle / walnut

second set: popcorn / broom / screw / apple seeds / mittens / pair of scissors / shovel / balloon

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1. Rudolf Steiner, *The Child's Changing Consciousness and Waldorf Education*, trans. Roland Everett (Hudson, N.Y.: Anthroposophic Press, 1988), 65

2. Ibid., 115



David Adams holds a Ph.D. in Arts History Education. Since 1973 he has been active off and on as a Waldorf teacher and administrator at both elementary and secondary levels and for several years taught art history in universities and art schools. He is author of the soon-to-be-published book *One, Two, Three! A Collection of Song, Verse, Riddles and Stories for Children of Grades 1-3*.

Can We Talk?

Parent-Teacher Communication: A Parent's Perspective

By Judy Chaves

Of all the aspects of Waldorf Education that raise my non-Waldorf friends' eyebrows, the one that raises them the highest is that my children have the same class teacher for eight years. *The same teacher for eight years?* I smile and nod and try to explain not only why it works but why I would not want it any other way: the smooth transition from year to year, the comfort and intimacy that are established in the classroom, the deep understanding and, ultimately, the love that grow.

Much of this makes sense to my friends. They know, from experience, the repetition and gaps that can result from the yearly changing of teachers, the annual anxiety, the period of readjustment. They appreciate the benefits of continuity. But even with this understanding, the eyebrows don't come down to normal level; something still doesn't sit quite right. "But what if you don't get along with the teacher?" they inevitably ask. "What if things don't work out?"

This is where things become tricky, for their questions indicate a major difference in our ways of defining "teacher," a major difference in the kinds of relationships we

want with the people who educate our children.

Explaining this aspect of Waldorf Education to them is, perhaps, as hard as explaining marriage to someone who has never been married—or, perhaps more aptly, to someone who marries and divorces once a year. And it is even harder explaining how, in my seven years of being a Waldorf parent, I have come to believe that it is this long-term relationship with the teacher that is at the very crux of a Waldorf education; how I have come to see the very beauty in the fact that, in June, we do not say goodbye. Watercolor painting, Norse myths, music, eurythmy—yes, these are all very wonderful aspects of the Waldorf curriculum—but it seems to me that the real learning, perhaps the most essential learning going on at a Waldorf school, stems from our being in relationship with one another for eight years.

What if you don't get along? What if things don't work out?

What, indeed?

Perhaps some see it as arrogance on the part of the Waldorf school to suggest that one teacher will work out for eight years. But I think, instead, what the school is saying is that it is *possible* for

things to work out among a group of children, their parents, and a teacher for eight years. I see this not as arrogance, but as a statement of faith in ourselves as human beings, in our capacities for communication, in our capacities for relationship. It is in learning to expand these capacities where, I think, the true Waldorf Education lies—not only for the children, but for the teachers and parents, as well. For eight years, we are, all of us, students.

I have come to believe that it is this long-term relationship with the teacher that is at the very crux of a Waldorf education; . . . I have come to see the very beauty in the fact that in June, we do not say goodbye.

For me, the hardest lesson has been—and continues to be—the realization that "making things work" with my children's teachers is not the same as "keeping things nice." Oh, but the temptation is great. Because I know these relationships are vitally important for my children's education and because I know they are long-term, I tend to shy away from doing anything

that might jeopardize them. I want to keep my children's teachers happy, I want them to like me and to like my children; I want them to know how grateful I am for who they are and what they do. I don't want to rock the boat.

And so when I have a concern or a question about something at school, I tend to sit on it, sometimes for a very long time. Indeed, I have found that the more serious the concern—and, hence, the more upsetting I imagine its effect on the teacher and our relationship—the longer I sit on it. And although, on the surface, things continue to be as nice as ever, beneath, my concern festers and my relationships with the teacher and with the school begin to turn sour. Things are not really working out. Yet, despite my being aware of this, I still often

lack the courage to do what is necessary for making them work out: to speak. Seven years of having children at a Waldorf school, seven years at this, and I still fall prey to a whole slew of imagined obstacles to talking. I still fall prey to my fears.

I want to list my fears and obstacles for you, because I think many of them are shared by other parents—and staring the monster in the face can sometimes lessen its power. I also would like, afterward, to discuss ways in which those fears and obstacles might possibly be overcome, ways in which we might possibly summon the courage to speak of our concerns to teachers, to do what is necessary for making things work.

Rationalizations

Often I keep myself from communicating a concern to a teacher by reciting to myself at least part of this litany: "I'm blowing things out of proportion." "Things will calm down in a day or two." "The teacher is tired and overworked and has her own family to deal with." "I will sound like a

troublemaker, a whiner, a complainer." "Things are infinitely better here than they would be anywhere else. What am I asking for, perfection?"

Emotions

Then there's the opposite situation, when a concern looms so large and matters so much to me—my child's self-esteem or physical safety—that I'm not sure I'd be capable of communicating my feelings without coming across as if I'm on the warpath. The tact, the vocabulary necessary for speaking my thoughts calmly and maturely would require communication skills I'm not sure I possess.

Sense of Isolation

Sometimes I feel alone in my feelings, seeing or hearing nothing from other parents that seems to corroborate my concerns. As a result, I can doubt my perceptions and, thus, my justification in speaking of them to the teacher. My feeling of isolation can, at times, be magnified by the closed door to my child's classroom, which can make me wonder how welcome I, or my questions, really are. Even the "Please take your shoes off before entering" request has sometimes made me feel awkward about my presence. There have been times when I have, quite literally, tiptoed into my child's classroom, fearful of trespassing, of being sent home.

Unclear Roles

The boundary between the parent's role and the teacher's role at a Waldorf school is fuzzy. This is



inevitable when home life and school life are considered so closely connected, when both academics and social life are taken up by the class teacher. We acknowledge, parent and teacher, that we are in this together, working as a team for the good of the child. "I will need your support on this," a teacher might say to me, and, more often than not, I am happy to oblige. But, first and foremost I am my child's parent. If my perception of my child's needs is different from the perception held by the teacher, then my loyalty goes to my child. But I hesitate to speak. I do not want to appear untrusting or lacking in support. I do not want to be seen as intruding where I have no business or as undermining the teacher's authority.

Anthroposophy

Sometimes it is difficult to communicate because I know that Anthroposophy stands behind what the teacher does—and I am not an anthroposophist. I appreciate the teacher's philosophical explanation of things; indeed, quite often it is very helpful. But, in addition to that appreciation, there is often a fear that my ideas, questions, or concerns may be dismissed or minimized because they come from a non-anthroposophical point of view. Sometimes I withhold a question because I fear it is not anthroposophically correct, that it is taboo. I fear being told that, if I were only to read more Steiner, my concern would disappear. I fear being told that, because of what Steiner says, there is no

room for flexibility or for change on a particular issue. Also I fear that, because of a question I have asked, I will learn about something Steiner said, something with which I so strongly disagree, that I will feel it necessary to leave the school. I can convince myself that what I don't ask about can't hurt me.

Expectations/Disappointments

I admit that I hold very high expectations, both of our school as a whole and of my children's teachers. When an expectation is not met, I am disappointed; I feel let down. One of the school's specialty programs, perhaps, does not meet the needs of my child, or my child's teacher reveals a weakness in a particular academic subject. It is difficult knowing how to voice these disappointments without seeming ungrateful, overly demanding, or lacking in trust. It is difficult keeping my disappointment about one area of school life from interfering with my ability to communicate regarding another.

The Developing Child

As was mentioned, perceptions change over time, particularly those belonging to our own children. Whereas the first-grader may speak of a teacher who can do no wrong, four or five years later that same child may speak of the same teacher with unmasked disdain. Meanwhile I, the parent, must communicate with the teacher within this increasingly thick miasma of "truths." How do I support the

teacher, yet not betray or belittle what my child perceives to be true?

Often the child's perceptions are made understandable for us, quite helpfully, by Steiner's theories of child development. Awareness of the "nine-year-change," the "twelve-year-change," and an understanding of what tends to occur at these stages can often help steer us through the miasma. But sometimes I am reluctant to convey a concern for fear of its being seen merely as a result of the whatever-year change and no more.

Sometimes it is difficult to communicate because Anthroposophy stands behind what the teacher does—and I am not an anthroposophist.

Yes, it is a formidable list. Reading it over, I begin to wonder how any of us manage to talk at all! Yet I think it is exactly what keeps us from talking that, ultimately, can also get us to talk: the knowledge that the relationship between parent and teacher is vitally important for our children, the knowledge that the relationship is long-term. At some point, we realize that we and our children are suffering from keeping things "nice" and that we've got another however-many-more years of this to go. We have to do something.

So, from where does our courage come? From two places, I think—from outside ourselves and from within. By "outside," I mean, first and

foremost, other parents, people with whom to talk, from whom to get reality checks, validation, support, a different perspective. There are tools we can use: tactful, appropriate methods of communication, such as notes; well-timed phone calls; prearranged meetings rather than spur-of-the-moment pickup-time chats; and meetings that include a third-party facilitator, such as another teacher or parent.

I have found, however, that even more important than these external sources of courage are those that are internal. Over my seven years, I have established a wonderful network of support from other parents, I have learned the ins and outs of note writing and appointment setting, but I can still, with all that, remain silent if I have not yet garnered sufficient courage from within myself.

How do I do that? Believe me, after seven years, I'm only beginning to learn. My list of strategies is incomplete. But the first thing I do is to remind myself that the relationship between parent and teacher can be, like any other long-term relationship, at times, incredibly hard. It's funny, but I tend to feel less like a wimp when I realize that I've got a pretty good reason for feeling like one.

Second, I remind myself of the nature of the Waldorf teacher's commitment. Sometimes when I get really worked up over a concern, I lose track of this, I can turn the teacher into an adversary. But if I remind myself of the unique

qualities of a Waldorf teacher—the deep, personal commitment he feels toward his students, the ongoing inner work he does regarding his own spiritual and moral development—then I realize that this is no adversary at all, but a person committed to continual openness and growth, a person committed to what he feels is best for my child, a person committed to working things out with me: a partner.

