

Renewal

FALL-WINTER 2001 - VOLUME 10, NUMBER 2

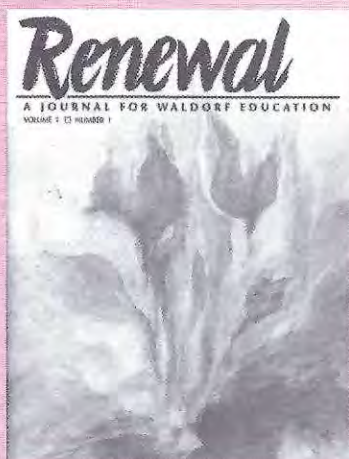


A JOURNAL FOR WALDORF EDUCATION



RENEWAL CELEBRATES ITS TENTH ANNIVERSARY

Sometime early in 1990, Henry Barnes—the first American to be formally trained as a Waldorf teacher (in the early 1930s in Stuttgart) and for decades a leader of Waldorf Education in North America—had an idea: the Waldorf school movement in North America should have a magazine to support its work. David Alsop, then chairman of the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America, concurred, as did other leaders within the association. An editorial advisory board, consisting of Henry, Patti Livingston, and James Pewtherer, was appointed. Ronald Koetzsch was asked to be editor. Marianne Alsop was given responsibility for production and circulation and eventually assumed the role of managing editor. The first issue appeared in the spring of 1991, thirty-two pages in length. About 1200 copies were printed.



Since that time *Renewal* has continued to appear twice a year, each autumn and spring. This issue is number 20. The aggregate of published material is about 1000 pages and includes some 300 articles written by more than 120 different writers. Today over 100 Waldorf schools subscribe to *Renewal* for all their teachers and parents, and the total number of copies sent to individual subscribers and to schools is about 18,000. This circulation makes *Renewal* one of the largest journals (in any country and in any language) that is connected with Waldorf Education and/or Anthroposophy. The magazine is fully self-supporting, each year meeting its own expenses and making a sizeable contribution to AWSNA's general fund.

Most of *Renewal*'s founders are still involved with the magazine. Patti Livingston and James Pewtherer are still on the editorial advisory board, still reading all the articles submitted to *Renewal* and helping to decide which will be published. Ronald Koetzsch is still editor, and Marianne Alsop managing editor. There have been some changes. Henry Barnes resigned from the board two years ago, and Vivian Jones-Schmidt took his place. About six years ago, Anne Riegel, now Anne Riegel-Koetzsch, became copy editor and principal proofreader. A *Renewal* management group, consisting of the two editors, two members of the editorial board, plus David Mitchell and Agaf Dancy, now oversees the running of the magazine.

We send sincere thanks to the hundreds of people who have helped make *Renewal* a success—writers, parents, teachers, school administrators, individual subscribers, and advertisers. With your continued support, we are confident that *Renewal* can continue to serve Waldorf Education, an education based on an understanding of the child as a being not only of body and mind but also of soul and spirit.

The staff of *Renewal*

CREDITS:

Cover art is by Matthew Alsop, a graduate of the Sacramento Waldorf School (1992) and currently the first-grade teacher at the Live Oak Waldorf School in Meadow Vista (near Auburn), California. This stained glass piece depicts a theme from the seventh-grade Waldorf curriculum—the age of exploration. *Renewal* thanks the Waldorf School of Baltimore and photographer Larry Canner for the photos accompanying “How is My Child Doing?” “Stability in an Uncertain World,” and “Movement in Waldorf Education”; David Adams for the illustrations accompanying his article; Kara and Sara Van Zant for the art work on page 20; Christian Brownrigg for the drawings accompanying the article “Asking Questions” and the botany drawing on page 18; the Detroit Waldorf School for the photos accompanying their article; Craig Holdrege for the illustration accompanying his article; the AWSNA art archives for the illustration on page 17.

FROM THE EDITOR

BY RONALD E. KOETZSCH, PH.D.



OVER EIGHTY YEARS AGO, RUDOLF STEINER EXPLAINED THE ROLE OF HANDWORK AND CRAFTS IN THE WALDORF CURRICULUM. OBVIOUSLY SUCH WORK DEVELOPS MANUAL DEXTERITY AND HAND-EYE COORDINATION, BUT IT ALSO AFFECTS THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BRAIN . . . AND ATTRIBUTES OF CHARACTER.

In the Waldorf curriculum, handwork and crafts have an important place. Children begin with knitting in the first grade, and, in the course of their education, they learn to crochet, embroider, do cross-stitch, sew by hand, and design and make clothing using a sewing machine. They also learn to carve wood, usually making in seventh grade a wooden spoon they have designed. Waldorf high school students learn weaving, pottery-making, bookbinding, metalworking, woodworking, blacksmithing, and even—when an expert is available—locksmithing.

The learning of these practical arts is a joy and a blessing, and the children experience that this is so. Handwork classes are typically quiet and orderly, as the children focus intently on their work.

But these activities are also crucial to the development of the child. Over eighty years ago, Rudolf Steiner explained the role of handwork and crafts in the Waldorf curriculum. Obviously such work develops manual dexterity and hand-eye coordination, but it also affects the development of the brain. These activities of the hands establish in the human brain the neural pathways that later will support the ability to think clearly and judge rationally. As Steiner suggests, the thread the young child learns to follow in knitting a scarf is akin to the thread of thought the adolescent and adult must learn to follow in the thinking process. Handwork also develops attributes of character—patience, precision, foresight, and respect and love for what is both useful and beautiful.

As with many of Steiner's insights concerning human development (and other fields), his view of the hand is being confirmed by contemporary scientific research. Neurologist Frank Wilson's book, *The Hand* (Vintage Books, 1998), is a 400-page paean to the miracle of the human hand. His basic point, supported by much research and many footnotes, is that the hand plays a pivotal role in the healthy physical, emotional, and psychological development of the human being. He also argues for a greater role for handwork and manual skills in education. Somehow Wilson's exhaustive research overlooked the man who made these same points eight decades ago. One will search the book's eighty pages of notes, appendices, bibliography, and index in vain for a mention of Rudolf Steiner or Waldorf Education.

Happily, the benefits of handwork and crafts are not limited to children. The hands and the brain of the adult can learn and master these skills and gain the benefits—physical, emotional, psychological, and moral—similar to those that a child reaps. Each fall the Foundation Year students at Rudolf Steiner College learn to knit. For several weeks during break and lunchtime these students sit here and there on campus working on their projects. There is something beautiful and poignant about these men and women, heads bowed over their work, learning—often with some difficulty—a basic human skill. They have as adults, consciously and freely, sought out an opportunity that they might have been given as a gift at age seven. There is no time limit on grace.

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FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF AWSNA

It is with pleasure and hope for the future that I begin my work as the new chairman of the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America. I also feel deep gratitude for the work of Dave Alsop, who so ably shaped and tended the organization for over twelve years.

For those of you who don't yet know me, let me introduce myself. I have been involved with Waldorf Education for over twenty-four years. I was a class teacher at the Washington Waldorf School in Bethesda, Maryland, for eighteen years, and for two years served as development director. Most recently, I taught high school history and social studies. I was also chair of the college of teachers, helping guide and maintain the personnel, program, and future-envisioning work.

I have been very active in the Washington school's search for a new home. This culminated in the recent successful bid on a large site with suitable buildings. I think my firsthand involvement in administration and community development, along with my ongoing experience in the classroom, are among the important assets I bring to this work.

I am a sailor. I love to travel, meet people, and make friends, and I look forward to visiting as many schools as I can. I was involved with the Anthroposophical Society before going into teaching and starting a family. My wife, Lynn, is an endless fount of support and inspiration for me. Together we have raised two children, Waldorf graduates, who are on their way to the kind of independence that we all value for our children.

While it is bittersweet to leave my excellent colleagues, students, and the parents at the Washington Waldorf School, I find the opportunity to serve as AWSNA chairman a compelling one. Waldorf Education faces challenges. Our schools, both in North America and around the world, deserve recognition as valid, time-tested places of learning and as social organizations. With this recognition, though, comes scrutiny and inevitable criticism—fair and unfair—and we must have courage and clarity of mind to deal with it. Informed by contact and dialogue with you in your school communities, I hope to help Waldorf Education grow and to increase awareness of and support for the movement.

The Association has several distinct tasks. It serves its member schools directly, giving advice, support, and guidance. Directing this activity will be Scott Olmsted, who is joining the organization as member services coordinator. The Association also serves the movement as a whole, promoting research and presenting and representing Waldorf Education to a broad range of people. We plan to be very active in contributing to the discussion on continent-wide, national, and local issues that affect schools. The voice of Waldorf Education should be heard. We also want to increase AWSNA's contact and cooperation with kindred associations within and without the Waldorf and anthroposophical movements.

This is a formidable agenda for an organization composed of varied and independent schools in three countries. Yet we share a view of the human being, one that is the foundation of Waldorf Education, and we share a desire to serve the children and families in our school communities. If the way we work differs according to place and the people there, let there be a unified voice and will for Waldorf Education that transcends borders and locales. Let that active voice be the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America.

I am eager to know what you think and what ideas and insights you have. Please feel free to write me at the AWSNA office or send me an e-mail at dbufano@awsna.org.

How is My Child Doing?

STUDENT EVALUATION IN WALDORF SCHOOLS

BY JAN-KEES SALTET

In recent years, there has been a stampede to institute standardized testing for schoolchildren. The aim is to set clear standards for skills and knowledge to be acquired, to make schools and teachers accountable, and to provide a workforce that can compete in the world economy. Forty-eight states now have standardized tests, and children are being tested earlier in their school careers and more and more frequently. After years of decline, test scores are rising and suggest to some that high expectations and rigorous testing of achievement may, in fact, "work."

In pedagogical circles, much criticism has been leveled against standardized testing. It brings more government interference into education and creates an atmosphere of stress and anxiety that is detrimental to a healthy learning environment. The multiple-choice format on which the exams rely can test only fact retention and certain intellectual skills. Well-known educator John Taylor Gatto writes:

There's no teacher worth his or her salt who, inside of a period at the start of a year, doesn't know who's going to get the As, who is going to get the Bs, who is going to cause trouble. . . . What we allowed to happen is for normal good judgment and wisdom to be set aside for some kind of mathematical wizardry. There's nothing a standardized test measures other than your ability to score well on the next standardized test.'

For children, tests loom large. Tests determine whether one passes or fails, is a "good" student or a "poor" student. At

the same time, students are keenly aware of the senselessness of certain questions and the shortcomings of the multiple-choice system. An astute ninth grader once remarked to me: "Some tests only show whether you're good at taking tests." They breed anxiety, a feeling of powerlessness, and resentment; standardized tests make children feel unseen, unknown, and not trusted. Tests emphasize fact retention and intellectual skills, and students dimly feel that tests leave an important part of their being unrecognized. A 1998 survey revealed that 80 percent of high school students have committed some form of cheating, such as using a cheat sheet on exams or plagiarizing written work. Perhaps cheating is a form of protest, a rebellion from the part that is left out.

EDUCATION, IN THE TRUE SENSE OF THE WORD, SHOULD AIM TO "LEAD FORTH." IT SHOULD NOT ONLY PREPARE CHILDREN TO MEET EXTERNAL STANDARDS, BUT ALSO ENABLE THEM TO REALIZE THEIR INNATE POTENTIAL, TO FOLLOW THEIR OWN STARS.



Standardized testing seeks to improve education, but often it undermines learning. Teachers are forced to "teach to tests," and the resulting atmosphere leaves little room for interest, enthusiasm, or the prime motivator, joy. A teacher's attitude and feelings concerning a topic or activity greatly influence the children and their interest and ability to learn. Just as the warmth and light of the Sun draws forth plants, the teacher's positive attitude promotes the learning and development of the child. If a teacher is interested and takes joy in the process of learning, the children will flourish. Standardization and excessive testing lock both teachers and children into a situation of stress and deprive them of vital motivation.

In Waldorf schools, exams and quantitative assessments do play a role, but a relatively minor one. One can get results by a system of rewards (good grades) and punishments (bad grades), as one can train a circus horse to do tricks, but such results are forced and bound to be short-lived. Also, a carrot-and-stick pedagogy doesn't sufficiently recognize the natural curiosity and love of learning that is in every normal child. Education, in the true sense of the word, should aim to "lead forth." It should not only prepare children to meet external standards, but also enable them to realize their innate potential, to follow their own stars. Waldorf Education aims to foster and serve that inborn, human spark. It is in this task that the true accountability of the teacher lies.

IF A TEACHER IS INTERESTED AND TAKES JOY IN THE PROCESS OF LEARNING, THE CHILDREN WILL FLOURISH. STANDARDIZATION AND EXCESSIVE TESTING LOCK BOTH TEACHERS AND CHILDREN INTO A SITUATION OF STRESS AND DEPRIVE THEM OF VITAL MOTIVATION.

One important formal assessment in a Waldorf school takes place when determining if a child is ready to move from kindergarten to first grade. The question is not whether a child can read and write, or has gotten a certain grade on an arithmetic test. The basic question is whether the child has developed enough so that the forces necessary for a different type of learning have been freed up. Therefore, the kindergarten teacher looks at motor skills, coordination of the different senses, the ability to play, and the use of the imagination. If these are sound, one can expect a healthy development of the feeling life in elementary school, which in turn will be the basis for a healthy thinking life in the high school. If the kindergarten child is not quite ready—even if he or she is old enough to enter first grade—it might be better to wait a year. Otherwise, learning will be a constant strain

for the child, which could have consequences for later life. So, an assessment of this kind takes the long view.

In Waldorf schools there is typically very little or no testing in the early grades. Testing in the academic subjects asks from the children to fulfill a given task alone, usually within a given time limit. It brings clarity, awareness, and focus. In the earlier grades, children are more dreamy and less individualized than they are later on. There is little need to single them out and wake them up this early. Testing at this age often causes premature self-awareness and tenseness. To be seen, loved, and appreciated gives enough incentive. Beginning in grade four or five, however, little quizzes such as spelling checks are good in anticipation of the more formal testing to come.

In about the sixth grade, a new mode of learning, a new motivation comes in, and the relationship to the class teacher begins to shift. Children become more aware of their own capacities and want to measure themselves against objective standards. Testing now begins to have pedagogical merit.

As the authority of the one class teacher begins to wane—typically in the seventh grade—children begin to find new authority figures in other persons they admire. They also seek the authority of facts and figures, or of the dictionary. Test results can play a healthy role here. Being evaluated in terms of a percentage or a grade is fitting at this stage, just as measuring lengths of strings in order to calculate intervals is an age-appropriate activity in seventh-grade physics. This meets a need. In the maelstrom of adolescent emotions, figures represent objectivity. Approval and appreciation remain vital, and it is especially important that children should not feel stuck with test results. They should be able to practice, make corrections, do tests over again. That way, the children have not only a yardstick for their achievements but also something to aim and train for. In the end, exercise of the will is what matters most.

Tests also have a function as a final stage of the learning process. New material is presented. The next day it is discussed and is taken in by the student at a deeper level. Then the students write and draw in their main lesson books and engage in various artistic activities. Through such endeavors that engage the will and the feelings—acting, drawing, painting, clay modeling, and so on—and that arise from the content of the lesson, the students fully digest and assimilate the material. In the final stage of the process, the child can show in a test that the material has become internalized enough that it can be reproduced. This is like a plant being able to form a seed. Done in this way, testing does have a pedagogical value

that continues into high school. The process prior to the exam is the opposite of the pernicious practice of cramming for exams, whereby the student is engaged very superficially with the lesson material.

Thus tests do play a role in Waldorf Education, albeit a minor one. Nevertheless, Waldorf students tend to perform well when they move into mainstream education, where tests are often the main basis of evaluation. They do well, not because they have been drilled in test taking, but because their schooling has nurtured their vitality and their various capacities and prepared them, not only for the balance of their education, but for the real tests of life later on.²

There are other, much more important means of assessment and review used in Waldorf schools. These include teacher reports, parent evenings, and school assemblies. The kind of assessment described in the following paragraphs not only aims to measure skills and accomplishments, but recognizes that many aspects of the child's development need to be monitored, that a fair picture only emerges over time, and that the very way one looks at the child actually has an influence.