Third, I remind myself of the teacher's humanness, of her strengths and weaknesses. I remember times when communication between us worked, when she not only listened, but responded with humor, flexibility, and courage. I recall that for every obstacle I have to overcome, she has her own: fear of jeopardizing her relationship with me; fear of stepping on my toes; fear of coming across as unsupportive or ungrateful; fear of losing the respect of colleagues were she to admit she was having a problem; and so on. In other words, this is a human being with whom I need to talk, a person with as many strengths and foibles as myself. Knowing this enables me to relax; it enables me to breathe.

Fourth, I remind myself of the nature of my own commitment, which is to contribute my full share in the parent-teacher relationship. What this means is promising to keep my end of the dialogue open, not to allow my fears or assumptions or preconceptions to keep me from talking, but to voice my concerns when I have them and to voice my

delights, as well. Also, it means promising to listen to the teacher with the same respect and openness with which I trust she will listen to me.

This is what I signed up for when I enrolled my children, and reminding myself of this gives me courage. When I realize that, by holding a concern back, I am breaking my promise and, as a result, putting my relationship with the teacher truly in jeopardy—which means putting my child's education, ultimately, in jeopardy—then there is a greater impetus to speak. Call it courage out of conviction, courage because my conscience will not permit me to do otherwise.

And, finally, I remind myself of what underlies all this: the faith the school has in my capacity for relationship. The concerns I have are not unique; they do not portend the end of the world. They are concerns that are a normal part of having children in a Waldorf school, a normal part of the whole scheme of things, and the school expects that I am capable of communicating those concerns to the teacher and working openly and respectfully with him *even with those concerns voiced, even if we disagree*. I want very badly to live up to those expectations, for I believe in what they say about human capabilities, about my capabilities, and I want my children to believe in these same human capabilities. My desire, then, gives me courage.

This is not to say, of course, that courage makes it any easier. Maintaining a

healthy long-term relationship—learning to speak our thoughts when necessary, learning to listen to another's thoughts, learning to work things out rather than give up—is still very hard work, no matter how courageous we may be. It is also not to say that courage guarantees a particular outcome. There are times when open and honest communication result, quite appropriately, in a family's choosing another form of education for their child, or in a teacher's implementing a particular program that perhaps is not strictly "Waldorfian." Our work, remember, is not that of following dogma. It is doing what is best for our children, and doing it in as open and healthy and respectful a way as possible. Difficult, unpredictable, and scary, yes, but I can think of no better work for human beings to be doing, and I can think of no better work for a school.

Just a few weeks ago, I went to a parent evening nearly bursting with a particular concern and yet thoroughly prepared not to speak of it. I was brimming with long-held questions about the role of religion at the school, about the relationship between Anthroposophy and Christianity and their influence on the curriculum. I had it in my mind that this was too fiery a topic to discuss in the open, that it was off-limits. And yet my concern was driving me crazy, building inside me, souring my relationship with the school. I had to do something. Fortunately, a far braver parent at the meeting

raised the very issue, and, encouraged by her example, I spoke.

No bolt of lightning struck. The ghost of Rudolf Steiner did not rise among us and demand that I go home. My daughter's class teacher, in fact, was utterly thrilled and grateful to have the topic raised, and the discussion that ensued was exciting, involving everyone who was there. I went home that night on top of the world, my commitment to the school renewed, my respect for the teacher increased, my bond with her tightened. And the amazing thing was that it wasn't even so much what was said during the discussion that made me feel this way; more—far, far more—it was the simple fact that we had talked. *

Judy Chaves has two daughters, ages nine and twelve, attending the Lake Champlain Waldorf School in Shelburne, Vermont. During her seven years as a Waldorf parent she has volunteered at the school in various capacities, including as teacher of English country dancing to students and faculty for the annual May Day festival, and as co-leader of a workshop for parents on parent-teacher communication. Judy has an MFA in Creative Writing and is currently working on several essays and a novel.

The author would like to acknowledge, as inspiration for this article, the several conversations about parent-teacher communication that she had with Stephan Vdoviak, eurythmy teacher at the Lake Champlain Waldorf School.

Editor's Column

continued from page 2

("Parents and Teachers Working Together") gives a teacher's point of view with his usual clarity and insight.

And for the lovers of investigative reporting and highly controversial issues, we have a piece—also by Roberto—about the proper technique for recycling Stockmar crayon nubs!

*

Profile: Christy Barnes

continued from page 4

Christy Barnes is a poet, editor, publisher, and translator, as well as teacher. Her first book of poetry, *Wind in the Grass*, was published in 1931 by Harper and Brothers with an introduction by Edwin Arlington Robinson. Her book of poems *A Wound Awoke Me* was published in 1994. From 1972 to 1984, Christy was editor of the *Journal for Anthroposophy* and currently is manager of Adonis Press. In 1992 the Adonis Press brought out *The Power of the Impossible: The Life Story of Percy and Marion MacKaye*, written by Christy's sister, Arvia MacKaye Ege. In the coming year the press plans to publish a book of poems by Swiss writer Albert Steffen. Christy translated many of the poems from the original German. Today Christy lives in Harlemville, New York, with her husband Henry. *

Parts of this profile are taken from an interview by Andrée Ward which appeared in the Hawthorne Valley Newsletter.

Parents and Teachers Working Together

By Roberto Trostli

The question of the respective roles and responsibilities of parents and teachers in a Waldorf school is an important one. It is closely related to the practical and pressing question: how can parents and teachers work together most effectively on behalf of their school and its community?

Students, parents, and teachers—these are three of the pillars upon which a Waldorf school rests. While each of these groups has its own needs, its own perspectives, challenges, and responsibilities, the relationships among them determine whether a school is healthy or frail and whether it will thrive or fail.

Parents and teachers have many more opportunities to work with the students than with each other. As a result, the relationship between teachers and parents needs more conscious and careful cultivation. A good relationship between parents and teachers will develop only if parents and teachers are interested in one another, if they trust one another, and if they support each other. Interest, trust, support—these are what must inform the relationship between parents and teachers in a Waldorf school.

Interest

Our interest can extend in ever widening circles. A teacher's interest may first focus on the child, but if it doesn't extend to the family and the home, such interest becomes stunted. A parent's interest may begin with a concern about his or her own children's education, but if it doesn't eventually embrace the school as a whole, such interest becomes shallow.

Waldorf students sense their teacher's interest. It gives them a feeling of security in existence; it is one of the foundations for a healthy sense of self. But what about parents? Or teachers? Do they sense each others'

interest? Without the teachers' interest, parents may feel cut off from the school. Without the parents' interest, teachers may feel that they are working in a vacuum. Without sufficient interest coming from others, both parents and teachers are liable to feel unappreciated, misunderstood, or judged. How can such feelings be averted?

Through attending parent-teacher conferences, class meetings, and school events, parents demonstrate their interest in their child's education, in their child's teachers, and in the school. By meeting regularly with the parents, by visiting the students and their parents at home, and by attending student events, teachers can show their interest in their students and their families. All this takes time, it takes effort, it takes commitment, but hard as it is, it is a necessary precondition for good relationships between parents and teachers. Only by developing and showing an interest in each other can parents and teachers develop relationships to the point where there is real mutual trust.

Trust

Without trust, a Waldorf school cannot survive. However extreme that statement may seem, it is true. A Waldorf school is trying to do more than teach; it is striving to educate children, to prepare them for life. A Waldorf teacher is trying to do more than cover a curriculum, develop basic academic skills, and nurture artistic, social, and other capacities. Waldorf teachers stand before their students as representatives of humanity and the world. Who among us is entirely worthy of this role? No one. What allows us to try, day after day, to do our best in spite of repeated failures? It is trust: the trust of our students, their inner recognition of our striving, and the trust of the parents of our students, their belief in our intentions and integrity. Without such trust, a teacher cannot do more than teach. Without

such trust, many Waldorf teachers would rather not even teach.

But trust must work both ways, and it is no less important that the teachers and the school as an institution trust the parents. Just as most Waldorf teachers have chosen to identify themselves professionally with the Waldorf movement, many Waldorf parents identify themselves personally with a Waldorf school. Because they sense that something special is happening in the school, because they are drawn to the sense of idealism, of communal and common striving, they want to participate, to belong. Because most parents didn't have a Waldorf education themselves, they are drawn to the beauty and the meaning that such an education provides. And most teachers joined the movement for the same reasons. Only by recognizing, respecting, and understanding each others' positions and perspectives can we develop trust. And only by developing trust will we be able truly to support each other.

Support

On the most basic level, teachers support a Waldorf school professionally, parents financially. But is this support or responsibility? The two cannot be equated. Responsibility is something that one accepts or takes on, willingly or not; support is something that one gives freely as a gift.

What is the most important gift that parents and teachers can give to a Waldorf school? It is commitment:

- commitment to the students for whom we are trying to provide an education imbued with spirit, with creativity, with life;
- commitment to building a community where people work together in new ways;
- commitment to an ideal that will help us transform ourselves and our world.

Waldorf Education works best if parents and teachers are interested in each other, trust one another, and support one another in their work and lives, in their relationships with the students, and in their striving for common goals. This requires a measure of tolerance and understanding that is not always easy to muster, but if we are committed to the students, we will find a way. And the children will benefit most of all. Children know when their experiences in



Parents selling baked goods at a Waldorf Harvest Fair

school and at home are congruent, just as they know when school and home are working at cross-purposes.

If parents and teachers make a commitment to work together in a school, they need to define clearly the areas in which each can be of best use to the school. Parent input need not, and should not, conflict with the principles of a faculty-run school. On the other hand, the idea of a faculty-run school does not mean that the faculty has to or should do everything.

Parents provide invaluable resources and assistance for a Waldorf school. By organizing parent and class events, putting on fairs and community events, arranging for lectures, workshops, and parent education classes, sponsoring forums for issues of parental concern, assisting with or conducting outreach, publicity, and recruitment activities, raising funds, and by innumerable other activities, parents help a Waldorf school fulfill its mission. By working in these ways, parents get to know the school more deeply and from the inside. By contributing to the life and well-being of a school, parents develop a deeper sense of loyalty to and identification with the school. The school becomes their school.

Every Waldorf school faces the challenge of finding the appropriate means of soliciting parental advice and having parents working in and for the school. Whether and how such work occurs—in the Board of Trustees, the various committees, the Parent Council, or in a particular class—needs to be clearly articulated. What is most important, however is that parents

and teachers recognize and acknowledge each others' commitment *and* responsibility.

Working Together

However deeply parents may become involved in a Waldorf school, however much they may contribute to and work for the school, they need to recognize that there is one major realm where their involvement is limited: the pedagogy and everything that directly or indirectly affects it. This is the realm where the teachers must be allowed to develop the art of education in freedom. Without such freedom and its corresponding responsibility, a Waldorf school will quickly lose the very qualities that make it unique.

A Waldorf school is more than a school; it is an experiment in community building, an attempt to bring healing and new life to the social realm. Rudolf Steiner said:

The healthy social life is found when, in the mirror of each human soul, the whole community finds its reflection and when, in the community, the virtue of each one is living.

If we take these words to heart, if we try to bring them to life with mutual respect and understanding, the question of how parents and teachers work together in Waldorf schools will be answered daily by the resounding affirmation:

Parents and teachers work together in Waldorf schools! ❀

Roberto Trostli has been active in Waldorf Education for the past seventeen years, teaching, lecturing, writing, leading workshops, and consulting. He is the author of a number of articles, including "Education as an Art: The Waldorf Approach," as well as a dozen plays for children. His two books are Physics is Fun! A Sourcebook for Teachers and a Vista Series volume on Waldorf Education, which will be published by the Anthroposophic Press next year.

Roberto received his B.A. from Columbia University. He was awarded a fellowship to the University of Cambridge, England, where he received an M.A. in medieval languages and literature. For ten years he taught at the Rudolf Steiner School in New York City, which he attended as a child, and he is currently the seventh-grade class teacher and the faculty chairperson at The Hartsbrook School in Hadley, Massachusetts.

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Beginning with Experience and Wonder:

An Approach to Science in the Kindergarten

By Carol Toole

Albert Einstein once credited his revolutionary discoveries to the fact that he had not mastered concepts of time and space as early as other children had. Quite backward in this regard, he began to ponder the mysteries of time and space only as an adult, and at that point—and this was part of Einstein's genius—he could combine the open questioning of childhood with adult thinking.

As Baudelaire said, "Genius is childhood recaptured at will." Teachers and parents of young children know that one must be well prepared as well as educated in a special way to meet the demands for knowledge made by the ravenously inquisitive three-year-old. The need for physical nourishment that characterized the same child as an infant has been superseded by a hunger of a different kind. Questions tumble forth like a set of Russian dolls, one out of the other. A conversation that I had with my three-year-old daughter brought home to me the true nature of the nourishment she required:

Why are you going to the mailbox?

To get the mail.

Why is the mail in there?

The mailman put it in there.

Why does the mailman put the mail in there?

So we can get our letters.

Why do we need to get letters?

This child was obviously not going to be satisfied by a diet of eggshell facts. When I finally descended from my high horse of intellect and stood on the sacred earth with my daughter, I saw what she saw. We walked together to the mailbox; I paused a moment before opening it. "Let's see what's inside," I said in a tone hushed with anticipation. The door was opened to reveal a mystery, to unveil secrets yet unknown. This daily act was restored to its place as a daily miracle, and my daughter was delighted to have me share this experience with her.

In his book *A Child's Christmas in Wales*, Dylan Thomas refers to the books he would get for Christmas:



"... books that tell everything about the wasp except why." *Why?*—this is what the child is ever asking. This is what modern science can never really answer. We would do well to look to the child for methods of discovery. For the child, each quest for knowledge begins with wonder and proceeds to a wholehearted participation in each experience. The child observes minutely, makes connections between seemingly unconnected phenomena, and playfully tries things out. He inwardly listens to the secrets the world around him has to tell. He shuns easy answers that he has not worked through himself.



Joan Almon, a Waldorf kindergarten teacher with many years' experience, tells of a boy who was watching his teacher churn butter. Observing that the white cream became yellow butter, he asked why this change of color came about. His teacher remarked that she also wondered about this. The boy stood with a look of deep concentration on his face. "I know why! The cream came from a cow and the cow ate grass and the grass was green. Green is made up of blue and yellow, and that is where the yellow came from." The boy knew about secondary colors from watching fluid watercolor paints mix together on wet paper. Indeed, Laura Ingalls Wilder's account of her pioneer childhood tells of butter making. In winter,



when there was no grass for the cows to eat, her parents added a yellow coloring to the otherwise white butter. The five-year-old boy in Joan Almon's anecdote had observed accurately, and was able to see relationships within his environment. His teacher wisely gave him room to ponder, to activate the inner force that questions and seeks an answer.

An important task of the Waldorf kindergarten is the preservation of these gifts of early childhood—this vigor in the realm of perception. Without a store of ready-made concepts to lock them into complacency and to comfort or to color their observations, children stand alert and ready to discover each object in their environment anew.

"What makes the night come?" a four-year-old asks.

Then he answers himself, "It must be the crickets chirping."

"What makes the rain?" begins another inquisitive monologue.

"The sky is an ocean, the thunder is the roar of the waves, and when the salt water gets into the babies' eyes—you can see their faces in the clouds—they cry."

Facts and abstract theories can wait until the time when they can be penetrated with understanding. Deep understanding is the end result of long experience. Factual knowledge and theories change, but this activity of creative thinking can lead the human being into an unending dialogue with the world around.

The Waldorf kindergarten teacher strives to develop the perceptual faculties of the child in a variety of ways. One way is to bring meaningful life experiences before the children. The forces the child utilizes to follow such processes as making butter, grinding grain, and sewing a doll are the same forces she will need to follow technological processes later on. This is an age of instant information, and more and more children are having problems paying attention. Schools must provide opportunities for the child to see how things are made over time, to see that there are struggles, and to see how one can persevere till problems are overcome. In real life one can't just push the "help" button!

In a Waldorf kindergarten doll clothes are swished in a basin of soapy water, cloth napkins from snack time flap on the clothesline outside, honey, yeast, and flour are mixed, kneaded, and left to rise. Is there a difference in the way soap dissolves in warm and in cold water? Do the napkins dry the same on a dry or damp day? Will the dough rise and stay so alive if we don't keep it warm? Here the laws of physics and

chemistry are manifest in a form a young child can truly digest, in the form of experience. When these sciences are formally studied in the sixth and seventh grades, the students feel they are on familiar ground.

A striking example of experience as the seed of knowledge is the biography of Michael Ildvorsky Pupin, a leading American scientist. His interest in the phenomena of light and sound began when he was a young boy in Serbia watching over his herd. During the long nights, he pondered the twinkling stars, and sometimes, to signal other herdsman, he would tap on a knife stuck deep in the ground. At the age of fifteen, Pupin came to America with five cents in his pocket and little, if any, understanding of the English language. Eventually his inventions would improve X-ray technology and solar astronomy and help make long-distance telephone calls possible.

One can only imagine how the young Pupin first played with sound and light during those lonely nights. Play is vital to the Waldorf kindergarten. The teacher takes great care in choosing objects for the children's play. They should be simple enough so that the child can add something of her own. They should allow room for the child to ask, "What can I make out of this?" and "What if I try this?" Another word for child's play is "doing." Toys that are finished to the last realistic detail rob the child of the activity that is her life's blood. Instead, baskets full of planks,

logs, cords, and cloths provide ample opportunity for budding scientists to experiment with equilibrium, weight, and levers and to explore cause-and-effect relationships. Activity is all!

Conversely, what is the result of providing abstract concepts as a response to a young child's questioning? A long car trip on the open road had precipitated a question in the mind of a seven-year-old boy. What would happen if we kept on driving to the end of the earth? What would we come to? When his parents explained that the earth was round and that they would get to where they started from, the boy became agitated.

"No, you wouldn't," he cried.

"But, you see, the earth is round like a ball," his parents tried to soothe.

"I know that!" the boy bellowed. "We're on the earth, the earth is in the ball, so where do we get to when we keep going?"

The little boy's worldview is perfectly depicted in a nineteenth-century astronomer's painting of a medieval pilgrim who has traversed a flat horizontal plane to the horizon and crashed through the celestial dome. The seven-year-old, with his pre-Copernican consciousness, had reacted to having his bubble burst—the idea that his own senses, what he could see before him, could not be trusted was unbearable. At nine years old, this same boy will be able to distance himself enough from his direct experience of the world

around him to take a more objective view. As the psychologist Piaget states:

The child does not adapt himself right away to the new realities he is discovering and gradually constructing for himself. He must start by laboriously incorporating them within himself and into his activity.

By giving the child time to land gradually in the realm of clearly defined reality, we guard the sense of wonder that fosters a kinship with the living world and provides a warmth of feeling for outer phenomena. This warmth incubates our thoughts—which can be dry and hard as a shell—and hatches out fresh, living ideas: ways to behold anew. The kindergarten teacher supports the children's observations with stories and poems that touch upon deep inner truths. When caterpillars wriggle among the spring-green leaves, the children may hear about a caterpillar who grows tired of eating leaves all day and longs to worship the sun like the flowers do, raising up their bright petals. When autumn winds blow chill and acorns adorn the ground, the children may hear how one acorn fears leaving the strong arms of his mother, but when he musters his courage and at last does let go, he finds he is on a journey to a new life. Within each event lies something of the universal that is revealed when one looks with the eyes of a poet, as the child naturally does.