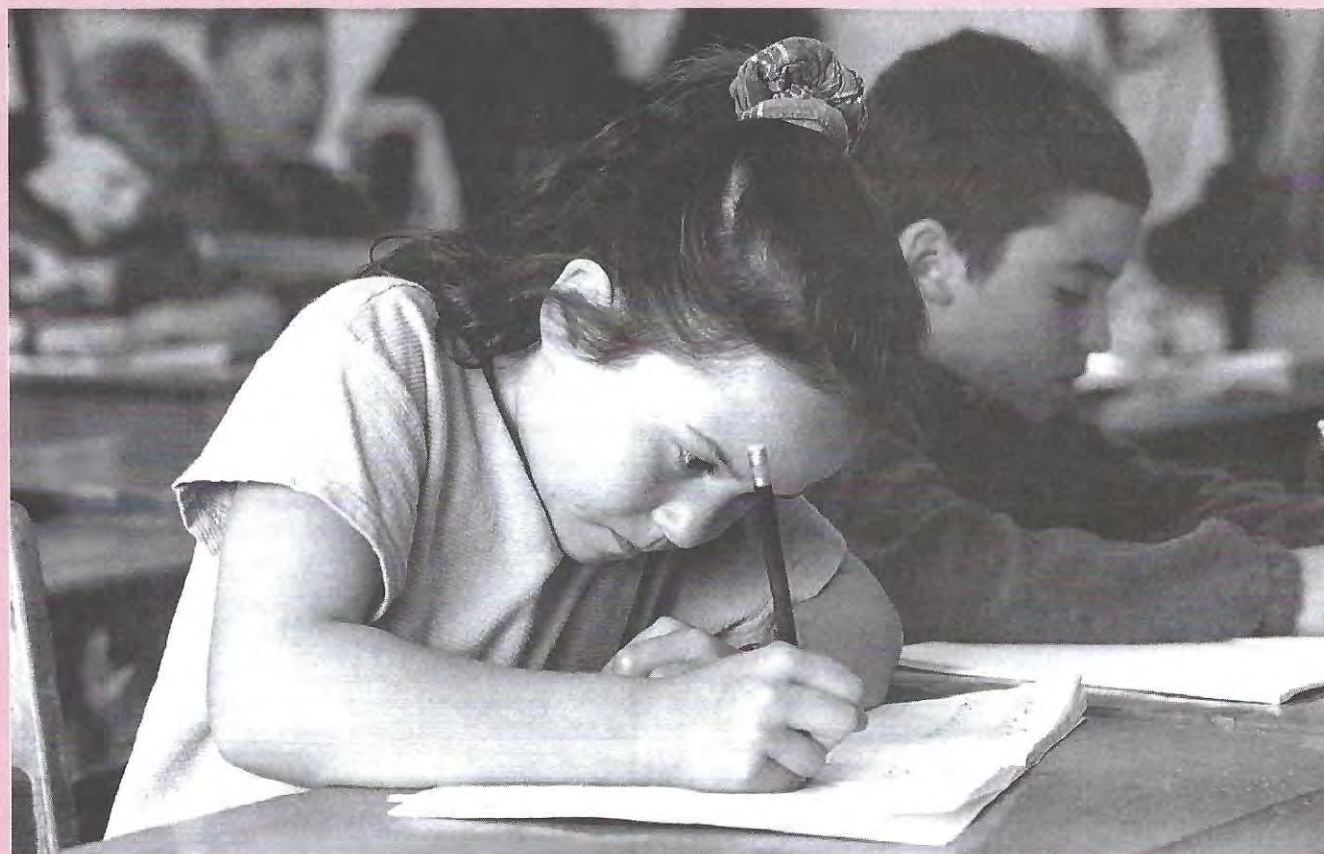
In reports, teachers try to build up a picture. They try to characterize the child, by describing special traits of her

playing, the way she forms certain letters, how she uses color, and so on. In addition to intellectual achievements, handwork, movement, social relationships, and other areas are reviewed.

These reports are based on more than performance in the classroom. Waldorf teachers strive to get to know each child very well. They are trained to observe each child carefully and with a warm interest. Every day the teacher greets and shakes the hand of each child. There are regular conferences with parents. Teachers make home visits and get to know siblings and the whole life circumstance of the child. In faculty meetings, class teachers hear from colleagues different perspectives on a child. Teachers each evening think in a meditative way about each child and that child's individual needs. Over time, the picture grows and deepens.

Also, teachers regularly meet with one or both parents of a child to exchange insights. The teacher, learning about the child's home life, can get a fuller picture. In addition, there are periodic parent evenings when the work of all the children in a class is on display. This adds the important element of comparison. Parents can see their child's work in context, one painting or knitted scarf among all the others, one foreign language book seen in relation to the work other children have done.

The basis of learning is the engagement of the student's interest by the teacher.





Seventh-grade students work on main lesson books that are the records of what they have learned.

Another important thing takes place during these parent evenings. In our time, we no longer can take shared values and standards for granted. Increasingly, we need to discuss those and build up common expectations together, and the communication taking place in these evenings helps to do that. This is a process in which we need to invest time. A class teacher I admire very much instituted a weekly potluck with a meeting afterwards, which she carried on for her eight years with the class.

In assemblies the whole school community—children, parents (and often grandparents), teachers, and administrators—comes together. These periodic, ideally monthly, gatherings serve many functions. Just as a test can conclude a learning process, a performance in assembly—the singing of a choral piece, the recitation of a poem, the playing of a piece of music, a brief dramatic offering—can close a period of learning, but without grading.

Assessment goes on at different levels in assemblies. The children see one another perform. They perceive themselves in relation to where they were and to where they hope to go. Imagine we are fourth graders, thrilled to show how clearly and strongly we can recite from the *Edda*, the stories about the Norse gods. When we see second graders do their rhythmical math exercises—beating sticks together—we remember how we were at that age. Then we get a glimpse of where we are going when we see those cool teenagers give us a hilarious preview of their class play. In assemblies, the teachers as well as the children have a chance to show the progress they have made.

The assembly serves another, more subtle function. We have today unlimited access to excellent artistic creations through recorded music, reproduced paintings, movie and television dramas, and so on. These polished end-products set very high and powerful, but often false

and unrealistic, standards. They are likely to obscure the human reality that all of us—children and adults—are in essence humble learners, practicing, but never perfect. Being surrounded by so many artificial, perfect examples is daunting and can contribute to a negative self-judgment. When we sit in a school assembly, a process takes place that can counteract the influence of these "virtual standards." We witness human development, which includes both triumphs and stumbling. This is a healthy thing to see again and again, because it grounds us and the children in reality.

Waldorf Education is based on trust in the innate human will to develop capacities and talents, to do well, to shine. Its standards for assessing a child's development are based on an understanding of what is appropriate and to be expected at each age. The young child is always saying "Watch me" and needs, above all, attention and love. The older child continues to need attention and recognition, but also the kind of yardstick that tests can provide. In monitoring the child's growth over time in the ways described, we both assess accomplishments and promote the development of the child. In addition, we as parents and educators can learn about the new possibilities for the children in our care. In such a process of assessment we are allowed not only to see the achievements that we can judge, but also to get a glimpse of the future.

ENDNOTES

1. Excerpt from an interview with John Taylor Gatto in *The Christian Science Monitor*, Oct. 10, 2000.
2. Paul Margulies, Jeff and Sheila Metzner, *Learning to Learn* (Fair Oaks, Calif.: AWSNA Publications, 1996).

JAN-KEES SALTET was born in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, and educated at the University of Groningen and at the University of Utrecht, where he received a Master of Arts in English and in art history. He did his Waldorf teacher training at Emerson College in England and took supplemental training in Stuttgart, Germany. He has been a Waldorf teacher in the Netherlands, Germany, and the United States and currently teaches at the Hartsbrook School in Hadley, Massachusetts. Jan-Kees's wife, Polly, is the eurythmist at the school, and his daughter, Elise, a recent graduate. In their household, the Saltets strive to cultivate the arts and humor.

STABILITY IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD:

THE IMAGE OF THE HUMAN BEING IN WALDORF EDUCATION

BY MICHAEL PRESTON, PH.D.



There is no substitute for real interaction between child and teacher.

WALDORF SCHOOLS ARE FOUNDED ON A FOURFOLD VIEW OF THE HUMAN BEING AND ON A PRACTICAL APPROACH TO NOURISHING EACH ASPECT, SO THAT THE HEALTH OR WHOLENESS OF THE HUMAN BEING MAY BE REALIZED.

Our culture today is increasingly fragmented, divided, and virtual. There seems to be no center that holds, no common ground of shared vital experience. Early in the twentieth century, D.H. Lawrence warned that the modern human being is becoming a thin, cerebral, largely verbal creature, full of words and opinions but lacking vigor and life. At the end of the century, the philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre claimed that society is rent by disputes because we no longer share a common moral basis on which to reach agreement. Our individual and our cultural lives have become anemic. We are challenged to find a basis for a vigorous and life-giving culture.

In an interview in the Fall 2000 issue of *Renewal*, Todd Oppenheimer speaks of his experience writing the article on Waldorf Education that appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* last year:

In all my research and meetings with people, I felt something in the Waldorf community that I only partly conveyed. I felt a tranquility and a fix on life that I didn't convey as much as I would like to—a real sound, solid moral footing in life that I would like to have dealt with more.¹

Oppenheimer perceived something very important. There is indeed a moral footing in Waldorf Education, a particular and profound understanding of the human being that includes practical ways to nourish and support each aspect of our humanity in a harmonious and complete way. This view of the human being, and the moral values and the practical activities that issue from it, can be stabilizing factors in our relativistic, postmodern times.

According to Rudolf Steiner, the human being is comprised of four aspects. The physical body gives us our structure and our capacity to do things in the world. But the physical body, without food or shelter and all that supports it in the surrounding environment, would quickly grow sick and wither away. These external support systems for the physical body have an analogue in the human organism itself, in what Steiner calls the "etheric body."

The etheric or "life-formative" body is a kind of energetic shadow of the body that gives it form and supports its life processes. The etheric body gives life, rhythm, and regularity to the physical.

Human beings also have desires and emotions, likes and dislikes, feelings and imagination, and these are much less regular or predictable. Steiner named this, the soul nature, the "astral body." It brings freshness, newness, and excitement to our lives.

The cultivation of beauty in small things, such as in writing by hand with a fountain pen, can be enriching for old and young alike.

The fourth aspect is the “ego,” the most mysterious, least easily pictured aspect of our being. Ideas, knowledge, and decision making are within the domain of the ego but do not define it. The ego is our eternal, spiritual individuality, our higher being.

These four elements are interrelated, each affecting the others, each affected by the others. Thus, the human being is neither just body nor mind nor a hybrid dualistic alliance, but a being, simultaneously spiritual and physical. The various elements of the human are woven together, each requiring its own particular nourishment.

WE NEED TO MAINTAIN AND VALUE OUR FACE-TO-FACE INTERACTIONS AND INSIST ON HUMAN PHYSICAL PRESENCE IN ALL INSTRUCTION, RELATIONS, AND DECISION MAKING, EVEN WHILE THE REST OF THE WORLD MAY BE GOING VIRTUAL.

This understanding of the psychophysical unity of the human being is one of the foundations of Waldorf Education. Steiner emphasized the importance of the physiology of the child and its vital role in education. He prescribed educational activities, such as movement games, artistic activities, and eurythmy, that involve the physical and etheric bodies as well as the intellect.

Also, Steiner made handwork a very important part of the curriculum. Speaking of the role of the hand in the development of later thinking skills, he remarked:

If you will recall what I said yesterday . . . that it is not the head alone, but the whole human being that is the logician, you will, I think, be ready to appreciate in a new way the significance of lessons that demand manual or bodily skill. For it is no mere whim that has led us to require boys as well as girls to learn knitting [in the early grades]. . . . Activity of this kind, carried out by the hands, leads to an enhancement of the faculty of judgment.²

Steiner held that in the developing child, everything that takes place in the physical body, including development itself, has psychological and spiritual effects. Conversely, all psychological, soul, and spiritual actions have bodily results, albeit often very subtle ones. This is an enormously important theme in Waldorf pedagogy. Failure to respect it endangers the child's healthy development.

It is indeed generally the case that when we set out to educate specifically the mental and spiritual faculties, without knowing that the body is itself a sheer expression of spirit, we actually



work then chiefly upon the body, and in the most harmful way. If we are going to educate children aright, we must always know just how the connection is at any point between the spiritual and the bodily in the child.³

Elsewhere Steiner speaks of the metabolism as playing an intimate part in healthy memorization. He asserts that good teaching will bring about an enhancement of metabolism and show in the delicate coloring of a child's cheeks!⁴

Steiner's attention to the physiological aspect of education often surprises parents and others new to Waldorf Education. However, recent neurological discoveries suggest that Steiner's psychological and pedagogical insights, often related to physiological factors, are accurate. In the last twenty years scientific research has identified and substantiated concepts central to Waldorf pedagogy and curriculum: the complementarity of the left and right hemispheres of the brain, the reality of multiple intelligences, and the importance of sensory integration in learning.

More recently the enormous role played by the arm and hand in the development of human consciousness has been powerfully demonstrated, notably in Frank Wilson's book, *The Hand: How its Use Shapes the Brain, Language, and Human Culture*.⁵

This psychophysical view of human nature and its development has implications for the social and cultural lives of adults as well. In the Western world, particularly after World War II, there has been an accelerating growth in individual choice, mobility, and means of individual communication. This has led to enormous cultural differentiation and to a loss of community cohesion based on shared beliefs and understanding.

In effect, we have overfed our astral and ego elements in and around us, to the neglect of the physical and etheric elements that provide life support, stability, and comfort. These aspects of being are treated merely as servants to

our life of feeling and thought, as though they have nothing important to teach us in our development and evolution. To some extent, we have become the thin, cerebral beings Lawrence warns about, oblivious to our dependency on the natural world around us, destroying that world, and substituting the virtual and the human-made for the real.

Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951), a leading philosopher of the twentieth century, broke through to a psychophysical understanding of human nature similar to Steiner's. Wittgenstein saw that human consciousness and certainty are not grounded in any "reasons" our consciousness gives to itself, but in our underlying bodily reality and in our community's "forms of life."⁶

This lived, shared, largely unspoken world of experience, based on mutual responsiveness and trust, gives individuals a sense of certainty about life and gives a culture its foundation and stability. Practices that involve the whole human being, customs about food, human relations, work, play, rituals, festivals, and the myriad activities of daily life create individual meaning and social cohesion. The physical and etheric aspects of the human being are central here, helping to create and sustain conditions of regularity and dependability. Values and beliefs that support these shared activities promote social cohesion. But, abstractions and ideas without basis in the shared human world tend to unravel culture. Wittgenstein fought against the erosion

THERE ARE CERTAIN ELEMENTS IN THE PHYSICAL LIFE—OF THE CHILD, ADULT, SCHOOL, AND SOCIETY—THAT CLEARLY MAKE FOR HEALTH. THESE INCLUDE CONTACT WITH NATURE; BEAUTY, IN THE BUILDINGS IN WHICH WE LIVE AND WORK AND LEARN, AND IN EVERY ASPECT OF LIFE; AND THE LIVELY PHYSICAL PRESENCE OF OTHER HUMAN BEINGS.

of the spiritual groundedness of human consciousness by what he called "scientism" or "pseudo ideas" that are not anchored in our psychophysical experience.

Wittgenstein draws a distinction between civilization and culture. Civilization is characterized by advanced technology, culture by social cohesion and shared meaning. An advanced civilization can be primitive in terms of culture or not even be a culture. Wittgenstein feared the decline of culture and foresaw much of what human life in the twenty-first century has become.

Rudolf Steiner often spoke of the renewal of the cultural life and held that education is our most important tool to this end. Many Waldorf parents and Waldorf teachers taking part in the education of their children feel a longing to be reeducated themselves. What they long for is not

First graders play hand games.



just the content of the curriculum but the “form,” the substantiality of life in a Waldorf school.

Waldorf schools are founded on a fourfold view of the human being and on a practical approach to nourishing each aspect, so that the health or wholeness of the human being may be realized. But this same paradigm and the same methods apply to the adults—parents, teachers, administrators—who are part of the school, to the school itself as a living organism, and ultimately to society as a whole. Each of these has a physical body that should provide a firm structure for life. Each has an etheric body that should be characterized by regularity and rhythm, a soul life that should be fresh and lively, and an ego that aspires to high purpose, moral values, and clarity.

There are certain elements in the physical life—of the child, adult, school, and society—that clearly make for health. These include contact with nature; beauty, in the buildings in which we live, work, and learn, and in every aspect of life; and the lively physical presence of other human beings. Rudolf Steiner emphasized the importance of shaking hands when we greet one another and, whenever possible, of arranging things so that we can meet face-to-face as whole human beings. We need to maintain and value our face-to-face interactions and insist on human physical presence in all instruction, relations, and decision making, even while the rest of the world may be going virtual.

The etheric body of the child, but also of the adult and of the school, needs a strong and healthy rhythm in daily life. In the school, the daily presence of the class teacher and the specialist teachers; the daily poems, songs, and verses; the celebration of festivals; the rhythm of the yearly class play; common social and cultural happenings at the school; work in the garden, and so on, all help provide a vigorous and healthy etheric life. Teachers experience this through being part of the daily life of the school. Parents can do so by participating as much as possible in school life and by introducing elements—such as regularity of schedule, daily verses, and a festival life—to life at home. These same elements, present in all traditional cultures but largely absent from our modern secular society, could enhance the life of the larger society.

The life of the astral body or soul is nourished by all that promotes imagination, inspiration, and the aspiration for virtue. The playing of music, singing, painting, eurythmy, and other artistic activities can enrich the lives of teachers and parents as they do the lives of the children. For the larger society, art that aspires to nobility and to the world of the spirit, and an active life of the mind are antidotes to the vacuity that can pervade modern life. Also, respect for the imagination of the other, and

concern for the other's growth in inspiration and virtue, are ennobling elements of friendship.