By the time of adolescence, the child has taken giant steps from this oneness she feels with the world. In standing back, she can now

view the world with critical judgment and reasoning powers. Whether this is a time of alienation or of reconnecting in a conscious way, whether it is a time of despair or of hope, depends largely on the seeds of thought sown in early childhood. In our time of cataclysmic change, the world each child confronts as an adult will be vastly different from the one she entered at birth. An inner change of human consciousness is the challenge we are called to. A thinking is needed that can imagine forms of society that do not yet exist, a thinking that keeps sight of the human being and of what improves the quality of our relationships.

To this end, let us hold back from offering our children ready answers and static facts, but rather open wide the doors to possibility and wonder. May we let the sun be for them, not a series of nuclear explosions, but a heavenly source of light and warmth that shines on all humankind alike. Let us give them the quiet space to listen to the beating of a heart and think, not of valves and pumps, but, as one child expressed it, of "all the love within it." ❀

Carol Toole studied early childhood education at the Waldorf Institute of Mercy College of Detroit. She taught at the Austin Waldorf School during its pioneer phase and has worked as a parent educator, a storyteller, and puppeteer. Currently Carol is the school's enrollment director, mother of a fourth- and a seventh-grader, and wife of the school's eighth-grade teacher.

Crayon Recycling

By Roberto Trostli and Sarah Strong



Most Waldorf schools use, particularly in the lower grades, the excellent but not inexpensive crayons made by the Stockmar company in Germany. The crayons are rectangular in shape and easy to hold. With use, however, they become too small to use easily. Rather than discard these undersized bits of crayon, the Hartsbrook School, drawing on a tradition of New England ingenuity, has developed a program of recycling Stockmar crayon scraps. The school has thus been able to use, rather than throw out, a significant amount of material, and has saved a lot of money in the process.

- Collect and carefully sort crayons according to color. You may need to test the colors on a sheet of paper. The different blues especially can be tricky to tell apart. Plastic quart containers are good for storing the sorted crayons.

- Clean the crayons by scraping off the outer layer with a non-serrated knife. Be sure to do this over a large wastebasket or sheets of newspaper. The knife can be cleaned between colors by dipping it in hot water or holding it over a steaming tea kettle and then wiping it with a paper towel.

- Set up a double boiler in an old cooking pan by putting a small metal canning rack—or something else that will elevate

the jars—on the pan bottom. Use small jars—jam jars work well—one for each color of crayon. Two or three jars will fit in the pan at once. Keep a kettle simmering on another burner to replenish the water that evaporates from the double boiler.

- Put four or five crayons that have been scraped clean in each jar, and as soon as there is enough melted wax to make a couple of recycled crayons, pour it into the mold. It is best at all times to have some solid wax in the jar so that the liquid wax doesn't get too hot. The less hot the melted wax is, the better

- The best molds are made from plastic ice cube trays with rectangular cavities. The correct depth can be marked with a felt tip marker on the sides of the tray, but with a little experience, one soon learns to gauge how much wax to pour. As soon as the ice cube tray is full, put it in the refrigerator to cool the wax. When the wax is hard, the crayons pop out easily. Because the wax sometimes leaves a slight residue in the tray, it is best to start by making the lightest colored crayons first. The ice cube tray can be cleaned with hot water and a paper towel.

- Store the new crayons in ziplock bags labeled with the color number and name.

Passion in Art and Science

By Michael Preston

The Waldorf teacher is convinced that every child can draw, paint, sculpt, carve, knit, embroider, and dance in the same sense that most schools expect children to be able to read, write, and work numbers.

This comment, from an article by Eugene Schwartz in the Spring-Summer 1994 issue of *Insights*, underlines what every Waldorf parent knows—that art permeates each subject in Waldorf Education. To most Waldorf parents, children, and teachers, this emphasis on aesthetic training and sensibility seems a perfectly natural and intrinsic part of education. Yet for many others there arise questions. Why such a concern with art? What practical and long-term goals does it serve? Why place such an emphasis on artistic presentation in learning, particularly in science? Is content being compromised?

Such questions rest on a common assumption—that the disciplines of science are quite different from those of the arts. Yet in earlier times, as during the Renaissance, science (*scire* [Latin], to know) meant simply “knowledge.” Leonardo da Vinci was a dazzling example of the great breadth and range of such knowing for the inquir-

ing spirit! In fact, scientific experience and artistic experience have a common source.

For Rudolf Steiner, education meant much more than simply learning effectively and happily, although, of course, it

learning is not to master various autonomous disciplines, but to realize the fullness of one’s humanity.

For example, in a Waldorf school, children learn physics because it is part of



Two Waldorf high school students discuss a project they are working on.

included those goals. Steiner sees in every human being a core of freedom and authentic creativity, the “compass needle” of which is governed by an inner sense of motivation and potentiality. For Steiner and the tradition of Waldorf Education, education is an art that aims to bring up loving and productive human beings who can impart meaning to their lives in the broadest and deepest sense of that term. For Steiner, the aim of

our fundamental human experience of the natural world. By studying physics, children awaken to wonderful and profound relationships within and around themselves and to the fundamental physical laws of the natural world of which they are a part.

In this light, science is a means of opening up our humanity through a particular way of understanding the world. It should not be a discipline

that gives us a detached view of the world and thus alienates us from it. Nor should it be a discipline that undermines our trust in our natural perceptions. Too often, a young person comes to experience science as a remote or arcane discipline that either keeps her at a remove from warm engagement with the subject of study or, because of its aridity and lifelessness, sends part of her to sleep. Such an approach may awaken the intellect but dull the sensory and aesthetic responses, responses that should be an integral part of our normal grasp of the world.

Ludwig Wittgenstein, one of this century's most passionate and influential philosophers and a pioneer in discerning our diverse ways of thinking through language, was a fierce critic of our modern uncritical acceptance of science in the form that has permeated our language, concepts of human nature, values, and sense of truth. To the extent that, as a culture, a people, or a civilization, we lose sight of the deeper dimensions of our being in the world and of our purposes, we are in danger of succumbing to a modern intellectual tyranny.

It was toward "popular" or "cultureless" science of this sort that Wittgenstein directed his remarks. He commented in relation to its threat to real knowledge and a deeper education: "[A] man has to awaken to wonder and so perhaps do peoples. Science is a way of sending him to sleep again."

Waldorf schools strive to awaken children to wonder

and to stimulate them to grasp the world in a direct, vital, and joyful way. Hence in teaching science their teachers are conscious that they must not bewitch the children with the jargon or techniques of a discipline nor make them exiles from their own natural grasp of the world. Rather, Waldorf teachers seek a way of teaching science that begins in simplicity and profundity and is experienced by the children as a natural extension of their own observations and curiosity.

This starting point, while easily passed over, is readily at hand. It is a condition and practice of perceptual openness that is so fundamental that it is neither artistic nor scientific. Rather it is the primordial basis for both. It is an experience of wonder, joy, and empathy with the world, to which Wordsworth perhaps was alluding when he wrote:

*There was a time when
meadow, grove, and stream
The earth, and every common sight
To me did seem
Apparelled in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of
a dream.*

All teachers know that children demonstrate extraordinary wonder and joy in the experience of even the simplest phenomena. And Waldorf teachers try to teach the sciences in such a way as to preserve this joy and wonder. Let us take the teaching of physics as an example. In Waldorf schools physics is formally introduced in the sixth grade. The first area of focus is acoustics. Rudolf

Steiner chose this as a starting point because the sense of hearing is more inward, more part of the inner life, than sight or touch.

The opening activities of this study are aimed at awakening the children's ability to hear simple sounds. This is sometimes done as a game in which the children have to discern the specific character of each sound that is presented to them from behind a screen. The aim is profound, for we are quite deliberately *not* asking for conceptual identification: i.e., "That was a metal spoon tapping a glass." We are asking instead for the children to describe the *sounds* they hear. A qualitative spirit pervades the "game." For example, a child may comment: "The sounds are high and sharp, very clear, like a musical note," or "The sound is like a pinging, something quite hard knocking something quite smooth and thin."

Often the children are very accurate in their descriptions. Indeed, it is fascinating to encounter the commonality of perceptual experience. Agreement in fine-tuned perceptual discrimination is substantial and brings great joy and excitement to the children.

After all the reactions and qualitative descriptions are in, the teacher asks, "Well, what do you think it was?" There are various answers, sometimes quite different. The children are remembering, sometimes accurately, sometimes inaccurately, what in their previous experience made noises like that. Finally they get to see the "source"

and hear it again while looking. There is great delight in confirming their previous judgments or, in some cases, a strengthened awareness and resolve for more successful efforts in the future.

Of course, this is merely the beginning of acoustics, let alone of physics. The acoustics lessons will lead over into a study of pitch, resonance, timbre, and dynamics and of the means to describe and accurately record these phenomena. The arrangement and explanation of cause and effect, of the constellation of certain phenomena, will bring in quite naturally the relevant concepts and their relationships. But this initial study of phenomena in and of themselves is based on and points to the fundamental principle of authentic human investigation of the natural world. The raw material of science is careful observation. Concepts, ideas, theories of relationships can cause us to see things in a new way and inspire research in new areas. But still there remains the encounter, in every area and at every level, of the observer with the observed. This encounter is so common, so much a part of our daily experience of the world, that we easily pass it over, easily take it for granted. But in doing so we miss its great significance.

In Waldorf school science classes, the awakening of this passion of experience is fundamental. It is the receptive stage of perception. Thus the study of the other sciences—



A Waldorf high school physics experiment

biology, zoology, chemistry, and the rest—also begins with observation of phenomena, with the unalloyed sensory, wonderful experience of the visible, palpable, audible facts of nature. The introduction of concepts, principles, laws, and theories follows, to be sure, but first the student experiences the phenomena as they are. This approach gives the student the opportunity to retain as an adolescent and even as an adult an openness and receptivity and an ability to experience the world with childlike wonder, passion, and enthusiasm.