The life of the ego is the sphere of intentions, values, and goals. The study of literature, history, and of nature provides a basis for living consciously as a fully awake human being. Also, the life of the Waldorf teacher ideally includes an inner meditative life that enables the higher self to be more and more present in the thoughts, words, and actions of daily life. Parents, too, can pursue such a path, which is a general spiritual striving and does not require belief in any particular religious system.

If we hold the image of the human being in our hearts, and strive in our private and common lives to nourish each of its aspects fully, we can create a modest but humane culture. Even in our overly verbal, virtual, and often divisive postmodern ways, we can find stability of form, health of rhythm, and liveliness of soul life. Our determination to nurture a real communal and cultural life—not only our agreement in vision and choice—will secure and protect this culture.

Waldorf Education was founded in 1919, is now found in over eighty countries around the world, and continues to grow. The education, the ideas behind it, and the way of life comprised within it speak to a need of our age. In the image of the human being and in the image of human life alive within it, Waldorf Education offers the meaning and stability lacking in our fragmented contemporary civilization.

ENDNOTES

1. See John Bloom, “An Interview with Todd Oppenheimer,” *Renewal* (Fall–Winter 2000), 7. See also T. Oppenheimer, “Schooling the Imagination,” *Atlantic Monthly*, September 1999.

2. Rudolf Steiner, *Waldorf Education for Adolescence* (Forest Row, Sussex: Steiner Schools Fellowship Publications, 1993), 36–37.

3. *Ibid.*

4. Rudolf Steiner, *Meditatively Acquired Knowledge of Man: Five Lectures by Rudolf Steiner* (Forest Row, Sussex: Steiner Schools Fellowship Publications, 1982), 26–27.

5. Frank R. Wilson, *The Hand: How its Use Shapes the Brain, Language, and Human Culture* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998).

6. See L. Wittgenstein, *On Certainty* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977), 6; and *Culture and Value* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), 64.

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MOVEMENT IN WALDORF EDUCATION

BY MARCIA GAUVIN

FOR STEINER, AS A PERSON WALKS, SO DOES HE FEEL, SO DOES HE THINK. FOR EACH PERSON, THE MOVEMENT OF THE BODY IS A REFLECTION OF THE MOVEMENT OF THE EMOTIONS, WHICH IS A REFLECTION OF THE MOVEMENT IN THOUGHT.

Children and teacher join in a circle game in a Waldorf kindergarten.



If you visit any Waldorf classroom, you are likely to see children in movement. In a kindergarten there is the bustle involved in the building of castles and in other play activities, or a circle of stomping giants that in a moment turns into a circle of tiptoeing fairies. In the grades the children stamp and clap and jump rope while reciting their times tables; they do eurythmy to recited verses; they knit bags or socks or hats; they play various kinds of circle games; and out in the school garden they dig, pull weeds, and carry water. In many schools children learn circus skills such as juggling and riding a unicycle. Movement is such an integral part of Waldorf Education that Waldorf children are asked to move as much as they are asked to be still.

The movement activities in a Waldorf school are not random. On the playground, of course, the children move with the joy and freedom of children at play. Movement in the classroom, however, is guided by an underlying pedagogical philosophy. Rudolf Steiner, the founder of Waldorf Education, maintained that there is a close relationship between the way a human being moves and that person's emotional, mental, and even spiritual life. For Steiner, as a person walks, so does he feel, so does he think. For each person, the movement of the body is a reflection of the movement of the emotions, which is a reflection of the movement in thought. But the relationship between movement, affect, and thought works both ways, and thus can be an important element in education. How children are helped to move, how they learn to move, can help determine how they speak, feel, and think.

The importance of healthy movement in the development of children was the focus of a Waldorf teachers' conference held last February at Rudolf Steiner College in California. The main speakers were Dr. Michaela Glöckler and Dr. Georg Glöckler, both based at the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland.

In her first lecture, Michaela Glöckler observed that a new medical paradigm is emerging within the medical community. Since the emergence of the germ theory of disease in the mid-1800s, medical science has focused on the question "What is the cause of illness?" In the new medical paradigm, however, the focus is "What is the cause of health?" In addition, the definition of health has been broadened to include emotional, mental, and spiritual health.

Appropriate forms of movement are crucial in the healthy development of the human being from the first months of life, and

especially during the early years of growth. Dr. Glöckler pointed out that, since its inception, Waldorf Education has focused on healthy human development—especially through the use of classroom activities involving harmonious physical movement.

Dr. Glöckler described how, in the first year of life, the human being learns at a rate never again equaled. An infant is born with reflexes, such as grasping and sucking, that soon disappear and are replaced with a “movement learning curve.” During this period a child bit by bit masters the movements crucial to healthy neurological development: lifting the head, rolling over, reaching, crawling, standing, walking, moving the hands and coordinating the fingers, and so on. Of course, each is a skill that the developing infant must acquire in order to become a functioning adult. Each of the skills is also a necessary precursor to the later development of other, “higher” human capacities such as speaking and thinking. In the learning of each type of movement, neural pathways are created in the infant’s brain, pathways that are necessary to the realization of other distinctly human skills.

Dr. Glöckler observed that each child has its own way of learning these types of movement. Each needs to be left free to experiment, fail, and learn. She recommended that each day parents allow an infant time to lie on a large, flat surface such as a blanket placed in the middle of the floor, so that the tiny child can explore the possibilities

Infants need opportunities to explore the possibilities of movement.

of movement. She warned against helping or accelerating the learning process, and said that devices such as infant walkers and infant swings are not recommended. The infant should achieve its uprightness and its mobility by its own efforts. Otherwise, the forces of will and the impulse to personal freedom may be compromised.

The relationship between movement and the various human faculties continues throughout childhood and in fact throughout human life. How we physically move affects how we move in the emotional and mental domains. Each movement evokes an emotional response. To walk in a circle brings a different inner experience than to walk in a five-pointed star. The movement patterns that children develop affect how they move as adults—physically, emotionally, mentally; how they relate to others; their capacity for compassion and love; the capacity to set a goal and strive unceasingly toward it; the capacity to distinguish between convention and one’s own moral judgment. Thus, fostering healthy movement in children is essential to their fulfillment as adult human beings.

“LAWFUL” MOVEMENT

The question “What is lawful movement?” was Dr. Georg Glöckler’s subject. Dr. Glöckler first spoke of the archetypal patterns of nature, where a myriad of forms, including the five-pointed star, the spiral (in various forms), and the lemniscate, can be seen. The crossed loop or lemniscate





Fifth graders do movement exercises in the classroom.

pattern in particular—found in the movement of the Sun and the planets, in the seasonal cycles of the Earth, and in the flow of water—is a dominant pattern in human physiology. We can see the crossed loop in the optic nerve, in our breathing, and in the interconnection of the respiratory and circulatory systems, with the heart holding the central, crossover position. When we perform a simple movement, such as placing our weight on one leg, the pattern of muscle contraction throughout the body that allows us to maintain balance is in a lemniscate. The ancient Greeks had a clear sense of this harmonious balance of tensions in the body and expressed it in their sculpture.

The lemniscate as a lawful and healing pattern of movement is present in many aspects of Waldorf Education. When children learn to knit in the first grade, the needles and their hands move in a lemniscate pattern. The lemniscate is one of the basic elements in the form drawing exercises that children do throughout their school years. It is also one of the basic patterns of movement in eurythmy. Of particular importance is the lemniscate that the children experience in the alternation between the inward activity of thinking and of outward movement,

which the teacher builds into the lessons and activities of the day. To plan and execute this alternation in a seamless and harmonious way is one of the main challenges of the Waldorf teacher.

... SINCE ITS INCEPTION, WALDORF EDUCATION HAS FOCUSED ON HEALTHY HUMAN DEVELOPMENT—ESPECIALLY THROUGH THE USE OF CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES INVOLVING HARMONIOUS PHYSICAL MOVEMENT.

The conference also included talks and workshops by teachers of various forms of movement taught in Waldorf schools, including eurythmy, Bothmer gymnastics, and spacial dynamics.

EURYTHMY

Michaela Glöckler said that in eurythmy, the “intelligence” of nature is the model of the movements. Eurythmy movements are the movements of growth, which can even be seen in the developmental stages of the embryo.

When we do eurythmy, we unite ourselves with "world wisdom." This is how eurythmy differs from other forms of movement or bodywork. Other types of movement and dance focus on training the body to be able to make certain movements. Eurythmy training is exactly the opposite. In eurythmy, we unite our soul with a mood or idea, and our body follows the soul's gesture.

BOTHMER GYMNASTICS

Developed by Fritz Graf von Bothmer, a teacher at the first Waldorf school in Stuttgart, Bothmer gymnastics involves exercises based on clear, geometrical forms. According to Jaimen McMillan, the free, upright human being, with its symbol of the cross, is the starting point, the end point, and the underlying skeleton of every Bothmer exercise.

In his demonstration, Bothmer teacher Michael Neu said that the Bothmer exercises utilize the polarities of lightness and heaviness, above and below, and right and left to develop the archetypal physical forces. Utilizing these polarities at the right time can have a therapeutic effect. In puberty, for instance, when children begin to feel a heaviness, both inwardly and outwardly, vaulting exercises can reacquaint them with levity. Lunging exercises convey the importance of striving and of maintaining and returning to a strong foundation position. One moves forward out of an impulse of will but must each time reestablish a firm footing.

SPACIAL DYNAMICS

In his workshop on spacial dynamics, Jaimen McMillan discussed the importance of being aware of the interplay between ourselves and the space surrounding us. Through various movement exercises, participants were introduced to some basic principles of force and resistance, and to their underlying social implications.

"In order to use spacial movement in an appropriate, artistic, and scientific way," McMillan said, "we must develop new concepts of space and new ways of perceiving movement. We must learn what effect a given movement has upon another person. As teachers, our own movements must be worthy of imitation."

Dr. Georg Glöckler, in his lectures, further stressed that in any movement activity, it is important that the movement is meaningful. To do meaningful work helps children become satisfied people who can call



Most Waldorf children start the study of stringed instruments in the fourth grade.

strongly upon their will. Every outward action creates a corresponding inner action. After every movement of the limbs, there exists a moment of questioning: "Is this a good deed? Is this meaningful? Is this joyful?" Children need to answer this question for themselves in the affirmative. Dr. Glöckler stated that each lesson that involves movement depends upon this moment of reflection that follows it.

The movement of the body is a picture of the soul. Hence, Waldorf teachers need to be constantly aware of how they move, speak, and think. A teacher who is a model of good movement is also modeling a harmonious inner life. Graceful, balanced, harmonious movement instills in children a love for the same qualities, which they will strive for within the other realms of their lives. This applies also to parents and to all adults who are around children. By our own being we help create what the children become.

The many forms of movement done in Waldorf schools—handwork, morning circle activities, the playing of musical instruments, gardening, painting, singing, eurythmy, gymnastics, and games—are all meaningful. They give the children opportunity to move in lawful and meaningful ways and to inwardly affirm those movements.

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HISTORY, HUMANITY, AND HANDWORK

BY CARMINE IANNACONE



A Waldorf high school student sculpting in stone.

WHAT IS AT ISSUE HERE . . . IS NOT ONE'S ATTITUDE TOWARD THE PAST, BUT ONE'S ATTITUDE TOWARD THE PRESENT AND WHAT THE PRESENT BRINGS. SHOULD ONE AUTOMATICALLY EMBRACE ALL THINGS NEW, SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY ARE NEW AND SEEM TO MAKE THINGS EASIER AND FASTER?

Our age may be a major turning point in history.

Advances in microelectronics, information processing, and communications are bringing a new era, not just in technology but in all the areas of life: art and culture, human relations and education, economics and lifestyle, perception and cosmology. The personal computer has radically changed how we think about and use information, how we act, and how we interact. But even relatively simple products such as the telephone answering machine, the VCR, and the microwave oven have altered our sense of time, our expectations, and our daily lives. More sophisticated products such as cellular phones, compact disks, portable video cameras, and digital photography are having and will continue to have a yet more profound impact on what it means to be human.

This revolution is for many a cause for concern. There are obvious benefits, but such profound changes will also have unforeseeable consequences. As we try to understand this "electronic age," the example of an earlier generation that confronted issues of a similar type and magnitude may prove a guide. About a century ago, a host of inventions including the typewriter, the automobile, the electric light, and the phonograph were ushering in the "mechanical age." A number of thinkers—among them, Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), the founder of Waldorf Education; John Ruskin (1819-1900); and William Morris (1834-1896)—were concerned about the short-term and long-term effects of this revolution in tools and production techniques.

Machines are able to replicate a product with great precision but work best with designs based on the

straight line, the right angle, and on rigid symmetry.

Straight lines and right angles give precision to a product, but they take away a dynamic and living quality. For Steiner and for others confronted by the fixed and hard-edged quality of things made by machine, "organic" forms took on new significance and value. In nature, virtually all forms are characterized by a sensuous curvilinearity and an absence of right angles. Steiner's aesthetic, his preference for organic and metamorphosing forms, is evident in his designs for the first Goetheanum and for the second.

Rudolf Steiner's active involvement in the debate about the effect of machines and machine production on human life and his aesthetic based on natural and organic forms greatly influenced Waldorf Education. Wherever possible, Waldorf school architecture and interior design are based on natural, non-rectilinear forms. This is not only out of aesthetic concern. Steiner said that the buildings in which we live, learn, and work have a profound effect on our moral life. Also, arts and handcrafts have an important, even central, role in the Waldorf school curriculum.

According to Steiner's aesthetic, each artistic creation should capture the vitality, fluid beauty, and uniqueness that living organisms manifest. While machine-made goods are uniform, handmade things are beautiful by virtue of their irregularity. A hand-carved wooden bowl or spoon, a hand-knitted scarf or hat, a wall that has been lazured (i.e., painted with many layers of thin watercolor washes), a piece of hand-dyed cloth—each of which can be found in a typical Waldorf classroom—express this sensibility. Natural materials such as wood rather than synthetic materials such as plastic also support this aesthetic. For this reason, in a Waldorf school the children's desks and chairs are usually made of unpainted wood so that the natural beauty of the grain can show. In their crafts and handwork, the children—beginning in the kindergarten—use natural materials such as beeswax,

The importance of handwork in the Waldorf curriculum

is related to the dichotomy of the machine-made and the handmade product. The very imperfection of handmade goods is a mark of dignity and bears witness to the limitations that make the artisan—and all of us, by extension—human. When the first grader finger-crochets a circular mat, or when the sixth grader learns to cut a pattern and sew together a stuffed animal, mistakes inevitably arise and corrections and revisions are made. These provide lessons in humility—in the original sense

of the word—derived as it is from *humus*, Latin for "earth." The child's experience of fallibility is an experience of her relationship to the rest of nature. It is this relationship, this connection, that Steiner and other thinkers of his day realized the machine would alter.

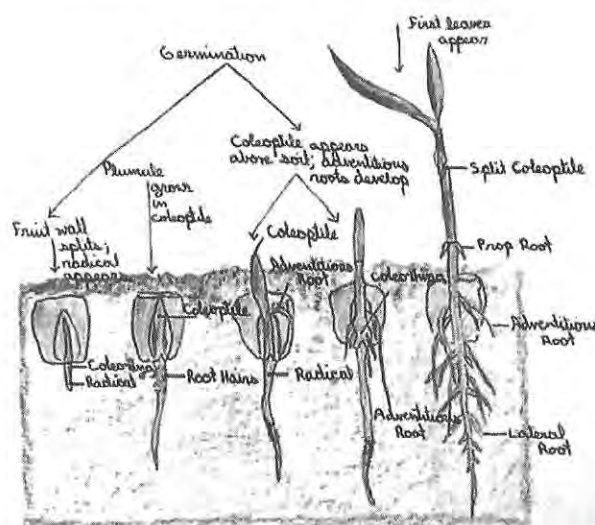
Also, the children experience in handwork class the absolute uniqueness of each human being. Given the same materials and the same instruction and employing the same methods, a class of fifteen children will create fifteen unique pieces of work.

Because of the special value of crafts, many writers

of Steiner's time held that the crafts should be as highly regarded as the arts. In Waldorf schools this is indeed the case. Waldorf eleventh graders learn bookbinding. The beautiful books they make of fine papers sewn together and bound within cloth covers are as much acknowledged as the drawings, poetry, and prose with which the book comes to be filled.

For progressive thinkers of Steiner's era, aesthetic values were not present only in the "fine arts" but also in all phenomena in nature and in human activities and creations. The Waldorf curriculum puts this idea to work by acknowledging that the sense of harmony, proportionality, and right relationship that one associates with the arts should be evident also in disciplines like biology, history, and mathematics. For each subject, Waldorf students make a main lesson book that contains both facts and

Germination of the Corn Seed (Monocotyledon)



A drawing from an eleventh-grade main lesson book on botany.



An eighth grader works on her doll in handwork class.

knowledge of facts with caring about how those facts are embodied. Behind this is a vision of the arts as pragmatic—rather than frivolous—in that they assist in the evolution of civilization, and virtuous in that they assist in the moral development of the individual.

Many thinkers of the late nineteenth century feared that the machine would sever this connection between meaning and matter. Simple tools designed for the human hand make this connection between the world of thought and value and the world of matter more visible. Such tools allow human beings to create products possessing a unique kind of “honesty.”

ACCORDING TO STEINER’S AESTHETIC, EACH ARTISTIC CREATION SHOULD CAPTURE THE VITALITY, FLUID BEAUTY, AND UNIQUENESS THAT LIVING ORGANISMS MANIFEST.

The fountain pen is an excellent example of such a tool. Waldorf students learn handwriting using a fountain pen, rather than a ballpoint, precisely because the fountain pen emphasizes this connection between thought and matter. Because its point can easily catch on the paper, the fountain pen teaches attentiveness and sensitivity. Because the ink will pool if one presses too hard, or not register if one glides too lightly, it teaches balance and appropriateness. Because the pen needs to be maintained, it teaches the value of care. As with all work done by hand, writing with a fountain pen forces one to experience the “denseness” of physical reality—which is exactly what higher technologies try to mask or overcome. The student must work conscientiously and consciously in order to manifest her will in the often obdurate material world.

Using a tool such as a fountain pen when a much less problematic tool like a ballpoint pen is available brings up the issue of anachronism. Waldorf schools are sometimes criticized for keeping children uninformed about the realities and necessities of modern life—the personal computer, for example. (In fact, Waldorf schools do teach students to use a computer, but at the time when the children are ready for such activity—in the high school years.) Reformers at the turn of the century were also criticized for advocating “old-fashioned” ways of doing things. What is at issue here, though, is not one’s attitude toward the past, but one’s attitude toward the present and what the present brings. Should one automatically embrace all things new, simply because they are new and seem to make things easier and faster? Or should one consciously examine implications and consider options? The nineteenth-century reformers did not reject the new technologies and tools. But they wanted diversity. They wanted to retain the possibility of choice and the critical attitude that choice cultivates. They recognized that new technologies engender new attitudes, patterns of behavior, and values that may in time negate the benefits of greater efficiency. They felt that all the implications, short-term and long-term, should be considered carefully.

Steiner and other thinkers of his generation feared that the mass production of machine-made goods would lead to depersonalization, apathy, consumerism, and other social ills. They were not wrong. Our media-dominated and electronics-oriented culture is a step further along on the same path of technological progress, and we suffer from these same ills. This makes the experience that Waldorf Education offers to its students more than still relevant; it makes it still necessary.

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PRACTICAL BEAUTY:

A WALDORF IDEAL IN CRAFTS AND ARCHITECTURE

BY DAVID ADAMS, PH.D.



One of Rudolf Steiner's ideals for Waldorf schools is a harmony between the approach to teaching practical visual arts—handwork and crafts—and the approach by which the forms and spaces of a school's classrooms are designed and built. The same principles should guide both form-creating activities.

Steiner envisioned a new cooperation between crafts/handwork, manual training, and artistic feeling.¹ His indications for the teaching of crafts in the Waldorf schools aimed to lay the foundation for this cooperation in the students' developing will and feeling. The combining of utility and beauty would gradually become a practical habit, both for Waldorf students and, through their influence, for the larger society.² Following an identical principle of design, school architecture and crafts instruction would together serve a new vision of the spiritual renewal of the design elements in the everyday environment.

Steiner indicated the essential principle for this approach in a comment on crafts teaching:

The starting-point in handwork and the crafts should always be the purpose to be served by the object in question. This is what determines its color and form. . . . In every case we must take into account the purpose which the object has to fulfill in life—that is the meaning of handicrafts.³

In architecture also, Steiner indicated that the first step is to ask oneself "What happens?"—i.e., what activities are to go on within the building?⁴ Around these activities, these functions, the forms and spaces of the building should be designed. He used the analogy of the close-fitting relationship between a walnut kernel and its shell to depict the kind of harmonious connection he intended between form and function (thinking of "function" in a broad, multidimensional way). The classrooms and school buildings should support the educational functions and the processes of human development that take place within the school.*

Form follows function. Style follows use. This is the fundamental concept. Its practice means that every work of design will have a functionally appropriate, individual form or structural gesture. This applies equally to large buildings and to the smaller, more intimate objects of everyday life.

In smaller utilitarian objects, the individualized form-gesture should express the character of the object's invisible function or purpose, especially its relationship to its human user. Steiner emphasized that in all the artistic objects created for daily life "it [is] the purposeful relationship to the human being, for whom they [are] being made, that [is] important, and this relationship [is] to be expressed in design and color."⁵ A building or a wooden spoon is fully functional (or beautiful) only when all aspects of its effects on users are satisfied by the designed form. This is possible only when the form has developed "organically" from its internal function and intended user activity, "as if grown out of the object itself."⁶ Ideally, the forms designed not only fulfill but also visually declare their functions. This approach to design can be called "organic functionalism."

*[A follow-up article by David Adams dealing with the practical application of organic functionalism in school architecture will appear in the Spring 2002 issue of *Renewal*. Ed.]

Such objects should also be designed so that they fit artistically into their intended surroundings. A dining room table should not appear the same as a library table. Looking at a tablecloth embroidered by a student, Steiner indicated how specific a visual design can be: "This is a tablecloth for use on a round table in a reception room in which guests assemble to drink tea."⁷

Through efforts along these lines, the artistic element can arise directly from the everyday practical activities of life, from those activities that give the object or building itself its meaning. Art does not then remain isolated from ordinary life within museums and galleries but flows out into daily experience.

The following examples from the Waldorf crafts curriculum illustrate the principle of organic functionalism in practice.

EMBROIDERY DESIGN

Waldorf students usually learn to embroider in the fourth grade—although in some schools the process begins in the third grade. In the seventh grade they use embroidery in connection with making clothing and sometimes take up more advanced embroidery in the ninth grade. Steiner once remarked at a teachers' conference, "There are people who embroider a thing, but whose embroidery might equally well be on something else."⁸ An embroidery design, also, should express the embroidered object's function and its relationship to the human being.



figure 1

If, for example, the object is an embroidered glove, one should be able to see that this glove is for a human hand. The asymmetry of the hand—the thicker palm and back of the hand contrasting with the more

slender fingers—as well as the structural character of the muscles and bones within the hand, can all be expressed, to an extent, in an embroidered pattern. Traditional crafts designs often have something of this character (figure 1, gloves).

Another important principle that concerns an object's relationship with the human user is expressed in a comment Steiner made about an ink-pen wiper. The surface had been completely covered with embroidery by the student. Steiner said that, rather, it should have been



figure 2

designed with a space free for the thumb to take hold of it. What a person does with his or her hands in using the object must enter into the embroidered design. It is a basic design principle that "an object should always be lightest in color where a human being has to hold it."⁹ A similar idea applies to the design of an embroidered wallet or needlebook (figure 2, needlecase).

Cozies for tea or coffee pots, Steiner noted, should be designed to show where there is an opening (i.e., at the bottom) and where the heat is retained. This latter part should be reddish in color (see figure 3, tea cozy). The same principle in reverse applies to the workbags often sewn and embroidered in grade three or four (figure 4, workbag).¹⁰



figure 3



figure 4

CLOTHING

In the seventh grade and usually for one or two years thereafter, Waldorf students learn to make items of clothing, first by hand sewing and then by machine sewing. Steiner encouraged teachers to try to overcome the dictates of current fashion and teach the children to

design their own clothing in a free, artistic way that expresses a relationship to the specific personality of the wearer and to the part of the human body involved.

One of his favorite examples with regard to clothing design tries to make a clear, functional distinction between the embroidered design for the neckline of a dress and for the hem.

You see girls . . . sitting in a needlework class sewing some kind of pattern round the neck, round the waist-band, and round the hem of a dress, and one is dismayed to find that it is

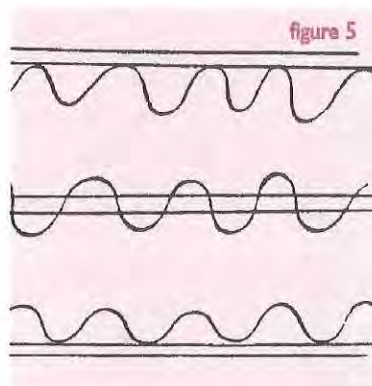


figure 5

always the same pattern! And when you meet a young lady hooped around in this way, she looks as though she has been squeezed together by this pattern which is the same above and below. Head and feet have been completely ignored, while in fact the

pattern ought to be metamorphosed in accordance with these (figure 5, threads).

Furthermore, remarked Steiner, a garment should be lighter toward the top to show a relationship to air and light, and heavier (darker) toward the bottom to show a relationship to the ground (likewise for shoes, which are actually in contact with the ground). "Face and hands express the human spirit and radiate out, so to speak, so that near these, the colors should always be lighter."¹²

WOODWORK

Throughout the Waldorf woodwork curriculum, which begins in fifth or sixth grade and continues through twelfth grade, the students make a variety of utilitarian objects. The fundamental functional principles of the

design of these objects are established near the beginning with one of the first projects, the carving of a wooden spoon. There it is important that the handle of the spoon is designed and carved in a somewhat asymmetrical, rounded form that fits comfortably into the shape, size, and grip of the human hand that will use it (see figures 6 and 7, utensils). An impression of the hand's grasp might be made first in clay as a guide.



figure 6

Waldorf high school juniors and seniors may also make pieces of furniture. A common first project is a three-legged stool with the seat slightly gouged out to fit the

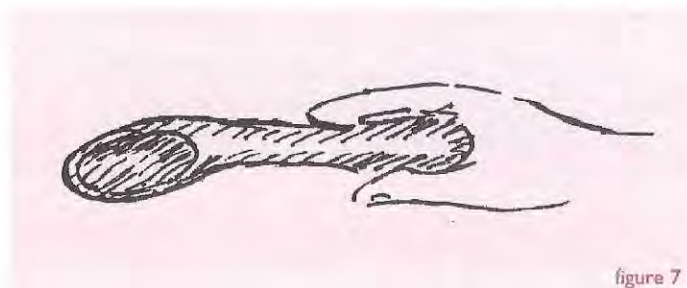


figure 7

rear end of the body that will sit on it. The idea that a chair or other piece of furniture is beautiful only to the eye Steiner called "an absurd idea." Rather, he said, "we want to feel the chair, feel the beauty of the chair when we sit on it."¹³ Artistic beauty must always arise with close connection to actual use.

BOOK DESIGN

In the eleventh grade Waldorf school students learn the art of bookbinding. Steiner placed a high value on learning this craft: "In bookbinding the children have to learn how to unite something spiritual with the physical."¹⁴ Ideally, the students first study the content and structure of the book before beginning a book cover design. The design will then



arise out of the ideas or story of the book combined with the essential nature of the book cover's function. Steiner's numerous comments on the design of books can only be summarized here. A book cover (or folder) should express its purpose as a cover by being darker than its contents, the pages within. The design of the

cover should also show clearly which is the top and bottom and which is the front and back. The supporting back should normally be darker and less articulated than the front. To prepare the reader, the ideal would be to represent the essential content of the book in the cover design. However, the design should be primarily located in the upper left-hand area of the book cover. The lower right-hand corner and edge would be left uncovered by design or text (or perhaps contain another design motif pushing in from outside the cover) in order to indicate where the hand grasps the cover to open it: "The place

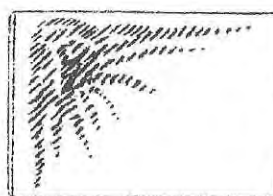


figure 8

where we touch or take hold of an object should always be lighter than the rest of it. It will then be as though the human being were radiating light." One should be able to see from the design of the cover that it is meant to be opened (see example above and figure 8, bookcovers). However, commented Steiner, today one seldom sees this; rather, books "usually bear some design which actually requires one to leave them shut, not to open them at all."¹⁵

COLOR IN INTERIOR DECORATION

Steiner once observed that there are many small household items that can be made by hand and then painted by the students (e.g., lamp shades), paying special attention to the role of color in the home environment. As Steiner observed on a number of occasions, the individual character of each color must be understood in making decisions about interior design. "If for instance you think of green," he said, "you can easily think of green card tables. Because a game is a limited, pedantic activity. . . , one can think of such an arrangement—a room with card tables covered with green. . . . On the other hand, a lilac-colored room or a room furnished throughout in mauve would lend itself very well, shall we say, to mystical conversation—in the best and in the worst sense. . . . Thus we note that by virtue of its own nature color has an inner character; whereas green allows itself to be defined, lilac, peach or flesh color tend to spread into vagueness."¹⁶

The particular qualities of each color are also supposed to be used in designing wall painting or wall decoration within the school. Again, the colors must be related to functions—either the function of architectural details (such as a warming or intensification of wall color toward the entrance to a classroom or beginning of a stairway) or to support the educational functions taking place within the classrooms. Steiner provided a number of recommendations for the specific colors of each classroom, changing through the years as the children mature.

CONCLUSION

The examples discussed above should make clear the essential design principle that Steiner intended to be used equally within the Waldorf crafts curriculum and in the architecture of the school buildings. All forms should be sensitively adapted to the nature of the human beings who use them. But this organic functional aspect of Steiner's artistic hopes for Waldorf Education has unfortunately been neglected in North America.¹⁷

This principle was to be a means for "ennobling" children's feeling for color, form, and line already during the elementary school years, so that they can bring an unspoiled sense of practical beauty with them into their life activities and thereby gradually transform the design of our surroundings to something more enlivening and harmonious.¹⁸ At the same time, the progressing crafts can gently lead children into a more pragmatic, down-to-earth relationship to their still new, earthly home.

In the end, design measures such as these—introduced at the "micro" level of crafts instruction and at the "macro" level of school architecture—hold the promise of best supporting the developmentally based educational tasks of the Waldorf school. They bring an artistic element into the design of our larger everyday surroundings and buildings, a design element that will gradually make them worthy of the human being as a being of soul and spirit as well as body.

ENDNOTES

1. Hedwig Hauck, *Handwork and Handicrafts, Part 1*, trans. Graham Rickett (Forest Row, England: Steiner Schools Fellowship, 1968; reprinted 1983), 67 (Teachers' Conference, June 17, 1921).
2. I would like to acknowledge the assistance of the late Margaret Frohlich, who generously shared with me her wisdom regarding principles of Waldorf crafts teaching and examples of her own or her students' work (including many of the illustrations for this article).
3. Recorded by Hauck in *Handwork*, 64 (my italics).
4. As reported in Rex Raab, "Rudolf Steiner as Architect," *Architectural Association Quarterly* 12 (1980): 54.
5. Louise van Blommestein, "Rudolf Steiner in Action: Indications for Design in Handwork – Part 1," *Steiner Education* 31, 1 (January 1997): 33. Her recollections of indications from Steiner for crafts teaching and design are an invaluable record and a helpful complement to Hauck's book. The second part of her essay is found in *Steiner Education* 33, 2 (July 1999): 21–25, 28.
6. van Blommestein, "Rudolf Steiner in Action – Part 1," 33.
7. Hauck, *Handwork*, 29.
8. Rudolf Steiner, Teachers' Conference, November 16, 1922, as quoted in Hauck, *Handwork*, 67.
9. van Blommestein, "Rudolf Steiner in Action – Part 1," 33.
10. Ibid., p. 35; Hauck, *Handwork*, 20–21, 42; also see van Blommestein, "Part 2," 22, 24. In addition to the examples given here, see the delightful account of Steiner's discussion on how to embroider a cushion in Hauck, *Handwork*, 30.
11. Quoted in Hauck, *Handwork*, 36; for an alternate translation, see Rudolf Steiner, *Lectures to Teachers* (London: Anthroposophical Publishing Company, 1931), 79 (1921 "Aesthetic Education" lecture).
12. van Blommestein, "Rudolf Steiner in Action – Part 2," 24.
13. Hauck, *Handwork*, 67 (Teachers' Conference, June 17, 1921; my italics); see also Rudolf Steiner, *Practical Advice to Teachers* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1976), 45.
14. Hauck, *Handwork*, 69.
15. Both quotations from Hauck's notes of the 1921 "Aesthetic Education" lecture, *Handwork*, 34 (see note 11 above).
16. Hauck, *Handwork*, 42; for alternate translation see Rudolf Steiner, *Colour* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1992), 32–33.
17. For example, mention of this principle is nearly entirely lacking in David Mitchell and Patricia Livingston, *Will-Developed Intelligence* (Fair Oaks, Calif.: AVVSNA, 1999) and only occasionally mentioned in Michael Martin, *Educating through Arts and Crafts* (Forest Row: Steiner Schools Fellowship, 1999).
18. See Steiner, *Lectures to Teachers*, 80.

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ASKING QUESTIONS:

ADDRESSING AN ADOLESCENT NEED

BY ANNE GREER



AS THE NINTH GRADERS, ALL THIRTY-FOUR OF THEM, JOSTLE AND BOUNCE INTO THE CLASSROOM, A SMALL GROUP OF BOYS PAUSES BRIEFLY BY MY DESK.

"HEY, MRS. GREER! ARE YOU GOING TO ASK US ANOTHER ONE OF THOSE WEIRD QUESTIONS AGAIN TODAY?" ONE OF THEM ASKS.