This passionate identification of the perceiver with the perceived lies at the heart also of artistic activity. We human beings are not only gatherers of sensory data. Often we "suffer" things. There is passion, as well as action, in human awareness. We are transported by great music, swept off our feet by extraordinary beauty; and in certain moments of blessing,

we are carried into a timeless apprehension of and fusion with what we are attending to—the rushing of the river, the song of a bird, the falling snow. Such experiences are more common during childhood, but they need not be restricted to it.

Wordsworth's poem "There Was a Boy" evokes movingly this experience of rapt absorption in which nature pours itself into us. The boy, after blowing "mimic hootings" to the owls by an evening lake, stops, arrested by the silence.

*Then sometime, in that
silence, while he hung
Listening, a gentle shock of
mild surprise
Has carried far into his heart
the voice
Of mountain torrents, or the
visible scene
Would enter unawares into his
mind*

*With all its solemn imagery, its
rocks,*

*Its woods, and that uncertain
heaven received*

*Into the bosom of the steady
lake.*

Wordsworth ends on an elegaic note, but these profound experiences of nature need not die in childhood.

Artists seek to preserve or rekindle this passion of experience throughout their lives. In a memorable passage, the painter Paul Klee describes sitting in a forest, wanting to paint trees:

*In a forest, I have always
felt, many times over, that it was
not I who looked at the forest.
Some days I felt that the trees
were looking at me, were speak-
ing to me. . . . I was there listen-
ing. I think the painter must be
penetrated by the universe and
not seek to penetrate it.*

The imaginative phase of pure perception that precedes judgment and conceptualization is, according to Waldorf methodology, an important part of all experience and learning—geographic, mathematical, verbal, as well as scientific and artistic. It is a state of open-ended, accumulative enrichment of perception or image that enables a fuller, more living and robust grasp of phenomena. In every discipline a vivid and clear demonstration or experiment can provide an experience that will remain a permanent and vital legacy within our repertoire of developing concepts.

Even in the teaching of mathematical concepts, our perceptual participation can be awakened. Rudolf Steiner

once distinguished between a definitional teaching of the concept of a triangle—three sides, three angles totaling 180 degrees, and so on—and a visual demonstration. He took an elastic loop and stretched it around two points, A and B; then, taking point C, he sheared it sideways and up and down. "This is a triangle!" he said to the observers.

Clearly, Steiner was calling upon the perceptual participation of his audience. He was calling upon a nonverbal assimilation of phenomena that would play in an imaginative, aesthetic way, but would come together and crystallize into an experienced concept to which, later, the verbal cloak could be given.

We cannot truly interact with the world unless we see and hear that with which we are involved. Our sensing of the world needs to be clear-eyed, open, attentive, non-egocentric, focused. The cultivation of these qualities can be seen as a discipline, the discipline of self-restraint, objectivity, and devotion—in fact, of love. This discipline is necessary for any human learning and inquiry, for any meaningful study of a subject. All good education involves love—love, which is manifest in our devotion and rapt attention to the phenomena we study. The apparent duality of observer and observed is replaced by a participatory unity of ourselves with the world. The power to do this consistently and regularly can be fostered in both science and art. Both emerge from the same place in the human soul.

Our heartfelt immersion

in phenomena and our unprejudiced experience of them provide us with real, firsthand knowledge of the world. Also they help us remain in touch with our own center as human beings. It is for this type of knowing that Waldorf schools try to educate their students. ❀

This article is a condensed form of a piece that appeared in the Fall 1996 issue of Insights, the newsletter of the Honolulu Waldorf School.

Michael Preston was born in Uganda, East Africa, and attended primary school there and high school in New Zealand. At the age of twenty he went to Emerson College in England, where he did the Waldorf teacher training. Michael taught as a Waldorf class teacher but also pursued an interest in philosophy at London University. He earned a Ph.D. in Philosophy, concentrating on the work of Wittgenstein and of Maurice Merleau-Ponty on the significance of perception in education. Michael moved to Hawaii seven years ago and is a class teacher at the Honolulu Waldorf School. His son is a third-year architecture student at the University of Hawaii.

Michael Preston gives his heartfelt acknowledgment to Maurice Merleau-Ponty for his illuminating books *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge, Kegan Paul, 1962) and *The Primacy of Perception* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964) and particularly for the essay titled "Eye and Mind" in the latter volume.

The Significance of Goethe's *Faust* in the High School Curriculum

By René Querido

Why do we teach Goethe's *Faust* in the twelfth grade of the Waldorf school? There are several reasons. This monumental drama is one of the great works in modern literature. It is remarkable in its scope and depth. As such it is part of the world literature curriculum of the high school, which also includes Greek tragedians, the Bible as literature, *Parsifal*, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, and the works of the Romantics, the Transcendentalists, Dickens, Victor Hugo, and the Russian novelists.

Also *Faust*, which Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) worked on for more than sixty years, offers a special opportunity to deal with aspects of modern life and culture.

Faust opens with two prologues. The first takes place in a theater and is a discussion on the stage between a director, a poet, and a comedian. They argue about what constitutes a good play. Differing points of view are presented. The director is interested in a drama that will become a commercial success because of its action and novelty. The playwright is concerned with the integrity of his creation. Will it be worthily performed? The comedian expresses the need for a "play" that meets his artistic standards and a director willing to provide the best possible circumstances. The amicable and fruitful working together of director, poet, and actor is emphasized. Otherwise the production will not draw an enthusiastic audience.

The prologue in Heaven that follows is of quite a different order. Three archangels—Raphael, Gabriel, and Michael—appear together with the Lord. Mephistopheles, the devil—whose name is derived from the Hebrew *mephis* or "deceiver" and *topel* or "liar"—appears. He cannot possibly imitate the heavenly music and eloquent phrases of the singing

of the archangels about the beauty and perfection of the universe.

Mephistopheles is scornful of the lives of men, and particularly that of Faust. The Lord, however, states that "men err as long as they strive" and asserts that in the end Faust will attain enlightenment and peace of mind.

The Lord and Mephistopheles make a wager. As long as Faust lives, the devil may tempt him. But if Mephistopheles' judgment of Faust is proved to be wrong, he will have to admit that: "A good man, with his groping intuitions / Still knows the path that is true and just."

This opens up the question of evil and the relationship of men and women to it. The divine powers have actually allowed the devil to intervene in our destinies, to create the maximum temptation so that finally we might succumb. But the Lord has unfailing confidence in the ultimate goodness of the human being.

The two prologues can yield profound and fruitful discussions with the students on topics that are of contemporary importance. These might include:

- What is the importance of the theater in our time and what are the different roles of the director, playwright, and actor?
- What is the role of evil in human evolution?
- Why did the Lord God allow the devil to tempt human beings?
- Does evil have an actual place in human development and why?

As the play opens, we meet Dr. Faust, a man in his fifties. Faust is a scholar and professor who has studied every discipline, including philosophy, medicine, and theology. Yet he is



Faust meets Mephistopheles

in a state of despair, because he has been unable to fathom the mysteries of life and of the universe.

On the eve of Easter Sunday, Faust decides to commit suicide. He wishes to plunge into the world beyond and there to find answers to the riddles that torment him. As Faust puts the goblet of poison to his lips, he hears the church bells announcing Christ's Resurrection. This event deters him from drinking the lethal mixture. Nevertheless, it is soon clear that Faust rejects suicide not because he has religious conviction, but rather because he remembers his childhood when he still had faith and a childlike relationship to God.

Without going into the details of these powerful scenes, we find that when Faust meets Mephistopheles he is still intent on solving the riddles of existence. And now an extraordinary relationship develops between the two. Faust has not lived a full life. He has spent most of it with the dusty books in his study with its high, vaulted ceiling. He has experienced little joy. Mephistopheles offers Faust his youth again and promises that he will be able to indulge in all the sensual pleasures with full-blooded vigor.

The pact is signed and sealed in blood. Faust agrees that Mephistopheles can have his soul if for one moment, however brief, in the

enjoyment of pleasure he "lingers awhile, [because] thou art so fair." In other words, Faust will give his soul to Mephistopheles if he stops striving.

In this scene, Mephistopheles describes himself and his function in the divine plan by saying that he is:

*A part of that power
Which always wills
evil, always procures good . . .
. . . the spirit which
always denies.*

Mephistopheles now begins to tempt Faust in order to acquire his soul. He takes Faust to the

Auerbach Tavern in Leipzig and introduces him to the fleeting pleasures of alcohol. But when Faust sees the crude behavior of four drunkards, he is immediately repulsed.

Though we should not equate the events portrayed in the Faust drama with events in Goethe's life, one or two incidents in the play may correspond to the playwright's own experiences. For instance, Goethe, as a young man in university, frequented the tavern depicted in the drama and may have had an experience there similar to Faust's.

Alcohol does not tempt Dr. Faustus, but when he is led to the witch's kitchen and provided with a drug, he becomes easy prey for the forces of evil. He is shown in a vision the image of Helena, the most beautiful woman of antiquity, whom he wishes to possess. Mephistopheles assures Faust that with this potion in his belly he will see " . . . Helena in every woman."

As Faust steps out into the street, still reeling from the powerful draft, he sees the young, innocent, lovely Gretchen, and his lust is awakened. He wishes at all costs to possess her. The consequences are disastrous. Faust seduces the young Gretchen, but, in the process, he becomes guilty of the death of her mother. Also, Faust kills Gretchen's brother. Gretchen drowns her baby and is arrested for

murder. In prison she loses her mind, and finally is executed for her crime.

Goethe depicts in a remarkable way the gradual transformation of Faust. His raw sexual desire for Gretchen becomes a genuine love for her. This occurs in spite of the fact that Mephistopheles does everything to prevent an ideal element from arising.

Gretchen loves Faust in spite of his initial motive and the way he had exploited her. It is this love which grows spiritually to the extent that Gretchen can actually save Faust from the clutches of Mephistopheles.