"OF COURSE," I SMILE. ANOTHER OF THE BOYS GIVES ME A THUMBS-UP.

By now they know the routine. The lesson begins with an opening poem said in chorus. This time it's the beginning of the *Odyssey* coupled with a section of Alexander Pope's *Essay on Man*. This main lesson block is called "The Story of the Story" and, in keeping with the central theme of "contrast" in the ninth-grade curriculum, we focus on the startling difference between the worldview of the Greeks, as evident in Homer's epic, and the worldview of the eighteenth-century English rationalists, in particular that of Daniel Defoe as expressed in *Robinson Crusoe*.

After the opening verses, as I write today's question on the board, they take out pens or pencils and lots of paper and begin to write. A purposeful quiet descends. The question I have written is one that continues to perplex me: "How do I know what I know?" Most of the students write busily for ten or fifteen minutes, some filling two pages. A few write only one or two short paragraphs and stare quietly out the window at the snow gently falling. Either way, my purpose is served. I have raised the question and they have pondered it.

From the beginning of my teaching in a Waldorf high school, I took to heart what Rudolf Steiner wisely said about the young and their great longing. It is the task of teachers of adolescents to help them to articulate and explore latent questions:

... questions about nature, about the cosmos and the entire world, about the human soul, questions of history—so that

riddles arise in their youthful souls (R. Steiner, *Education for Adolescence*, lectures in Stuttgart, June 12-19, 1921).

If the questions are left unasked and unaddressed, Steiner warns, the capacities newly awakened in the young will be transformed, "first into delight in power, and second into eroticism." The epidemic of adolescent violence in North America over the past decade seems to validate Steiner's predictions.

From my thirty-five years of teaching teenagers, I have learned that what the young want is what we all want: to find meaning and purpose, to experience a sense of connectedness to other people and to the world, and to feel that each of us can make a difference.

Of course, what the young want to know is what we all want to know: Who am I and what is my role in the world? Even when we are aware of all that makes each of us unlike the other, when we ask, "Who am I?" there is an immediate sense of the difficulty of defining that "I." How much more complex this becomes when a young person takes up the task, for the first time, of looking into his or her own soul, of encountering himself or herself. This difficult task is central for the adolescent. The self-encounter of the adolescent usually tests, and often painfully, all adults in the vicinity to see how far they have come in their own inner searching.

Encountering the self is a lonely experience. In truth, each of us must do it alone. This is what consumes the adolescent: the intense isolation. "Nobody understands me!" "You don't know what I mean!" "How can you have any idea of what I'm going through?" The "gentle pain" of adolescence, Steiner calls it.

Young people want, in some measure, but never completely, a guide through these confusing, puzzling experiences. They avidly consume advice in the plethora of aggressively marketed books, magazines, movies, TV shows, and Internet connections aimed specifically at them. Usually, though, all of it leaves a nagging sense of dissatisfaction. There are plenty of answers, but they are responses to the wrong questions. It is not easy to articulate the right questions, the meaningful ones. "I'm

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so unhappy,” they say, sometimes aloud, but more often silently, through looks, postures, and gestures. “What’s the trouble?” you ask. “I don’t know,” they reply, “I can’t explain it.”

For the first time, they are facing what it is to be. “I didn’t ask to be born,” they shout, terrified of the power of destiny, fighting to escape, to seek oblivion, fascinated by the possibility of choosing to do something other than what is dictated, by the fact that death itself can be a choice. “Do I really want to be here?” they ask. “Do I really want to be me? Did I really want to be?” To be, they know, takes courage. And these are dangerous waters, for them uncharted still.

In teaching English main lessons, I use free writing as a way of safely exploring the territory. I write a question on the blackboard and allow a quiet fifteen minutes of writing without the demands of perfect sentence structure or even correct spelling. The only requirement is that the students keep their pens and pencils moving and that they write as they think. There is a wonderful silence, always. Often, I write too, glancing up to see heads bowed over eager pencils and pens or someone chewing an eraser and looking out the window, lost in thought. I’ve come to think of these exercises as a modest beginning to a contemplative life. And what do the students say? They write things like this:

How do I know what I know? To tell you the truth, I have no idea! Sometimes I think to myself, how does this tissue the



size of a grapefruit up in my head make me able to write and read and understand? What makes me understand? How do I at one point not understand something, and then it just clicks in my head? It seems when I ask questions like this to people everyone calls me crazy and “off topic,” but it can never be “off topic,” because we are always thinking. . . . I sometimes say to myself that I believe something when my soul gives me that feeling. I can usually feel when a situation is not right. One last thing. How was Albert Einstein able to be a great scientist and discover $E=mc^2$ and not be able to tell where his house was?

And:

How do I know what I know? After yesterday’s main lesson I was fascinated all day long thinking about some of the ideas we discussed. I was wondering about this exact question, and now this morning there it is written on the board. The more I thought about it, the more I always came to this brick wall, reaching to the stars, impossible for me to break through or get over. Finally, as I was riding home in the car and thinking again, I felt the same feeling of intense frustration I had been feeling all day; I wanted to scream. It was like looking at a page of math questions and not understanding any of it. Then I came to the one answer that I believe is right for me. I just have to trust myself, my feelings and emotions. If I feel something is right in my HEART, not in my intellect, then I have to take that for real. No one else can tell me what my reality is. I have to decide that for myself.



At the end of the ten or fifteen minutes, the pages are handed in. The students wait expectantly for what is coming next. They know I have chosen five or six of yesterday's responses to read aloud in class.

Yesterday, before we began to talk about the way the Greeks felt the gods to be an integral part of everyday activity, I asked them what they thought of God. And now they'll hear how a few of their classmates responded. Again, there is a silence, this time an open and accepting space. Although there may be guesses about who the authors of these small confessions are, there is never certainty. A gradual understanding emerges that others, too, take these questions seriously, that others have an inner life that is rarely shared.

What is my idea of God? Here is another of those questions that can't be answered scientifically, and I find myself having to trust myself. It's hard, though, when your picture of something is always being hit on the head as soon as it emerges from its shell by society's towering intellect. I don't view "God" as a picture or something with form. I believe in an energy or spirit simply permeating everything. Sometimes I think of this as pure white light, or sometimes I think of it as a goddess. I guess you'd say that I choose to think of this energy as feminine because of the gentle, caring, loving qualities I believe it has. I'm a little leery of thinking of "God" as masculine, because of the violent, punishing "God" which the Bible often portrays. I feel as the Greeks did that this energy is deeply rooted in nature, and by becoming in touch with nature, one can tune into the stream of love and life that is everywhere.

Often a discussion follows, always a gentle deepening of thought and feeling. All of us in the classroom are opening toward each other while at the same time recognizing the uniqueness of each individual.

Through the high school years, the questions change to match the development of the young person. The tenth-grade year is often called "the breaking of the blood tie." The sixteen-year-old is often in conflict with his or her own family over choices that lead to independence, often choices of friends, romantic or otherwise. In this, he or she is living out that change in Western consciousness that occurred around the twelfth century, a change reflected in the movement from epics based on a strong blood or clan connection to troubadour romances in which love defies the demands of family. In English class we read *Romeo and Juliet*. Again there are wonderful opportunities to ask questions.

When was the first time I thought I was in love? It was a long time ago, grade three or so. I was "in love" with her until grade five. I was always watching and hoping for this person to show some sort of kindness towards me. It was crazy: some days this person might actually say something to me and I would be so happy. Other days this person would almost ignore me, then I would feel really down. This went on for about three whole years, and there were times when I thought this person liked me, but I was too shy ever to do anything. I always remember how fun it was to invite her to my birthday party or be invited to hers. When she left the school I was very sad for the first part of the summer vacation, but after a while I was happy and felt free. I know now that it was actually just



THE SELF-ENCOUNTER OF THE ADOLESCENT USUALLY TESTS, AND OFTEN PAINFULLY, ALL ADULTS IN THE VICINITY TO SEE HOW FAR THEY HAVE COME IN THEIR OWN INNER SEARCHING.



puppy love, but at the same time it seemed very real to me. Now I have actually really fallen in love. This time I feel even more strongly attached. I feel I know her as well as my sister. When she smiles at me, I feel an energy in my chest which is very strong. This must be real love, musn't it?

And:

Have I ever done anything knowingly that I knew my parents would have disapproved of? Of course, absolutely, a million times, but to think of just one?! I always feel a little bad, I mean, my parents trust me and then I do something they wouldn't want me to do. I also get a little anxious that I might just be caught. But by now I've done it so many times that it doesn't bother me anymore. Should I still feel responsible to my parents?

In the eleventh grade, the main lesson block on *Parzival* (the thirteenth-century German epic poem by Wolfram von Eschenbach) centers on that most important of questions, "Brother, what ails thee?" Before the young hero completes his journey of self-development, he passes through what is familiar territory to most seventeen-year-olds:

Is there value in loneliness? Of course, there is. I have this sense of wanting to discover the world when I'm alone. When I'm around people, I lose myself a little bit. This is not intentional; I just get caught up in the swirl of people and their problems. But being alone is not the same as being depressed. I feel really belittled when people assume that I enjoy being depressed, like I'm doing it for attention. . . . When I'm depressed I couldn't care less for the outside world. It just falls away, including all the people in it. Depression is like a huge hole, but it's certainly not comforting. There is no pleasure in depression, only pain. But at least that shows I'm still alive and, as they say, where there's life, there's hope.

By the twelfth grade, they are used to "living in the question," realizing the joy that comes from allowing oneself the space to wonder. The twelfth grade is a time, too, for integration; and responses to questions in English classes often move into other subject areas, even though I am still asking the same questions, perhaps phrased slightly differently:

What am I certain about? I think there is more value in uncertainty than there is in certainty. One example of this is, until I came to Waldorf from public school in grade nine, I really never got a good idea of what science really is. At Waldorf I learned that science is not the most solid and immutable of all subjects. In fact, I learned that it is probably the most ambiguous and changeable of all the disciplines. I became interested in science for the first time in my life, for I began to realize that science does not, in reality, remove mystery and wonder from all things, but, in many cases, it gives things a sense that nature is queer, and that everything is most definitely not knowable. This was especially clear to me in our last main lesson, *Vertebrate Zoology*. Science does not tell us everything there is to know about the universe. In fact, in the wilderness of mystery that we will have to make our way through for centuries to come, science is needed, but not science alone. To understand nature and life itself, we need not only science, but poetry, religion, art, music, philosophy, history, and writing as well. Life is not unambiguous, so how can it be explained in an unambiguous way?

How can it, indeed? I have always been comforted by the understanding that, in Waldorf high school education, it isn't my task as a teacher to give answers to questions, but to leave the students with life's great riddles and to wish these soon-to-be adults well in their questing.

All illustrations for this article are by Waldorf high school students.

ANNE GREER has recently retired from full-time teaching at the Toronto Waldorf School and is enjoying occasional meetings with adolescents as a guest teacher in other high schools. Home is now beside the ocean in Nova Scotia, where the great riddles of the world keep her happily questioning.

THE ART OF THINKING:

HELPING STUDENTS DEVELOP A TRULY HUMAN CAPACITY

BY CRAIG HOLDREGE

IN THIS ESSAY, THE AUTHOR EXAMINES SEVERAL FACETS OF THINKING THAT WALDORF HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS WANT TO HELP THEIR STUDENTS DEVELOP. A SCIENCE TEACHER, CRAIG HOLDREGE GIVES EXAMPLES OUT OF HIS OWN LESSONS. HE ILLUSTRATES HOW THE WAY SUBJECT MATTER IS PRESENTED CAN HELP AWAKEN AND STRENGTHEN THE STUDENTS' ABILITY TO COMPREHEND THE WORLD AND THEMSELVES. THE ESSAY IS IN TWO PARTS. THE SECOND PART WILL APPEAR IN THE SPRING 2002 ISSUE OF *RENEWAL*.

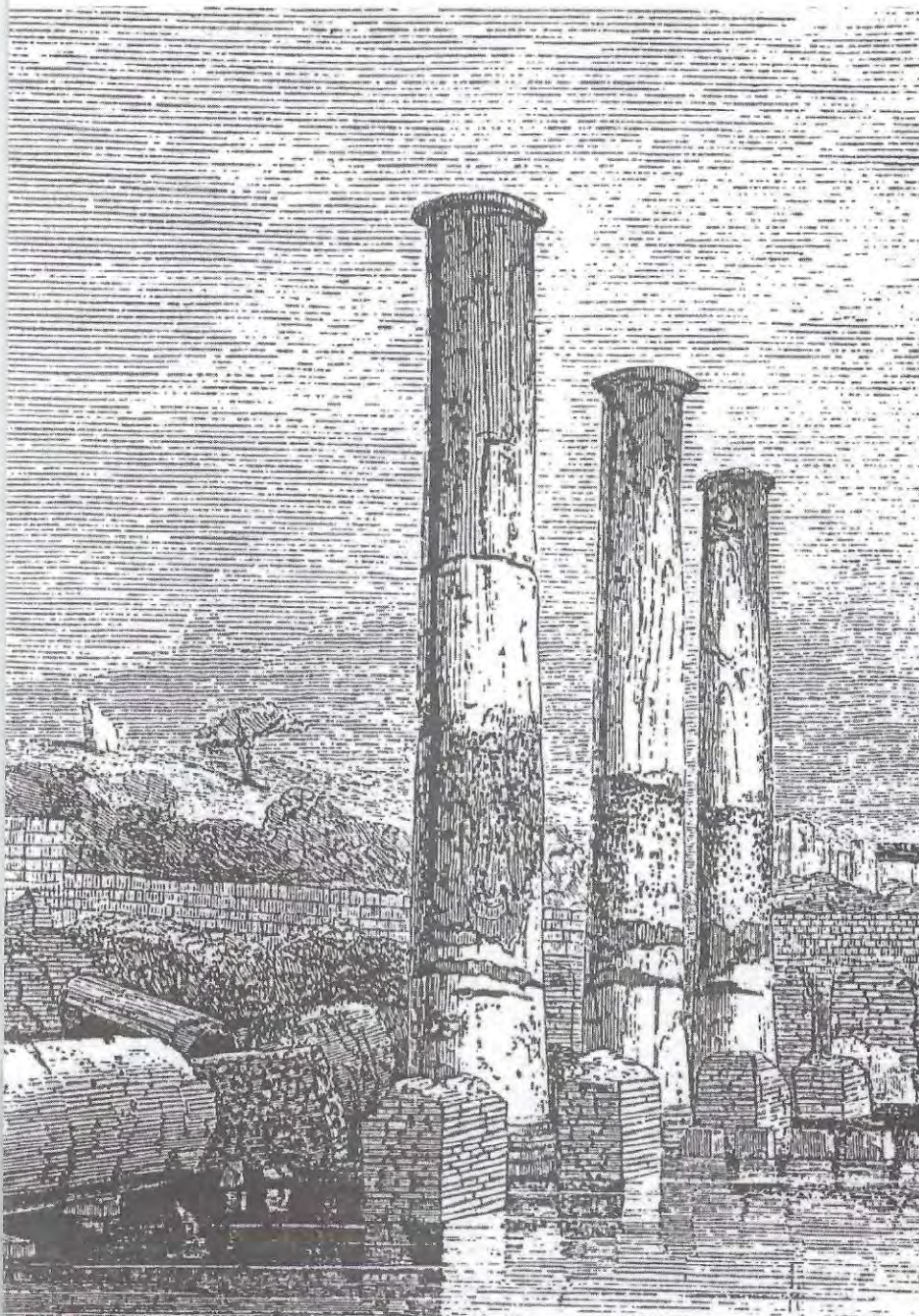
QUESTIONING

The ability to question lies at the root of thinking. When a person truly thinks—is not just following and expressing thoughts heard from others—the activity arises out of questions. Questions are the driving force of any thought process: they give direction, focus, and energy. If we as teachers are interested in helping students think, then we must help them learn to ask questions about themselves and about the world.

One problem with our information age is that people acquire much knowledge, come to “know” very much, without ever having asked for this knowledge and without afterwards questioning it. We know the Earth moves around the Sun; we know the Earth is 4.5 billion years old; we know we breathe oxygen; we know genes determine heredity—we know, we know, we know. But if you ask ninth graders how they know any of these facts, you get blank stares and responses like, “I don’t know, somebody told me that,” or “I saw it on the Discovery channel.”

The purpose of this question is not to embarrass the students but to show them that most of us have no idea how we know what we know. In fact, we are

Columns of the Serapis Temple in Pozzuoli, Italy.
Reprinted from John Dennis, *Structural Geology*
(New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1972).



unquestioning believers in the “facts” of science. It’s paradoxical that the scientific age, which began as a revolt against traditional belief systems, has become an age of the belief in science. We are ensconced in a “dogmatic slumber,” to use Kant’s phrase. One primary task of science teaching should be to help students awaken from a certain naïveté of childhood that otherwise can all too easily become a deep dogmatic slumber in adulthood.

Adolescents should be helped to experience a continual, personal scientific revolution.

To this aim, when I teach science classes beginning in the ninth grade, I emphasize that the students shouldn’t take any handed-down knowledge for granted. They need, as do we all, to question what we think we know. In this sense, high school students need to become healthy skeptics—but not cynics!

“How do I know this?” is the fundamental question. When the students begin asking this question, they soon realize that they know very little. Although at first unsettling, this realization becomes exhilarating.

Fortunately, there is a person who can stand as an ideal for the students—Socrates, one of the great figures of Western culture, a philosopher who was put to death for thinking independently. Socrates was the man who always asked questions and was wise because he knew that he knew nothing. Starting from this Socratic base, we, as a class, can begin to acquire true knowledge.

But this is difficult. If you think back on your experience of science classes in college, high school, or middle school, you may well remember, as I do, learning by rote (and forgetting) myriad facts for multiple-choice tests. This kind of learning is widespread in American education and is what my colleague Steven Talbott calls “fact-shoveling.” Since most of us have grown up in this system, it’s not easy to overcome the idea that the science teacher’s main task is to shovel facts into the students. Even worse is the assumption that we must do this in high school to prepare for college—something like eating an appetizer of rocks to prepare for the main course of boulders. Fortunately, there is a way to overcome this dead and deadening approach to science.

RIDDLES: THE “SERAPIS TEMPLE”

One powerful and fruitful alternative to feeding students stones is to present scientific phenomena through concrete examples that involve riddles to be solved. Riddles engage the mind and stimulate questions. Riddles stir

feelings, awakening wonder and interest. They fire the will to find a solution. Riddles are wonderful. The most time-consuming part of my lesson preparation has been the search for riddles that will serve as an entryway into the process of learning science.

The Waldorf high school science curriculum includes a block on geology in the ninth grade. Rocks are not immediately interesting to everyone, and the first time I taught the block I was afraid that I was going to bore the students with things I was very excited about. But the riddle approach—along with fieldwork, which I won’t go into here—saved the day.

ONE PRIMARY TASK OF SCIENCE TEACHING SHOULD BE TO HELP STUDENTS AWAKEN FROM A CERTAIN NAÏVETÉ OF CHILDHOOD THAT OTHERWISE CAN ALL TOO EASILY BECOME A DEEP DOGMATIC SLUMBER IN ADULTHOOD. ADOLESCENTS SHOULD BE HELPED TO EXPERIENCE A CONTINUAL, PERSONAL SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTION.

In the eighteenth century, Italian archaeologists began to excavate ruins from the Roman empire. In Pozzuoli, a village on the Mediterranean coast near Naples, the ruins of what appeared to be a temple were discovered. About a hundred feet from the sea, the tops of three large columns were found hidden by bushes. The columns were covered with foot after foot of compacted volcanic ash (tuff), volcanic rocks (pumice), and debris. Volcanoes surround the area and Mount Vesuvius is not far away; it is an area with frequent earthquakes. The three columns turned out to be enormous—about forty-two feet high. Remains of many other columns were found, and the ruins were given the name the Serapis Temple. Archaeologists later concluded that it was a marketplace.

There was something strange about the columns (see figure). The bottom twelve feet were smooth and uninjured, but the next twelve feet were not: the limestone was highly corroded. Looking carefully, the excavators found cavities with shells of saltwater mussels. These are mussels that bore cavities into rock by dissolving it and then dwell in these cavities. The top eighteen feet of the columns were weathered, but in quite good shape.

If I succeed in describing this archaeological find to the students in a vivid manner, I hardly need to ask the question, “What’s going on here?” It’s as if the columns themselves were saying, “Do you see that we are a riddle to be

solved?" The main question concerns the twelve-foot band in the middle of the columns that is corroded and full of mussel shells. To the logical minds of ninth graders it is completely clear that the presence of mussel shells means that the columns were at some point submerged in water. And they must have been in water for quite a long while, since the mussels had time to eat the limestone away.

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT FOR ADOLESCENTS TO EXPERIENCE THAT THEY CAN SOLVE RIDDLES, THAT THEY CAN ANSWER THE QUESTIONS THAT THE WORLD POSES. THIS GIVES THEM THE CONFIDENCE THEY NEED TO HAVE IN THEIR MENTAL POWERS. THEY FEEL: I CAN UNDERSTAND THE WORLD.

Here a process of question-and-answer begins, during which the teacher may need to provide more information to give the students a better orientation. But the students' conjectures and questions move the process along, and hence the process is a bit different in every class.

How did the columns get in water, and why is there only one band of corroded limestone, with intact material above and below it? Most students think—as did the first geologists investigating this example—that the water level rose. If this were true, then sea level must have risen at least twenty-four feet, up to the top of the mussel-eaten band in the columns. Since the sea level is more or less horizontal and the Mediterranean Sea is connected to the Atlantic Ocean, the whole oceanic body of water covering the Earth would have had to rise—perhaps due to melting of the ice caps—twenty-four feet. This would have resulted in there being a continuous band of submerged coastlines all over the planet. But this is not the case. Even along the Mediterranean seacoast there is no evidence of a general rise in sea level. Evidently it was a more local phenomenon.

One alternative is that the ground itself could have sunk. Usually a student conjectures that during one or more earthquakes the coast at Pozzuoli sank. The water level appeared to rise, but in reality the ground level sank at least twenty-four feet over a period of time. Although this is hard to picture, there seems to be no alternative explanation.

Now we have the columns standing in twenty-four feet of water. Why don't the mussels eat away all of the submerged part of the columns? This is a key moment for the exercise of thinking—the ability to bring together

different facts and to see connections between them. I've seen students' faces literally light up when they finally "get it." "It" is the following sequence of events:

Before, or perhaps while, the columns are sinking below the sea water, a volcano erupts and covers the area with twelve feet of volcanic ash and rock. This protects the lower twelve feet of the columns, so that the boring mussels have only the middle twelve feet to inhabit. The upper eighteen feet are above the water line; they weather, but are inaccessible to the water-bound mussels. Slowly the mussels inhabit the twelve-foot band of the columns and eat away limestone, making caves for themselves. At some point in time the coast rises, the water recedes, and the columns then stand once again on dry ground. Over time they are covered by ash and rock from other volcanoes and debris from earthquakes, so that only the tops are visible in the eighteenth century when they are excavated.

Together we have reconstructed in our minds—on the basis of three unremarkable columns—remarkable movements of the Earth's crust: first a sinking, then a rising, and all within historical times. At the conclusion of this discussion, I feel a sense of success when I see that the students are amazed at what can take place upon the Earth and also at their own ability to think and to tie together archaeological and geological facts into a coherent picture.

LOGICAL THINKING ANCHORED IN OBSERVATION

The students have learned several things about thinking in their study of the Serapis Temple. First, they have learned that questions are essential. Without asking questions, they won't get anywhere. Secondly, they learn that to answer questions they must go through a process that takes time and energy. They can't sit back and expect to become enlightened. When they come up with conjectures, those conjectures have to be brought in relation to the facts at hand. The question "Do they fit?" must be asked. Also, the students have to think through the consequences of their hypotheses. If the sea level rises twenty-four feet, what would happen on all coastlines? They then see that if a particular train of thought doesn't make sense, they must try a different pathway.

Often students who are very quick intellectually are satisfied with answers that don't hold up under careful scrutiny. Considering a problem like that posed by the Serapis Temple columns slows down and extends the

thought process so that it becomes more conscious. We, as a class, move from one phenomenon to the next, testing our ideas at every step. Sometimes we rush ahead only to realize we've lost the phenomena; so we go back and reconsider. We learn to be disciplined in our thinking. A core element in this discipline is observing very carefully and being faithful to what we observe. Any training of thinking is also a training of observation—and vice versa.

It is very important for adolescents to experience that they can solve riddles, that they can answer the questions that the world poses. This gives them the confidence they need to have in their mental powers. They feel: I can understand the world.

This ability to solve the riddles that life and the world present is not the same as the ability to make quick and cutting judgments—a capacity that seems to be an adolescent birthright. Ninth and tenth graders possess a sharpness of intellect that comes out most strongly in their ability to argue. But this capacity to judge and argue usually has its source in a maelstrom of moods, likes, and dislikes. This turbulent emotional life and the argumentativeness that it engenders can cover up the genuine idealism these young people have brought into the world. Thus the students need to learn to base their judgments on interactions with the world and not just on their own predilections. To help them in this process is an essential aim of the Waldorf high school, and the study of the external world in science classes is especially important and healthy.

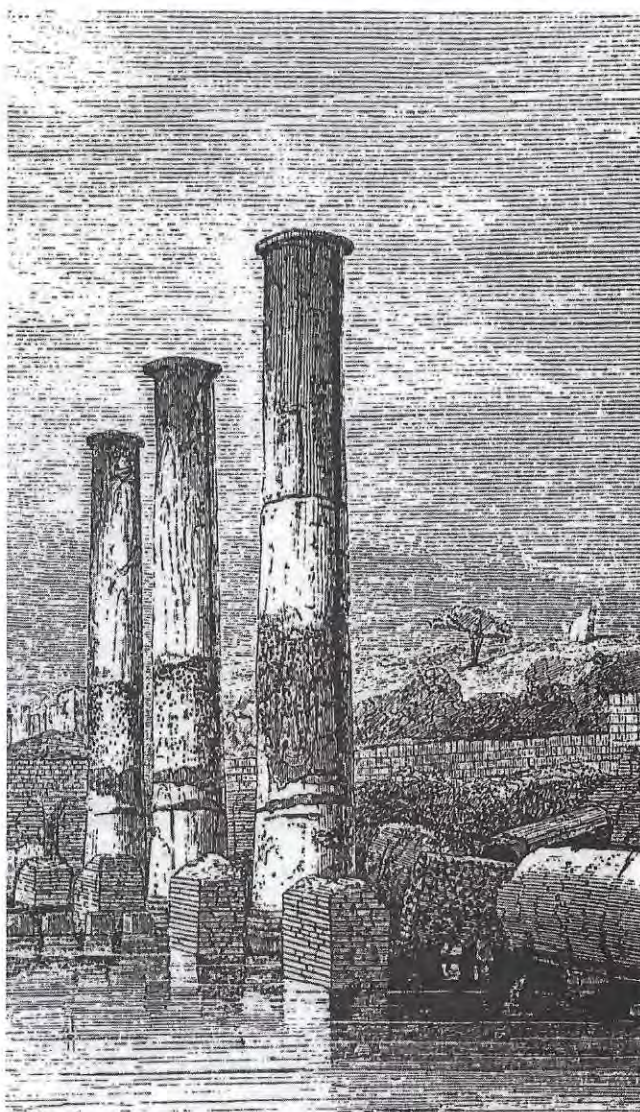
Through participating in exercises involving scientific discovery, students learn to see science as a product of human activity. Science always starts with riddles like that posed by the three columns. Perceived in a purely external way, the columns are objects that we could easily pass by and dismiss with a shrug and the thought, "So what?" But if we look and question, this static outer appearance is transformed through thinking into a lively movement. The students begin to see through the columns a world of becoming. They look, so to speak, with their mind's eye into the past by reading the present carefully and intensely.

This is vastly different from learning in a geology class the "fact"—illustrated by a few cursory examples—that the Earth's crust moves up and down. Such "knowledge" is external to the human soul, and having to acquire such knowledge causes many people to learn to dislike science in school. But if the students themselves reconstruct the past out of the present, then they are involved. They know how geological knowledge about the Earth's past comes about, because they have been engaged in a process.

This is a very satisfying experience for the students. Part of that experience is their knowing that they don't know all the answers. There is always more to investigate. This experience is the entryway into complex and, then, holistic thinking. These types of thinking are the subject of the second part of this essay.

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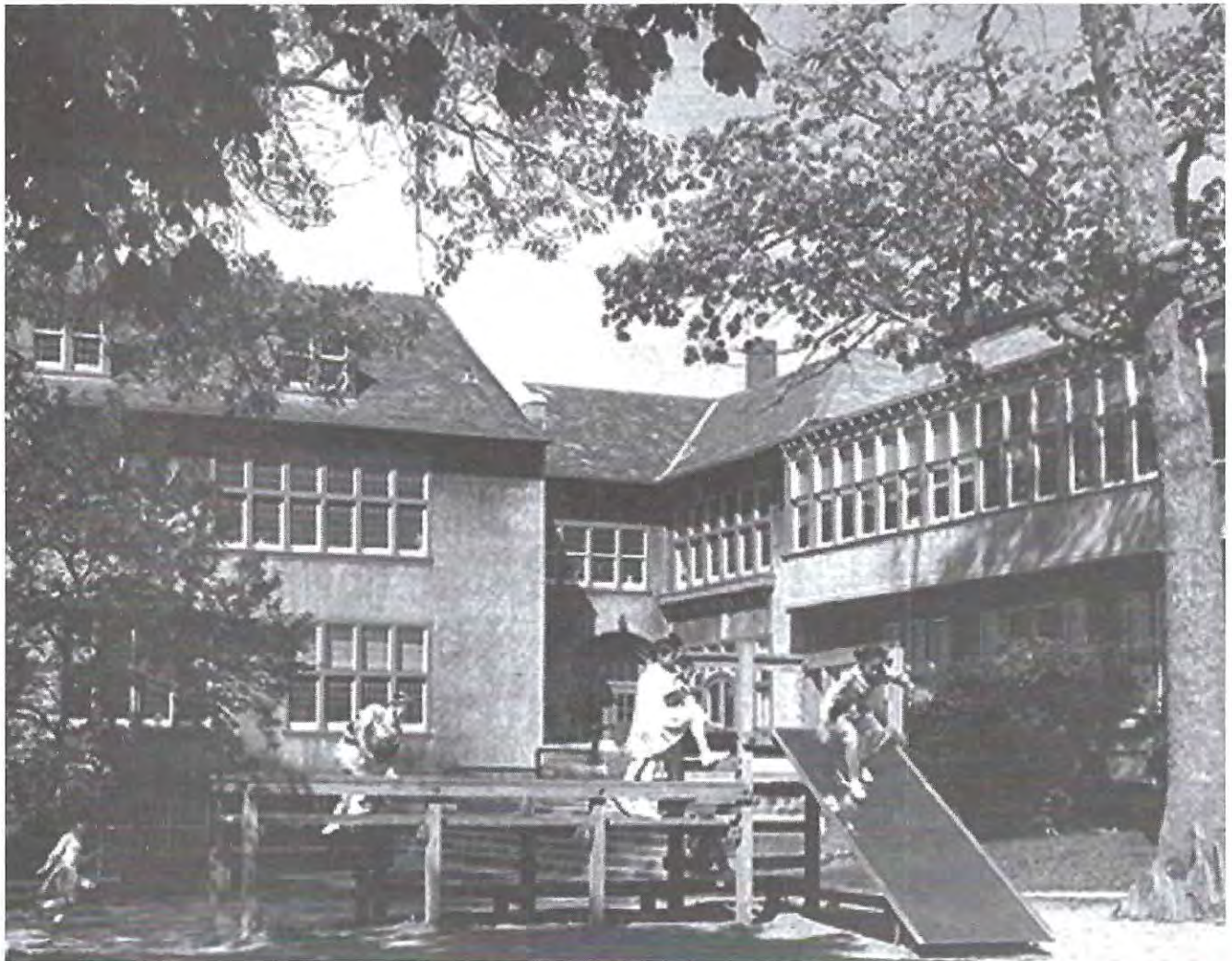
The research for this article was part of a high school research project sponsored by AWSNA.



THE DETROIT WALDORF SCHOOL:

A PORTRAIT AT THIRTY-FIVE

BY CANDYCE SWEDA AND DINA WINTER



... as it appeared in 1965.

The city of Detroit has come to symbolize the economic and cultural decay of the older industrial cities in America. However, a city is an organism and, like all organisms, utilizes the forces of growth and decay to produce new life. As Rudolf Steiner pointed out, "What is living needs polarity, needs opposites. . . . Progress cannot be made through neutrality, but through mutually maintaining and harmonizing opposites." The life of the Detroit Waldorf School has been characterized by harmonizing the dramatic, radical polarities of its milieu: rich and poor, black and white, city and suburb.

Detroit is surrounded by water. To the east is Lake St. Clair, the heart-shaped little lake named after "Our Lady of Poverty." The Detroit River flows out of the lake and forms the southern border of the city. The river is actually a strait, being the connection between the upper and lower Great Lakes, whence comes the city's original (French) name, "D'étéroit." Across the river, actually to the south of the city, is part of the Canadian province of Ontario. However, Detroit itself is built upon a crystalline bed of salt, the remnants of an ancient saltwater bay.

Detroit is laid out like a huge wheel, whose spokes are the broad avenues of the city—a fitting image for the Motor City. The purpose of these avenues is to facilitate movement from one part of the city to another. But these wide and busy streets are also barriers—certainly to pedestrians—and have helped create racially distinct and isolated neighborhoods. Detroit has been a city of neighborhoods with strong identities and loyalties since its rapid growth at the turn of the twentieth century. Immigrants from central and eastern Europe and from the rural South flocked to Detroit for the then munificent five-dollars-a-day wage promised by Henry Ford.