After these dramatic events, Faust still has many years to live and tragic ordeals to face. We find him at the end of Part II of the drama, one hundred years old, totally blind, and accompanied by "Care"—or "Worry." As he dies, lifted into spiritual worlds, Gretchen approaches from the heavens, and through her sacrificial, loving intercession, Faust's guilt-laden soul is redeemed. Here we find the words: *The eternal feminine draws us upwards.*

There is a golden thread that runs through all of Goethe's work: the depiction of the transformation of love from *Eros* to *Philia* to *Agape*, from selfish erotic love to brotherly love to selfless love. But this metamorphosis requires renunciation and sacrifice. The mature Goethe expressed this need with great simplicity in a poem in the collection called *Ost-West Divan*.

*Dying and becoming,
If you do not have this
You are but a somber guest
On the darkling earth.*

Goethe struggled all his life to do away with the old so that the new might be born at a higher level. He was confident that human beings, if they but strove, and learned to discipline their inner soul forces, are capable of realizing the finest ideal of humanity.

*Let man and woman be noble,
Helpful and good!
For that alone
Distinguishes them
From all beings
That we know.*

We can see from even this brief account of the drama that it offers many opportunities for profound discussion. In working with *Faust*, high school seniors about to go out into the world must consider various critical and relevant questions:

How do we face evil in our time?

How can we know the deepest secrets of the universe?

What is the nature of suicide?

Does alcohol offer lasting pleasures?

What is the nature of drugs?

How can the soul be ignited by lust?

How can love as a deeper emotion between man and woman truly arise?

The tragedy of Dr. Faust was written almost two hundred years ago, but it poses a number of modern questions. It is indeed remarkable how interested the students are in tackling these themes, which are contemporary and which deeply touch the life of each human being. ❁

René Querido, L.L.D., has been involved with Anthroposophy and Waldorf Education for over forty-five years. He has been a class teacher and a high school teacher and from 1977 to 1991 was director of Rudolf Steiner College in Fair Oaks, California. His books include *Creativity in Education* (1982), *The Golden Age of Chartres: The Teaching of a Mystery Center and the Eternal Feminine* (1987), and *The Mystery of the Holy Grail: A Modern Path of Initiation* (1991). Most recently, René has edited and written a long introduction to a collection of writings by Rudolf Steiner. This material was published in 1997 by the Anthroposophic Press with the title *The Western Approach to Karma and Reincarnation*. René lives in Boulder, Colorado, and travels widely, lecturing on Anthroposophy and Waldorf Education.

For the Love of Literature: A Celebration of Language and Imagination

by Christy MacKaye Barnes

Last year the Anthroposophic Press (Hudson, New York) published a book called For the Love of Literature: A Celebration of Language and Imagination. This remarkable and beautiful book is the capstone of Christy MacKaye Barnes's long and distinguished career as teacher and writer. It includes twenty-two essays on language and literature, nine of which are by Christy. The remaining thirteen, by other writers inspired by Anthroposophy and connected to Waldorf Education, include "The Future of the English Language" by Adam Bittleston, "The Trials of Parsifal" by L. Francis Edmunds, and "We Love Grammar" by Dorit Winter. Douglas Gerwin edited the volume.

Following are excerpts from several of Christy Barnes's essays included in For the Love of Literature. Used by permission of the Anthroposophic Press.

From "Can Imagination be Trained?"

Education has for a long time been oriented toward informing the mind and training it to respond to facts and problems as speedily, logically, and accurately as possible. Our schools are based on the indisputable premise that intellectual powers and the ability to absorb information are necessary and important for life and progress and that their efficiency can be improved.

Many of us look upon imagination as a pleasant and admirable embellishment to cultural life. But there have been and are people—writers, scientists, statesmen, planners of all kinds—who say that without imagination we cannot foresee, organize, or originate what is needed for the future. The relationship of education to intellect and imagination should be one of the fundamental concerns of the new generation. . . .

It is up to the teacher to help a student to distinguish between illusion and "real imagination."

One means of doing this is to guide him methodically through three steps in the imaginative process: first, the very accurate observation and reproduction of an image; second, the tracing of carefully authenticated analogies to this image, through which he is led to recognize the fundamental law which creates their congruence [one might, for example, observe the structure of a leaf and then compare it to the leaf-like structure of a river delta]; third, based upon the study of such actualities, the discovery of that fire which creates and shapes new images out of which may evolve poems, music, works of art, inventions, or social reforms. . . .

There are a thousand ways, of course, to cultivate the imagination. It goes without saying that each teacher creates his or her own ways and means. You can steep a boy or girl in the greatest poems of the great poets; read them aloud; have the children learn them by heart, and collect poems as one might collect flowers or autumn leaves; lead the students deep into their childhood memories of nature and into their newest experiences of human beings, minerals, and stars, open them to the sounds, rhythms, and wisdom of language; and show them how with Blake not to "see with but through the eye," how to open eyes within eyes. Let them learn not only to see but to breathe in the color of the sky, the light on a white birch tree, the sunset glow on a snow peak, the gray devastation and tragedy of a city slum. . . .

From "Poetry, Music, and Imagination"

And yet, what really is a word? How is it born? Arising as an invisible thought or the impulse of a warm heart, it must build itself a body if it is to be effective in this physical world of ours. And so it does—out of the most

ephemeral and intangible of substances: the stuff of sound. With the instruments of lips, teeth, tongue, and palate, the delicate yet sturdy consonants are shaped to provide keel, masts, sails, and vessel, and in the hull of each syllable is placed a musical, glowing vowel, like a jewel set in the prongs of a ring, a jewel—as the Swiss poet and dramatist Albert Steffen expressed it—“enclosed, protected, cherished, held in place by the many-sided care of consonants.”

So the little boats of each word are ushered forth into the world, uttered from the human mouth and then borne outward on the stream of the outflowing, warm, slightly moist breath—winged words that fly straight to their goal—another human soul. An impulse arising within us may appear first only as a glint in the human eye, next in a gesture, and finally in the transformation of them both, as speech carried on the spear-throw of the breath. . . .

From “Speech as an Awakener and Healing Force”

Our speech is, with the exception of our gestures, probably the most intimate and revealing expression of what is human and individual in each one of us. As such, it is of central importance to everyone and especially to teachers whose task and art it is to give human individuals the best start in life. Speech expresses, but it also impresses or stamps itself upon those who hear it, especially if they are young and in the most imitative and formative stage of life. Speech is the great conveyor of meaning; it is also a revealer and sculptor of human beings. . . .

If as teachers we can make our speech into an instrument for active thinking, our students will hear how this lends a definite ring to our voice and sharpness to our consonants. They will listen to the audible drama of thought in the intonation and phrasing of the spoken sentences as one thought builds and depends upon another, as conclusion answers premise. And they will imitate this clarity, logic, and structure both in their own speech and in their thinking.

Teachers in a Waldorf school are particularly concerned with speech. They use the spoken word rather than textbooks in order to convey

what they know, have digested, and then re-formed for their students, who in turn form it over once more for themselves in their own notebooks. For teachers, the spoken word is their constant instrument. They know, for instance, that ear and larynx are closely allied, and that the larynx continually imitates what the ear hears, even when one is not speaking. In this way what children hear models their still soft and impressionable speech organs subtly but surely in its own image. . . .

The speech organism, however, consists of more than the mouth and larynx. It also includes our breathing and one might even say our whole nature. . . . Breathing is an intrinsic part of speech, and the way in which people breathe when they speak has a definite effect upon us. . . . The phrasings and impacts of the breath are as various as there are people on earth. Through them we mutually affect one another, usually unconsciously, but nevertheless actually.

Children are more sensitive to these impacts than adults. Not only children’s speech but their whole manner takes on something of the clarity and fineness, the blunted or sloppy character of the consonants they hear, something of the flow or purity, the harshness, fullness or weakness of the vowels. But they imitate more than these. The hearty relaxation or hesitation with which the breath of the adults around them comes and goes . . . the warmth, thoughtfulness, integrity . . . the whole life attitude of the speaker . . . influence the rhythmic and circulatory systems [of the children]—vital centers of physical and psychological health.

From “Why Write?”

Why write? Why write a letter, an essay, a story, a poem? Write a poem because a melody, an experience, an imagination rises and hums in you, and the memory of something you have heard or done or read gives it the sounds, mood, color, the wings to glide out into the air in song or across the paper in silent music. You write because there is a thought, a message, a task, a story that must be told, a game or process to explain. Writing it down crystallizes it into clarity, in fact crystallizes with it the writer’s whole being, making it firmer, more structured and awake.

What children have written, be it feeble or clear, disorganized or harmonious, works back upon them in a formative or disorienting way, and in time works back upon the whole class. This is why you take the best of what they have handed in and read it aloud to them: it both stimulates and forms their future efforts. This, too, is perhaps the primary purpose of a school literary magazine: that it hold up to them a goal of clarity, skill, and healthy imagination which they become eager to emulate. Likewise, if we want young people to write well, they should hear from their earliest years the language of the greatest writers—Shakespeare, Blake, Burns—or of the King James Version of the Bible, which nourished the style of a Lincoln.

Writing is a social art. A vast spectrum of experience needs to pass from one human being to another if friends, nations, and races are to understand and live in community with one another. But this the media, with segmented and capsulated impressions interrupted by advertisements, cannot do. It takes literature, with its art of conveying the heart and depth of things. Without such communication, there is no community, no circulatory system to keep the soul of humanity fed, active, and refreshed.

From "Literature and the Drama of Polarities"

Viewed from without, the soul of the adolescent is in a state of glorious imbalance. Adolescence is, in one sense, a disease without which you do not progress as a healthy human being, an abnormality without which you are not normal. The soul is a-flow and a-wash with new, fresh ideals, dangers, dramas and mysteries . . .

One of the tasks of a high school teacher is to help the students—through the medium of imagination rather than through raw experience—to explore these longings, extremes, ideals, dreams, and life riddles even further. Here a teacher can have no more effective collaborators than the great poets, dramatists, and novelists. Through them, the students come to realize that now they are no longer alone in their world of discovery. These artists plunge with them into depths and delights and voice their own questionings; and one or another author becomes their friend and guide.