Detroit grew rapidly again during World War II because of the wartime expansion of industry. Large numbers of African-Americans came from the South to work in the city's factories. By 1950, Detroit had almost two million people. However, the social and cultural tensions between the races led to a dramatic decline in (mostly white) population. Between 1950 and 1990, Detroit lost over 800,000 people to "white flight," causing the city's African-American population to rise from 16 percent to 76 percent of the total.

The birth of the Detroit Waldorf School is woven into this rich tapestry of history. The population decline during the 1960s created huge financial pressures, and the public

The eighth-grade class of 2001 sitting on the willow tree planted by the third grade in 1968 as a part of their farming block.



schools, with reduced budgets, began to cut programs. A young physician, Rudolf Wilhelm, offered the city school board a donation to restore arts programming in the school that his children attended. The board said that it could not restore programming in only one school. Not a person to be discouraged, Dr.



Dr. Rudolf Wilhelm

Wilhelm, along with his wife, Amelia, became active in their church to find a solution for this crisis.

Dr. Wilhelm had attended a Waldorf school as a child in Germany, and he approached the church with the idea of beginning a Waldorf preschool. He and Amelia sponsored a citywide conference at the church in 1964, at which noted Waldorf educators Dr. Hermann von Baravalle and Werner Glas gave an introduction to Waldorf Education. The lectures and artistic workshops stimulated great enthusiasm for Waldorf Education, and the church was asked to rent space to a new Waldorf preschool.

The church board, however, was divided on the issue, not wanting to look as if it were abandoning the public school system. Just when it looked as if the proposal would be voted down, an African-American parent, Ralph Harris, implored the board to accept the proposal. "You can send your children to any public or private school you want. But where is the private school for my children?" His impassioned plea persuaded the board to accept the proposal. This was the moment of conception for the Detroit Waldorf School.

Then, as now, the primary need of a new Waldorf school was strong teachers. At the suggestion of Werner Glas, Dr. Wilhelm invited Theo and Marianne Buergin, class teachers at Highland Hall Waldorf School in Los Angeles, to consider moving to Detroit. The Buerkins questioned if they could handle the daunting task of starting a school. While visiting Detroit, they went to church with the Wilhelms on Palm Sunday and heard a sermon on courage. They took that as a sign that they should accept the challenge. The Buerkins became the educational founders of the school, which opened as a preschool in the church in 1965.



In 1966, Theo Buerger, the first-grade teacher, accompanies morning singing with his ukulele.

After only one year at the church, the venture had to find a new home because the fire marshal would not allow an elementary class on the premises. Dr. Wilhelm found a private school building for sale in Indian Village, one of Detroit's first historic districts. In the early 1900s, executives of the city's industrial firms had built mansions in this area, and the school had been founded for the daughters of these wealthy families. By the 1960s, Indian Village had become surrounded by tough, drug-infested neighborhoods. With a large donation by Dr. Wilhelm and with help from residents of Indian Village, the school made a down payment and purchased its new home. The school opened there on September 6, 1966.

The Waldorf school was well received in the Detroit community and began to grow rapidly. White and African-American families in equal numbers were drawn by the ideals and methods of Waldorf Education. A special school community emerged that was and still is

Kindergarten children at play in 1985.



racially and financially diverse. More teachers were needed. Who would come to Detroit? Dr. Wilhelm decided to start a teacher training program at the school. He persuaded Werner Glas to move from Los Angeles to Detroit and head the program. Lectures on Waldorf Education at local universities by Francis Edmunds of Emerson College in England helped to establish and maintain an affiliation with Mercy College of Detroit, through which university accreditation was obtained for the program.

After this initial burst of creative energy, the school moved into the struggles that are as predictable in the life of a school as they are in the lives of the children who attend it. As the Detroit Waldorf School grew through its infancy, administrative changes had to be made that broadened the decision-making circle of the school beyond the initial pioneers. In 1978, a split in the faculty led to a split in the parent body and to the establishment of a breakaway school. Later, in the school's adolescence, the school and the teacher training program became independent of one another and established separate boards.

Three significant challenges faced the school during the birth of its adulthood, around its twenty-first year. First, the high school was closed due to a scarcity of trained high school teachers. Second, the teacher training program moved from Detroit to Spring Valley, New York, and became Sunbridge College. And third, another painful rift developed again between the parents and faculty, this time over the discharge of a faculty member, and many families left the school.

One stormy spring afternoon in 1987, the entire faculty and all the members of the school's board of trustees sat together grimly pondering the school's future. Were the destructive forces at work in the city also destroying the school? Would a move to the suburbs assure the school's future financial viability? The group realized that the very raising of these questions was creating a lack of will for the task at hand. Dina Winter, one of the pioneer board members and, at the time, the board president, asked those present who were willing to "stand for" the school's remaining in Detroit to physically stand up and pledge their support, come what may. In a powerful and moving moment, every individual in the room rose one by one in support of this commitment.

By overcoming the indecision that had so long handicapped the school, the Detroit Waldorf School has been able to stand for Waldorf Education in a difficult urban environment. Now celebrating its thirty-fifth year, the school has 184 students in kindergarten through the eighth grade. Although the Detroit area remains one of the most segregated metropolitan areas in America, the Detroit Waldorf School attracts a racially balanced student body, approximately half African-American and half European-American. Two-thirds of the students come from Detroit itself, and the balance commute in from the suburbs, some of the students traveling forty miles each way. The school has made a serious effort to attract African-American faculty and staff. Currently, two class teachers, two kindergarten staff members, the music teacher, and one of the office staff are African-American.

The daily life of the school in which children of different races and backgrounds learn, study, and play together is an inspiring example and gives hope for the future. It is a gift for which all—teachers, staff, parents, and visitors—are thankful.

Dr. Wilhelm passed away in December. His wife, Amelia, remains on the school board. Their work in Detroit has created a legacy of courage and tenacity in the community and has helped nourish the Waldorf movement throughout North America.

THE LIFE OF THE DETROIT WALDORF SCHOOL HAS BEEN CHARACTERIZED BY HARMONIZING THE DRAMATIC, RADICAL POLARITIES OF ITS MILIEU: RICH AND POOR, BLACK AND WHITE, CITY AND SUBURB.

CANDYCE SWEDA has been a parent at the Detroit Waldorf School, has worked as administrator of the school, and served on its school board. Also, she was a charter member of the board of AWSNA. At present she is a remedial specialist at the school and the development director. Candyce also is a member of the Shared Gifting Group of the Rudolf Steiner Foundation.

DINA SORESI WINTER had a career in opera and sang leading roles in some of the larger opera houses in Europe. Leaving the operatic stage at a relatively young age, she helped start the Detroit Waldorf School, in which she is still active. She maintains her lively interest in music, and teaches singing, coaches students in operatic performance, and serves as vocal coach and foreign languages advisor to the award-winning Detroit Concert Choir.



OUT OF ANTHROPOSOPHY

A MODERN PATH OF MEDITATION AND INNER DEVELOPMENT

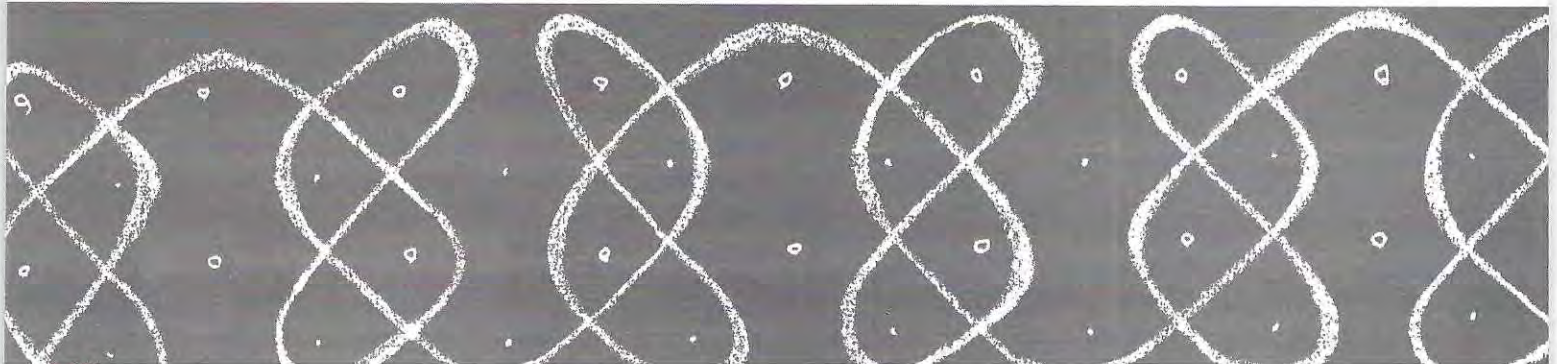
BY THOMAS POPLAWSKI

According to Rudolf Steiner, there are two dimensions of reality. One is the physical, material world that the human being perceives with the physical senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste. The other is the invisible and impalpable spiritual realm that lies



STEINER MADE IT VERY CLEAR THAT THIS PATH OF MEDITATION AND INNER DEVELOPMENT IS A FUNDAMENTAL SPIRITUAL ACTIVITY AND NOT TIED TO ANY PARTICULAR RELIGIOUS TRADITION. ONE CAN BE A BUDDHIST, CHRISTIAN, MUSLIM, JEW, HINDU, OR OF ANY OTHER FAITH AND PURSUE THIS PATH WITHOUT COMPROMISING ONE'S SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES.

behind the physical world. This is comprised of the subtle energies, elemental nature beings, and higher spiritual beings that have brought the physical world into being and that animate, influence, and direct it. In past ages, human beings were able to perceive and communicate, in varying degrees, with this spiritual world. For the modern human being, particularly for the modern Western person, this domain is a closed terra incognita. The materialistic worldview that prevails in much of our culture holds that this domain does not exist, that all invisible realities are merely epiphenomena of matter. Agnosticism holds that while this world may exist, the human being has no capacity to perceive or enter into it.



On the first page of his book *How To Know Higher Worlds: A Modern Path of Initiation*, Rudolf Steiner writes that within each human being lies dormant the capacity to perceive and experience and communicate with the spiritual realm. He then describes a series of exercises in meditation and inner work that, he asserts, will bring the well-intentioned and self-disciplined seeker experience of this world.

The meditative path that Steiner describes and that he also calls "spiritual research" has a strong moral element. He asserts that, for each step forward that a person takes in meditative practice, one must take three steps in moral development. Also, a person's impulse to follow this path must arise, not out of selfish motives, but out of a wish to benefit all of humanity. The ultimate aim of this way of meditation is not to escape from the world and the cycle of birth, suffering, and death but to be able to live in the world with new powers of insight and creativity and to help improve the world. Human destiny is inextricably tied to the destiny of Earth.

Steiner acknowledges the richness and effectiveness of the meditative traditions of the East (of India, China, Japan, Tibet, and others) but holds that they may not be the most appropriate for the modern person, especially the Westerner. Many of these oriental techniques are based on the control of the breath and may require renunciation of the world. The meditative practice Steiner presents is based on the control and discipline of the thinking process and is meant to be pursued in the midst of life.

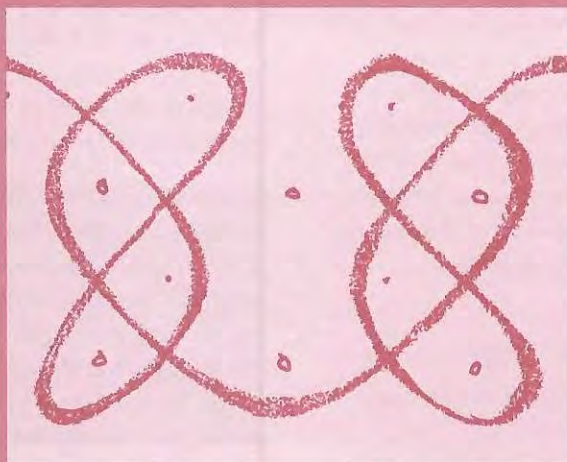
The spiritual practice that Steiner describes involves a training and development of both the heart and the mind. One prerequisite for spiritual work is an attitude of veneration, a devotion to truth and knowledge, not for one's own sake but for the sake of others. This mood of devotional reverence requires that we be open-minded, patient, and positive, and that we refrain from criticism of others. These attributes help create an inward receptiveness without which even the most dedicated mental exertions would not bear fruit. Regular meditation itself

helps one develop these attributes, but often they in themselves require some concentrated work and attention. Prayer, religious practice, artistic therapies, and psychotherapy all can help here.

The discipline of the mind begins with the study of spiritual texts. This helps to moderate our normal, materialistic and narrow way of looking at the world. Such study also

serves to develop our powers of concentration.

The next step is to make thinking more conscious and to gain control over the thinking process. This is necessary if one is to gain access to the spiritual domain. In meditation, the aim is to shed our body-based consciousness and to cross the "threshold" that separates our normal day-waking consciousness from the realm of imagination and spirit. The threshold is a semipermeable boundary that protects our normal consciousness from intrusions of the subconscious or supra-conscious, from both angels and demons, so we can go about our daily lives.



THE MEDITATIVE PRACTICE STEINER PRESENTS IS BASED ON THE CONTROL AND DISCIPLINE OF THE THINKING PROCESS AND IS MEANT TO BE PURSUED IN THE MIDST OF LIFE.

According to Steiner, when we sleep, or, more accurately, when the body sleeps, the nonphysical aspects of our being—the soul and spirit—enter the spiritual world. Normally we do not remember much of what transpires on these nightly sojourns, but some of our dreams can be understood as memories of what has happened there. During these times our thinking is not clear or focused. Occasionally sleep gives a generalized inspiration of the type useful mainly for artists. It does not help us much in dealing with our personal problems and those of the world. We need to gain access to the inspiration of the higher worlds in a more awake fashion.

There are means other than sleep by which we can cross the threshold. Psychedelic drugs, a high fever, chanting, breathing exercises, ecstatic dance, and so on, can induce an experience of the unseen world but usually one that is dreamy, unfocused, and characterized by fleeting images and colors or flights of fantasy. Typically, in such experiences the emotions are highly aroused and one's thinking is neither clear nor objective. These experiences can be pleasurable (most experiences that feel good

involve some form of “leaving our body”), but they do not tend to be useful—it is our thinking and cognition that need to be inspired for this to be so. We need to be able to cross the threshold and still to think in a clear and focused way.

The first task for the meditator is, in Steiner’s words, to “build a hut” on the other side of the threshold. In this protected space one can be open to receiving spiritual impressions but still have one’s consciousness “held in” and condensed rather than dissipated, as it usually is when it enters the realm of dream, imaginations, and invisible beings. This is achieved through strengthening one’s thinking so that when one crosses over, one can both maintain a wakened consciousness and remember what one experiences there. The control of thinking is strengthened through concentration exercises.

ONE PREREQUISITE FOR SPIRITUAL WORK IS AN ATTITUDE OF VENERATION, A DEVOTION TO TRUTH AND KNOWLEDGE, NOT FOR ONE’S OWN SAKE BUT FOR THE SAKE OF OTHERS.

One of the basic concentration exercises Steiner recommends consists of choosing a simple, human-made object—a pencil, a pin, a match, a paper clip—and focusing one’s thinking on it. One may think only thoughts related to the object. All extraneous thoughts need be excluded but for the mental picture of the paper clip. One maintains this focus through inner questions such as: What is it made of? How was it made? What was the intent of its inventor? Where was it manufactured? and so on. Thus one always keeps the mind on the topic of the paper clip. Unrelated thoughts and feelings will break in, but one must persistently return to the theme. One strives to develop a well-structured sequence of thoughts in order to foster absolutely clear thinking.

This concentration exercise does not sound very challenging, but it is. Steiner recommends that it should be practiced every day for between five and ten minutes, but most beginners find it quite difficult to hold a single line of thought for that time. The ability to complete the exercise comes with daily practice, and many find the “paper clip exercise” a useful tool when they need grounding, as before beginning a meeting or going to a job interview. It also makes an excellent warm-up before a session of regular meditation. It is an essential exercise, because if one wants to learn to bring clear thoughts out of the realm of inspired imagination, one must first be capable of thinking clear thoughts.

When one has developed some ability to concentrate, one can start to learn to meditate. The practice of contemplative reflection begins with verses or short sentences of an inspirational nature. One practice verse that Steiner suggested for beginners is *Wisdom lives in the light*. One can, however, choose verses—and, later, paragraphs and longer passages—from the Bible; from other scriptures of the East and West; from the writings of mystics and religious thinkers; as well as from the literature of Anthroposophy. In this, one goes beyond normal, everyday thinking through steeping oneself in the lofty thoughts conceived in moments of meditation by spiritual seekers who have been inspired by the spirit.

In this so-called “word meditation,” one begins by taking a theme and trying merely to understand what it means. If we do not understand something, we cannot meditate upon it. One must actively ponder the thought, not just say or think the words over and over. One can condense the thought and focus on a key word. In Steiner’s practice verse, for example, one can hold the image of light and at the same time fold the concepts of wisdom and “lives in” into it. Also, one might compare various meanings of light, both physical and metaphorical, as well as visualize things associated with light. The words *wisdom* and *light* have in their sounds a mantric power, and one can focus on that.

Eventually this concentrated thinking or contemplating of the theme leads to another stage. At a certain moment the theme begins “to think itself,” to generate new pictures and images that are not the products of associative memory or from “old thinking.” At this moment one has begun true meditation.

In word meditation, there are two principal challenges. One is to get beyond the thought, to make the leap to imaginatively playing with the thought or seeing it pictorially—to think it without words. The practical minded person who thinks in concrete terms and the very intense person both often have trouble doing this. Their challenge is to be flexible enough to move into the phase of being open and receptive. Steiner felt that the scientifically trained person has a great potential for meditation because the mind has already been trained to think clearly. However, one also needs at the right moment to be able to surrender and be open to what comes toward one in meditation. Artistic work, especially movement and the composing of poetry, can help to overcome this rigidity or resistance to surrender. Steiner gave another set of “perceptual meditation” practices that also can help in this regard.

The opposite challenge is faced by the person who strays beyond the bounds of the protective hut and,

rather than seeking clear and defined mental pictures and thoughts, revels in and gets lost in feelings or in vague sensations of the soul. The exercise becomes a kind of daydreaming of the theme. Usually, more consequent practice of the concentration exercise can correct this. Also, there are other meditation exercises that Steiner prescribed for the control of the emotions, his so-called "subsidiary exercises." Diet, exercise, and specific therapeutic interventions also can help an individual become more grounded.

STEINER FELT THAT THE SCIENTIFICALLY TRAINED PERSON HAS A GREAT POTENTIAL FOR MEDITATION BECAUSE THE MIND HAS ALREADY BEEN TRAINED TO THINK CLEARLY.

Meditation can be done with others, and it is helpful to be part of a group that meets regularly. Group meditation can give new energy and focus to the work of each person. In groups, individuals can share their experiences in meditation, receive advice and encouragement from others, and gain confidence in the value of their inner experiences. For those unable to find a working group, Steiner recommended keeping a meditation journal, in which one records one's experiences in order to give them clarity and objective form.

As one progresses in this meditative practice, and the hut in the realm of imagination and spirit becomes well-established, one can focus on specific questions or problems in meditation. Using the model of "word meditation," one can meditate upon and await an inspiration related to a question regarding one's professional or personal life. Steiner calls this "spiritual research." He held that the challenges that modern humanity faces can be met only when we use this method to gain help and inspiration from the spiritual world.

Steiner made it very clear that this path of meditation and inner development is a fundamental spiritual activity and not tied to any particular religious tradition. One can be a Buddhist, Christian, Muslim, Jew, Hindu, or of any other faith and pursue this path without compromising one's other spiritual and religious activities. Steiner held also that persons in any field of endeavor could and should meditate. A gardener, scientist, lawyer, laborer, and craftsperson all, through meditation, can develop concentration and clarity of mind, as well as receive new thoughts and inspirations that will help them with their work.

As the founder of Waldorf Education, Steiner held that meditation is a necessary element in the life of the teacher and in the life of the school. Only through meditation can the teacher come to the "living thoughts" that will

allow him or her to present the Waldorf curriculum in a vital and engaging way and to deal with the demands and challenges of being a teacher. For Steiner, the path of inner development is a sine qua non of being a Waldorf teacher.

Steiner prescribed certain meditations for teachers. He recommended that each night before going to sleep a teacher visualize each child in the class. In effect, the teacher, in doing this, poses the question to the invisible world: What can I do to best meet the needs of this child? Novice Waldorf teachers should understand, though, that Steiner gave this exercise to a group of teachers who were advanced meditators. They were already accustomed to sense-free thinking. To make this exercise meaningful and effective, one must be seriously working on a broader meditative practice.

In a number of Waldorf schools, the weekly teachers' meeting begins either with a concentration exercise or a short meditation. This can help each person to listen more fully to the others and to be more occupied with the well-being of the group and of the school, rather than with his or her own personal agenda.

Many systems of meditation focus on achieving the highest level of enlightenment, the overcoming of subject and object, the sense of unity with all that exists, and with infinity and eternity. Rudolf Steiner's approach to meditation is unique in that it focuses on attaining practical insights from lower stories of the ascending tower of higher consciousness, those levels closest to that of our normal everyday consciousness. Simple and direct, and requiring an amount of time and effort that even busy persons of today can manage, this discipline can help almost anyone to enliven and spiritualize daily life and work. It can also in time lead to the highest levels of consciousness. Consistent practice is slowly and subtly life-transforming, leading not only to knowledge and vision, but to a life that is more human and more meaningful.

Rudolf Steiner was once traveling by rail in Central Europe, and the train stopped at a small, rural village. Steiner turned to his traveling companions and commented, "There is a man who has been meditating by himself in this village for many years. The entire area has been subtly changed because of this." Our meditative practice can be a blessing to ourselves and also to those around us.

*THOMAS POPLAWSKI is a regular and popular contributor to *Renewal* and has had more articles in this magazine than any other writer. A psychotherapist who now lives in Northampton, Massachusetts, Thomas did a eurythmy training in England, where he met his wife, Valerie. The Poplawskis have two young sons, Julian and Byron, who attend the Hartsbrook School in Hadley, Massachusetts. Valerie is a kindergarten teacher at the school. Thomas writes and lectures frequently on Anthroposophy, Waldorf Education, meditation, and related topics.*

EX OPERIBUS RUDOLF STEINER

MEDITATION, INNER WORK, AND SELF-DEVELOPMENT

The capacities by which we can gain insights into higher worlds lie dormant within each of us. Mystics, gnostics, and theosophists have always spoken of a world of soul and spirit that is as real to them as the world we can see with our eyes and touch with our hands. Listening to them, we can say to ourselves at every moment: "I know that I, too, can experience what they talk about, if I only unfold certain forces within me that today still lie dormant there" (p. 13).

We begin with a fundamental mood of soul: the path of reverence, of devotion to truth and knowledge (p. 16) . . . We must train ourselves vigorously in the mood of devotion. We must seek—in all things around us, in all our experiences—that which can arouse our admiration and respect. If I meet other people and criticize their weaknesses, I rob myself of higher cognitive power. But if I try to enter deeply and lovingly into another person's good qualities, I gather in that force (p. 19).

[Also we must learn] to surrender ourselves less and less to the impressions of the outer world and develop instead an active inner life. If we chase after amusements and rush from one sense impression to the next, we will not find the way to esoteric knowledge (p. 22).

Create moments of inner peace for yourself and in these moments learn to distinguish the essential from the inessential (p. 26). . . In the time [you set aside for yourself each day—it can be as little as five minutes], strive to view and judge your own experiences as though they belonged to another (p. 27).

. . . [The] care and cultivation of our lives of feeling and thinking endow our soul and spiritual bodies with higher senses and organs of activity. The first step is to direct the soul's attention toward certain processes in the world around us. On one side are the processes of life—of sprouting, growing, and flourishing and, on the other, all phenomena connected with withering, fading, and dying away. . . By their nature they evoke feeling and thoughts in us. . . We must consciously and intensively focus our full attention on them [and for a short time] . . . banish all else from our souls. . . Eventually, just as the eyes and ears of our physical organism are formed by natural forces out of inanimate matter, so organs of clairvoyant seeing are formed out of the feelings and thought that arise in relation to growing and flourishing, withering and dying (p. 39). *(This is but one of a number of inner exercises that Steiner recommends. Ed.)*

All human beings, in addition to what we may call the ordinary, everyday self, bear within themselves a higher self or higher human being. This higher human being can be awakened only as each of us, individually, awakens it within oneself. Until then, the higher faculties latent within each of us and leading to supersensible sight remain hidden (p. 22).

We must continue to observe this rule seriously and faithfully until we feel the inner fruits of inner calm and tranquillity. For each who does this, a day will come when everything around will become bright with spirit. Then to eyes we did not know we had, a whole new world will be revealed (p. 29).

ALL QUOTATIONS ARE EXCERPTS FROM RUDOLF STEINER, *HOW TO KNOW HIGHER WORLDS: A MODERN PATH OF INITIATION* (HUDSON, N.Y.: ANTHROPOSOPHIC PRESS, 1994).

BOOK REVIEWS



RAVEN'S EYE

BY PHILIP THATCHER

Corona Press

North Vancouver, B.C., 2000

400 pages \$19.25

REVIEWED BY JOHN WULSIN

Philip Thatcher, born and raised in the United States, has been teaching English, history, and drama at the Vancouver Waldorf High School in British Columbia, Canada, for over fourteen years. His first novel, *Raven's Eye*, is a delightful, intriguing read, and a rich evocation of the interaction between three cultures—the Pacific Native American, the Canadian “Anglo,” and the Irish Celtic. Part of the novel is set in a Waldorf high school.

The novel's hero is a young Native American boy, born on the island of Duxsowlas, north of Vancouver Island. Baptized as Nathan, the boy tries to discover the story of his native name, Gwawinastoo, “Raven's Eye.” As he struggles to find his identity and his way in life, the Parzival motif emerges as a key for his seeking. Nathan changes his name and spends several years in a newly founded Waldorf high school. Thatcher describes this adolescent milieu masterfully, with tact and without

sentimentality. The classmates have a deep respect for each other and, in varying degrees, an understanding of who each is becoming. Thatcher evokes the living, changing web of relationships among these increasingly conscious young people who listen and watch, with courage and restraint, for moments when one deed or another may be needed. The working out of karmic relationships is not an unimportant aspect of Waldorf Education.

Thatcher artfully explores parallels between the Native American folk spirit, so much of which has been sacrificed before the overriding, invading Anglo culture of the North American continent, and the Celtic folk spirit, so much of which has been sacrificed before the overriding, invading Anglo-Saxon culture of the British Isles. The different mythic streams meet, merge, and reveal each other, all in the context of an individual's destiny unfolding, revealing, and fulfilling itself.

As a historian, Thatcher appreciates and artfully evokes the importance of the particulars of time and place. As a storyteller, he knows that while history tries to portray what happened, myth tells what happens. *Raven's Eye* glistens as these three contemporary peoples—Native Northwestern, Canadian Christian-Anglo, and Irish Celtic—meet each other and, at the same time, meet the timeless rhythms and laws of the Native American myths, the Celtic myths, and particularly the universal pattern of the Parzival story.

We live in a time when much art lacks spiritual nourishment and when much spiritual work lacks artful vitality. In *Raven's Eye*, Philip Thatcher has written a book in which art and spirit enrich each other. Alleluia!

JOHN WULSIN teaches English in the high school of the Green Meadow Waldorf School in Spring Valley, New York.

SCHOOL RENEWAL: A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY FOR CHANGE

BY TORIN FINSER

*The Anthroposophic Press
Great Barrington, Mass., 2001
192 pages \$16.95*

REVIEWED BY RONALD E. KOETZSCH, PH.D.

Torin Finser, director of the Waldorf teacher training at Antioch New England, has written a book about personal and school renewal. Intended primarily for Waldorf teachers, it offers much practical advice on how teachers can cultivate energy and joy in their teaching and in their relationships with children, parents, and colleagues. The book is also a blueprint for the renewal of schools.

The book starts with a sobering case history of a Waldorf class teacher, who, while she loves her work, is overburdened, overstressed, and finally burned-out. She becomes physically sick, and her ability to continue as a teacher, physically, emotionally, and psychologically, is in doubt. Rather than quitting, she resolves to renew herself personally. Relying largely on insights about the human being and human life contained in Anthroposophy—the ground from which Waldorf Education has sprung—she sets about doing so.

In describing this teacher's odyssey, Torin Finser mentions many activities and attitudes that can contribute to personal renewal. Among them are observing a daily rhythm of activities; eating wholesome food (and drinking less coffee); doing artistic and craft work; playing music; gardening; consciously cultivating positive rather than negative thoughts; spending time in nature; reducing the effect of technological forms of communication (he talks with insight about the effect of e-mail communications); cultivating an attitude of devotion to a cause greater than oneself; having faith that there are higher beings who are ready and willing to give us strength and guidance if we open ourselves to them; having faith that we have a higher self within that is capable of transcending and transforming our faults and weaknesses; learning to say no to requests that one take on another task or responsibility when one is already overtaxed; setting boundaries between work and personal life; and so on.

Finser writes at length about the importance of sleep as a source of renewal and inspiration. He gives various suggestions for improving the quality of sleep, such as recalling in reverse order the events of the day just past, immediately before going to sleep. He also writes about self-development through meditation and inner work. In this he relies largely on the suggestions of Rudolf Steiner.

While the book is meant primarily for Waldorf teachers, the advice is pertinent for school parents as well—in fact, for any adult dealing with the challenge of our rushed and harried times. The book also provides useful insights into the lives of Waldorf teachers, insights that parents may find helpful.

The personal crisis of this Waldorf teacher takes place in a school beset by student and parent discontent, tensions between teachers, falling enrollment, financial difficulties, and other problems. Finser observes that the foundation for school renewal is the personal renewal of the adults involved. But he is also keenly aware that



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Stages of Imagination

Working Dramatically
with Adolescents



by
David Sloan

STAGES OF IMAGINATION: WORKING DRAMATICALLY WITH ADOLESCENTS

BY DAVID SLOAN

AWSNA Publications

Fair Oaks, Calif., 2001

218 pages \$17.00

REVIEWED BY ANNE GREER

David Sloan's book *Stages of Imagination* is exactly the book for which high school drama teachers have been longing. It is a blend of practical how-to's, succinct reminders of basic principles of Waldorf pedagogy, and insightful inspiration. Most importantly, the book is a passionate plea for giving imagination a central role in education, offering, as it does, "a potent antidote to the soul-sapping tendencies of our age" (p. 9).

Undoubtedly, teachers faced with the daunting task of directing the eighth-grade or twelfth-grade play for the first time will quickly turn to "Part Three: Practical Aspects of Mounting a Production." There

they will find a week-by-week schedule of all they need to know, from choosing the play—Sloan includes an extensive list of large-cast "Plays That Have Worked," as well as an excellent bibliography—through casting, rehearsal, technical advice, and production. A concise but detailed distillation of a four-week version of the process, presented on a one-page chart, is destined to be enlarged, photocopied, and tacked to the classroom walls of many busy teachers. Another very useful section describes over seventy drama and improvisation exercises that will engage and inspire students.

While the book is full of practical detail, Sloan's cardinal insight is in the parallel he draws between the "incarnation" of a play and Rudolf Steiner's description of the incarnation process of a child. The play's not "the thing" for Sloan; it is very much a "being," following the same stages of growth and requiring the same nurturing in its activities of thinking, feeling, and willing, as does a child. Sloan's extensive explanation of this development, and his explanation of the four temperaments, are clear and free from jargon. His book is accessible and useful for all teachers of drama, not just those in a Waldorf school.

Underlying the entire book is Sloan's belief that adolescents need the "artistic alchemy" that drama provides. In many Waldorf high schools there is a main lesson block on the history of drama that gives the students an understanding of theatre's roots in the spiritual life of humankind. When such an understanding of drama is coupled with belief in the power of imagination, acting becomes much more than mere "play."

Sloan cites English anthroposophist Owen Barfield's understanding that imagination allows a transcendence of the isolation of self, thus overcoming the gulf between the subjective and the objective. In this light, Sloan writes that . . .

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SCHOOL RENEWAL: A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY FOR CHANGE

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the procedures and policies followed in a school affect that community's vitality. To this end, he gives practical advice on how schools can improve communication, the giving of counsel and suggestions to teachers and staff, the organization of meetings, decision making, interpersonal relations, and conflict resolution.

Torin Finser has written a practical and useful book for Waldorf teachers, parents, and administrators.

STAGES OF IMAGINATION: WORKING DRAMATICALLY WITH ADOLESCENTS

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imagination can actually become an instrument for addressing some of the rampant social ills that afflict our modern world—the loss of community, the growing sense of meaninglessness and despair, the dehumanization of the human being, and the rising tide of violence” (p. 197).

Sloan sees drama as a way to help the young cultivate the seeds of moral imagination: empathy, compassion, recognition of “the higher possibilities in the other and to act—onstage and off—in accordance with that vision...” (p. 197).

Throughout, Sloan's voice is deeply personal. The reader is invited into the everyday life of a practicing teacher, with all its frustrations and satisfactions, through anecdotes spanning twenty-five years of experience, told with humility and humor. Clearly, he's been through many, many productions and knows well the attendant apprehension akin to despair:

At a certain point, usually less than five minutes before opening curtain, the director may find a quiet corner and say a silent prayer. He prays that some interested, guiding spirits might help keep the duct-taped set from collapsing; he implores them to keep the back of the leading lady's dress closed with a bent bobby pin, because no one could find a single safety pin in the entire costume room; he humbly asks that the terrified student playing the messenger, who has never spoken his five measly lines correctly, finally gets them right. Then, more times than not, prayers are answered. . . . It is as if a kind of grace has descended upon the stage. . . . Every birth of a play confirms over and over that there are indeed guiding spirits” (pp. 31-32).

And on countless opening nights from now on, a quiet “Thank you, David Sloan” will also be offered up in the general relief.

ANNE GREER has taught high school English and drama for thirty-five years, most recently at the Toronto Waldorf School. Now retired, what she misses most is the suffering and elation of working with students in twice-yearly productions.