A good English teacher longs to bring students into direct contact with great authors so that from them each young person can learn, as Keats learned from Spenser, Dostoyevsky from Gogol, and Melville from Shakespeare and Hawthorne. All original authors have apprenticed themselves to a chosen master and followed in his footsteps for a longer or a shorter way. . . .

[It] is well worth taking a precious half-hour of a morning lesson to allow each student to recite a poem learned by heart. A poem learned by heart will stay with them throughout a lifetime. Learning by heart allows time for the substance, mood, and music of a poem to trickle down below the head-knowledge of academic teaching and become formative forces within the life of the feelings and the will, developing powers of compassion and purpose.

[Also, one can let] the students learn to write in a similar way—by becoming the authors' pupils. Writers themselves have always done this. But today in school, we ask pupils to write essays *about* what they read, to analyze and criticize them. This sharpens their critical powers and is very necessary and good. But it is one-sided. It strengthens no imagination, no productive ability, encourages no breadth or variety of style.

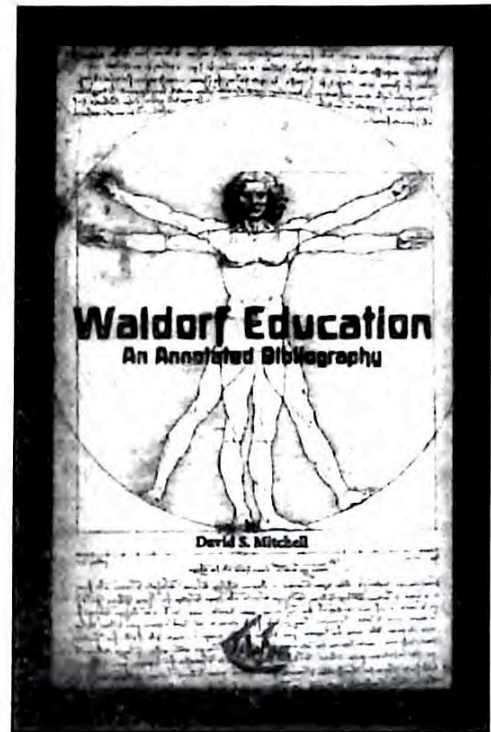
After reading Chaucer, let the class practice Chaucer's art of portraiture, using his swift, economic strokes and abrupt transitions, sketching like him the most telling articles of dress and character with shrewd humor. Or let them try Hawthorne's Rembrandtesque use of one ray of light in a large darkness, Emerson's surefooted pace of thought, Hardy's mastery of concrete nouns and Conrad's abstract ones, Melville's splendid, rolling seas of language and alliteration. This exercises deep regions of their beings. Their imagination grows, truer, more concrete, and expansive.

From "Backgrounds for Russian Literature"

[One] of the most interesting tasks for a teacher—or for anyone, for that matter—is to seek out those great pioneers of modern and future thought who are to be found in almost every country and culture, and then to explore the inner landscapes they provide, climb the crags of their rocky conceptions and breathe

the high, clear air and large perspectives of their insights. If we are to stir the imagination of the younger generation, give transparency and mobility to their widening powers of vision, and toughen their mental grip, we must find examples for them, great figures who can help to nourish and exercise young people's capacities.

Such creative spirits need to be found, moreover, in countries other than our own. Interestingly enough, once one comes to know one of these forerunners, one discovers that they have already found out others of their own kind, have spun threads of friendship across the seas, built indestructible bridges of insight between peoples, and links from their own time to our own. In some respect these pioneers are more contemporary now than they were in their own eras. Goethe, Carlyle, Coleridge, MacDonald, Emerson, Thoreau, Tolstoi, Dostoyevsky are some of these. Soloviev is another. ❀



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Integrating Aboriginal Culture into Waldorf Schools in Australia

By Gilbert Van Kerckhoven

Although Waldorf Education has existed in Australia for almost forty years, relatively little has been done to incorporate Aboriginal culture and spirituality into the Waldorf school curriculum. Individual teachers have tried with various degrees of success to introduce elements of Aboriginal

One reason why no more progress has been made is that the cultural environment in which the Waldorf schools have had to work has been a difficult one, not conducive to dealing with Aboriginal culture in a positive and creative way. Until recently, Australians of European descent have largely denied the value of Aboriginal culture. The schools must

activate the healing quality of Waldorf Education in order to help redeem an unfortunate situation that is rapidly improving but that still exists.

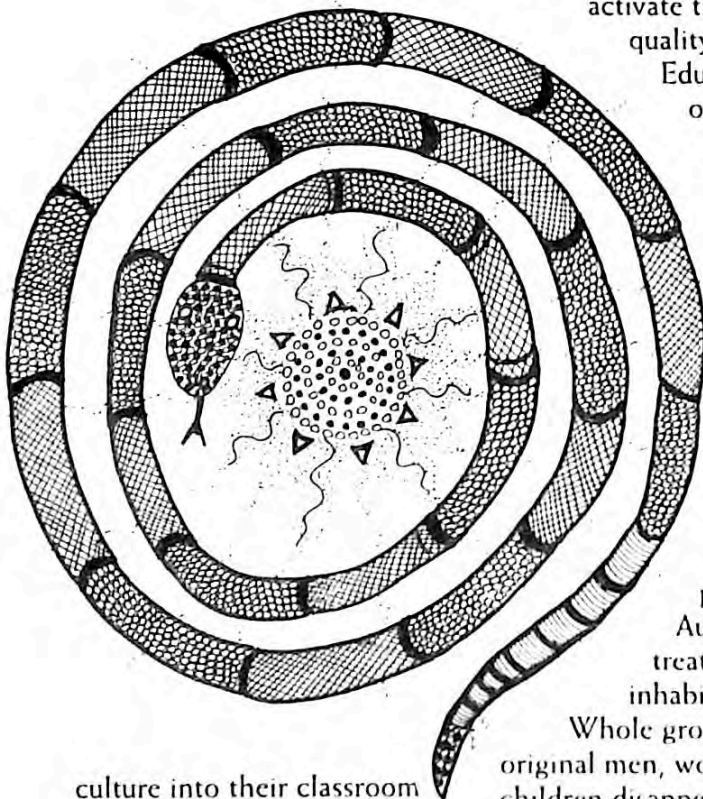
As elsewhere in the world, European settlers in Australia often treated the native inhabitants harshly.

Whole groups of Aboriginal men, women, and children disappeared from the lands on which they lived and which they cared for, massacred or driven off by white settlers desirous of their land, or perishing from diseases

brought by the whites—influenza, measles, and the like.

Also, up to a few decades ago, the Australian government tried to undermine Aboriginal culture in many different ways. One method was to separate Aboriginal children from their parents and put them in the care of white foster families. The aim was to “integrate” the native people into Australian (i.e., white) civilization and to prevent Aboriginal elders from conveying their beliefs, culture, stories, language, values, and practices to the younger generation. Much of the old Aboriginal culture was lost forever, and countless individuals were deprived of their identity and their birthright culture. Also, European logging, agricultural, and mining practices upset the fragile ecological system and deprived the Aborigines of their sources of food. Thus in less than two hundred years the foundations of Aboriginal culture were to a great extent destroyed.

The Aboriginal culture in its view of the world, the human being, and nature has much of value for children (and adults) of the dominant white culture. Though one speaks about “the Aboriginal culture,” this is as incorrect or correct—as to speak about “the European culture” or “the



culture into their classroom and some have exchanged content, methods, and resources on an individual level. But a concerted effort on a national level is just now being considered.

native American" culture. The Aboriginal culture of Australia consists of many distinct tribes and groups. These can and do vary greatly in language, belief, and custom.

All Aboriginal groups, however, share one central concept—that of the *Dreamtime*, though its specific content can vary from region to region. The *Dreamtime* denotes a time when the earth was new and largely unformed. During this time the creation beings and the ancestors of the Aboriginal people shaped the earth through their deeds, and, when their time had come, returned to the spirit lands. Physical traces of their presence can be still seen in the constellations of the stars, in specific features of the landscape, and elsewhere. Though the term "*Dreamtime*" refers to the time of the activity of the ancestors, it includes also our current time. The *Dreamtime* has a beginning but no end.

Aborigines have a deep and vital respect for nature. They see the earth as sacred and not to be touched, changed, or altered—by agriculture, mining, or logging. Furthermore, for an Aboriginal person the land and the human being are one; they cannot be separated. Disturbing the earth may harm a person somewhere far away. Fell a tree and you kill the spirit of a person, the spirit which is living in the tree. The person will get sick and die even if he or she lives far away. The Aboriginal elder Big Bill Neidjie says (in his broken English)

We walk on earth, we look after (her) . . . like rainbow sitting on top. But something underneath, under the ground . . . we don't know . . . you don't know. What you want to do? If you touch . . . you might get cyclone, heavy rain or flood. Not just here. You might kill someone in another place. Might be kill him in another country.

This oneness with nature is expressed in beliefs and practices concerning the totem. Among Aboriginal tribes in certain regions of central Australia, each child at birth is given a plant or animal totem by the elders of the tribe. This proto-plant or proto-animal is the spiritual ancestor and spiritual guardian of the person. An Aborigine can never harm or kill his or her totem. Associated with each totem is a place on the land where its life forces are strongest and to which the person can go to activate and appropriate these forces.

A teacher can talk about such concepts in class, but the children will experience them more strongly through living experiences of the culture—its way of life, traditions, customs, and stories. Already in the second grade some stories and legends can be told. Set in the *Dreamtime*, many deal with the origin of certain animals, plants, geographical features, constellations of stars, and so on. Many also have a moral value. Through them the foundation of moral conduct, tribal laws, patterns of behavior were conveyed to the children of the tribe. One story, for example, explains how humans and animals became differentiated. The first

beings on earth were able to manifest as both animal and human. Those who obeyed the laws given them by their creator (the Rainbow Snake) became humans. Those who disobeyed were turned into animals, stones, and mountains. Such stories can be told alongside Aesop's fables and similar tales and can be used as the basis of various class activities: clay modeling, painting, drama, drawing, music, and story writing.

In the fourth grade when the children study their local surroundings, Aboriginal culture can be dealt with in greater detail. Intact Aboriginal communities no longer exist in the areas where there are Waldorf schools. But place names, and signs of Aboriginal life, such as grooves in stony outcrops near a watercourse where the native people sharpened their tools, are found in many areas. And where Aboriginal culture does

survive, children can experience Aboriginal food-gathering practices, medicinal plants, clothing, family life, tools, weapons, rituals, and so on.



In the upper grades, students can learn more about Aboriginal culture. In the fifth grade, when the exploration of Australia is studied, the teacher can point out that some white explorers died of thirst and hunger in areas where Aborigines had lived for millennia. A study of survival in the bush and of food-gathering techniques might follow. When fire is studied in grade seven, Aboriginal fire-making techniques—using just two sticks—might be described and tried out in practice. One Waldorf school each year takes its tenth-grade students on a practical surveying camp to an Aboriginal site that contains traditional works of art. The task of surveying the site was given by the Department of State Aboriginal Affairs.

Waldorf Education has a role to play in Australia. One task is to help the children develop a respect for the native people and for their ancient culture and a love for the land. This will allow them to live on this continent aware and grateful for its past and to have a harmonious relationship to it.

Another task is to help build a bridge between two cultures, one an ancient culture undisturbed by modern influences until two hundred years ago, the other a culture of the future. Waldorf Education can therefore fulfill a healing task on the Australian continent. How this is to be accomplished—by means beyond teaching children about Aboriginal culture in the schools—must be investigated. It will have to be taken

up by individuals who are willing to actively put themselves at the service of the folk spirit of the continent.

Recently, for example, a theater group of two Aborigines, a white Australian, and an emigrated Englishman presented a play about the 1834 massacre of Aborigines near the town of Denmark in Western Australia. Children and teachers from the Waldorf school in Denmark saw the play and were deeply affected by it. The play provided a view of local history from the perspective of the Aborigines and brought to light in detail an event that has always been minimized in white Australian history books.

This inner meeting with Aboriginal culture can become a spiritual responsibility, as indicated by these words of Bill Neidjie:

This story is important.

It won't change,

It is law.

It is like this earth,

It won't move. . . .

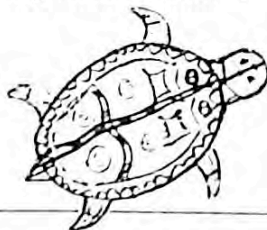
Now you know this story.

You [are] responsible now. . . .

Might be your grandson will get this story. . . .

Keep going. . . .

*Hang on like I done. **



Gilbert Van Kerckhoven is Flemish and teaches at the Golden Hill Steiner School in Denmark, West Australia

Letter to the Editor

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pedagogy, and at least many Waldorf teachers are anthroposophists. These facts have significant implications for both teaching and administration. Waldorf schools may not be "sectarian" in a strict sense, but Anthroposophy is a religion by any reasonable definition, and its influence on Waldorf Education is far more determinative than is typical in public or in other private, nonsectarian schools. Parents, I think, are often unaware of this.

4. Many Waldorf teachers I've observed often use what I would call "Waldorf-speak"—a language laden with jargon, unfamiliar terminology, and vague, mystical ideas. Some parents go years without really understanding what's being said, and prospective parents are asked, in effect, to make an enormous leap of faith.

In spite of these comments, I find much in Waldorf Education that resonates with my own views, and I have deep admiration and appreciation for the Waldorf teachers I've known. But I do encourage an expansion and continuation of the discussion begun by Dr. Koetzsch and a commitment on the part of Waldorf educators to communicate clearly, intelligently, and honestly.

Sincerely,
Clifton Neil Irby
Stone Mountain, Georgia

The writer is a Christian Science practitioner whose daughter is a student in the fifth grade of the Waldorf School of Atlanta

Video Review:

Waldorf Education: A Vision of Wholeness

Produced by Telequest, Princeton, N.J., 1996.
Eugene Schwartz, Consultant. Funded by a grant from Herbert H. Hagens. Sixteen minutes.
Available from Hagens Recording Studio, 61 Lower Harrison St., Princeton, NJ 08540. Tel: (609) 452-2127. \$20 + \$2 shipping & handling.

Reviewed by Michael Ronall

A "Waldorf video" might seem incongruous. Do not Waldorf teachers spend their days combating the effects of video culture on their pupils? But this film is not for Waldorf pupils. It is meant for parents of prospective students and indeed includes an explanation of why the schools forego electronic media: as we watch a fifth-grader raptly counting stitches on her knitting needle, her teacher tells us that

we find very often that for children who see a lot of television, everything comes to them without their doing anything . . . and so they lose [practice in] practical thinking, logical thinking. Problem solving comes by figuring out things with their fingers and working with their minds on them.

One of the producers, Dick Blofson, is a parent of two Waldorf alumnae; footage was shot at the Princeton, Spring Valley (N.Y.), Kimberton (Pa.), and Detroit schools. Their classrooms bustle with students' creative activity, and this survey naturally approaches the pace of an action film; the cinematography is midway between the "talking heads" staticism of *Sunrise Semester* and the postmodern, violent clash of images and perspectives of *Sesame Street*. The tempo is humane, treating the children—and the viewer—gently, allowing the documentary to clamber through a fairly swift progression of scenes. It is evident in the shift from the visible animation of the younger years to the self-contained bearing of older students

that the children's mobility has not dried up in the interval but become refined, taken up into the individualizing personality.

We enter into a series of classroom vignettes while Bach's third Brandenburg Concerto is performed with precision and zest—by what turns out to be a high school orchestra. Classes of all ages make music beautifully and with evident enjoyment: one group sings madrigals, another a Renaissance round in Latin; a recorder choir plays a French folk melody, which modulates into a violin solo exquisitely performed by a lone, pensive adolescent in his school's sculpture studio. But at the root of these accomplishment is artistry valued more for its "how" than its "what."

Every child is an artist, every child is a poet, every child is a musician—the reality is that there are millions of children out there who can hold a tune and sing well, who, given half a chance, can paint beautifully.

But the true purpose of a ninth-grade class's four-month project to build hammer dulcimers is to "allow them to have a picture in their head and teach them to bring it out through their hands." A student performs a melody on his completed instrument with aplomb, interspersing the execution with an account of his interest in all the steps of making it. And the viewer can only agree with the assessment, offered almost as an afterthought, that "it came out pretty nice."

In Waldorf Education, method, as well as subject, is coordinated to the child's stage of development. In the service of depicting this relationship, the video's camera work itself occasionally embodies pedagogical principles: a kindergartner at play is shown from the neck down, suggesting the universality that is characteristic of early childhood and allowing the audience to join in "building worlds [for which the teachers] provide the raw materials." Against a backdrop of silk puppetry, imaginative play, and gardening, a kindergarten teacher describes her task as:

. . . to guide them in that process but not raise to consciousness intellectually what they are doing. . . . If we try to distill a lesson out of it, we only pull a child out of the direct participatory consciousness that's really true to this phase of childhood.

Successive scenes show that they do indeed "go into first grade full of love for activity; they're very present, they're very eager."

Pupils are met at the classroom door each morning, greeted by name, and given a handshake, "to see how they are and to let them know that they are seen." That the class teachers grow with them "from grade one all the way through grade eight as a family" prompts one retrospecting ninth-grader to marvel: "... she totally knew every single one of us ... everything about us ... math, history, everything. She directed our plays, she went on our class trips. ..." Proud students display lavishly illustrated main-lesson books, and one boy announces happily, "Instead of *looking* at the material, we learn it *as we make it!*" A teacher who has seen his class "grow into the people I'd tried to imagine them being in first grade," recalls that throughout elementary school, "their feelings have been their educators. ... I've tried to appeal to their interest and their feeling about the subject that I'm teaching them."

But at adolescence,

suddenly all kinds of changes are going on in their own bodies. Now the question is asked by the kids themselves: "Why is my skin breaking out?" "Why is my voice deepening?" This is the moment to bring in physiology, you've got them.

One teacher adapts Galileo's reputed method for proving the uniform acceleration of falling bodies, by having tenth-graders sing "Old MacDonald" ("—unless you have another suggestion") to gauge the speed of a steel ball rolling down a ramp. The interdisciplinary lesson "includes history, it includes philosophy, it includes the mathematics—they just finished studying coordinate geometry—and of course it includes physics."

The approach itself is anything but mechanical, because

all the great physicists had an impulse that was not to build a technical machine but was really to understand the world, and really to understand the world is a philosophical pursuit.

Artistry is evident throughout the film: in the courtesy and humor modulating the dignified tenor of instruction, in the sheltering gesture of a teacher bending over a student at his

desk, in another teacher's encouragement to his student teammates when he hits a softball.

Artistry is present for first-graders dancing out arithmetical combinations: "*Two groups of six are we, two groups of six are we!*" Their teacher's persistent tone urges confidence—and the insight will follow—that they can indeed divide into intelligible sets; and the next scene shows ninth-graders giggling as they recall the song about the fir tree that taught them to count. We glimpse artistry in the teaching of eurythmy, geography, and language, and in the atmosphere of a faculty meeting; we hear its effects in a parent's satisfaction that "the people who are making the policy are practicing it."

Producers and sponsor of this video, the normally unobserved elements of such an endeavor, deserve credit for allowing the distinctive features of Waldorf Education to breathe through their technological handiwork. Like the students' knitting, it reveals love worked into it as creative thinking—and is likely to inspire the viewer's own. ❀

Michael Ronall, a writer and editor, attended the Rudolf Steiner School in New York City. He studied philosophy at Sarah Lawrence College and the Graduate Faculty of the New School for Social Research. Since 1990 he has been consulting editor and a contributor to the quarterly Newsletter of the Anthroposophical Society in America.