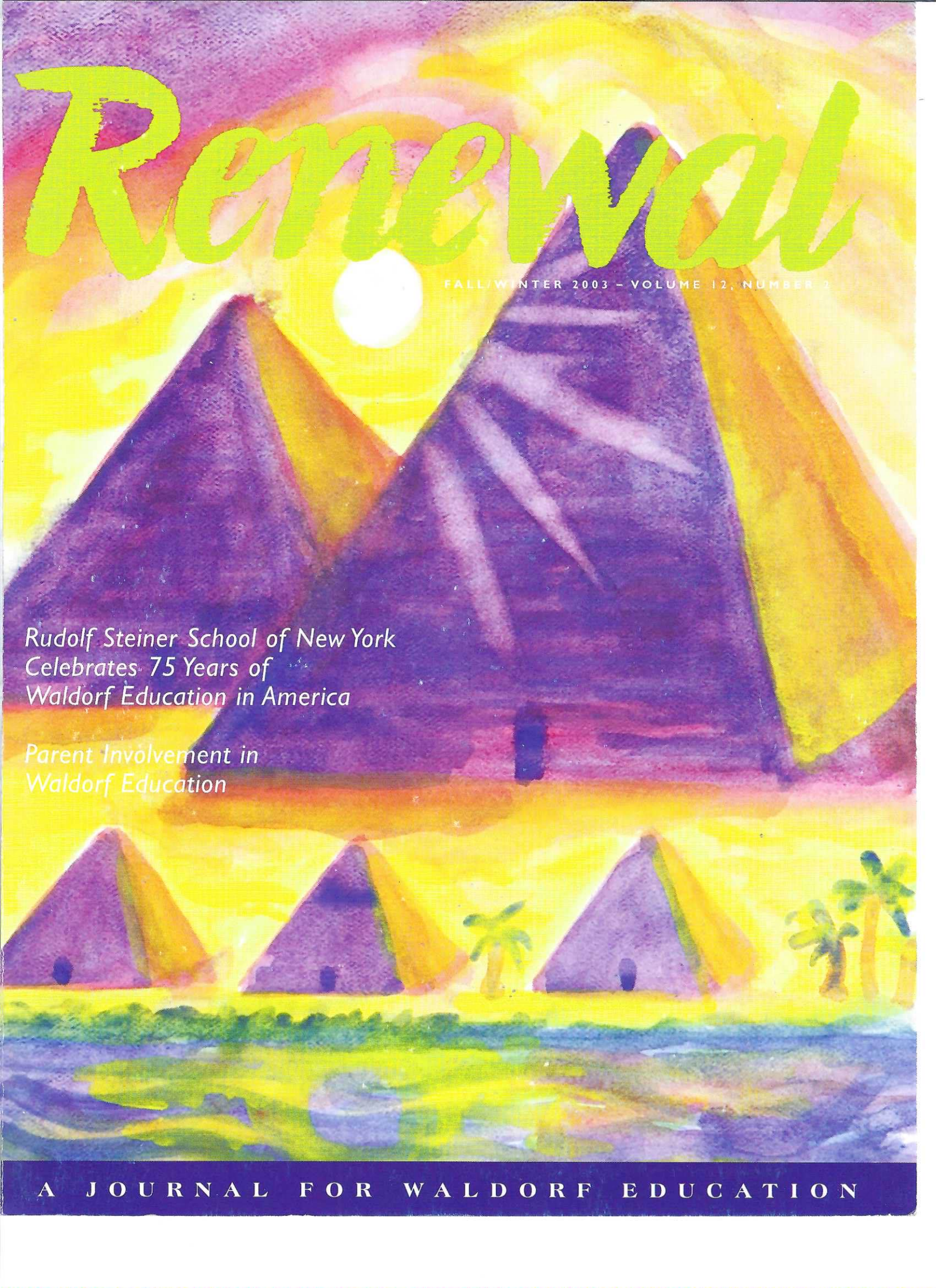




Renewal

FALL/WINTER 2003 - VOLUME 12, NUMBER 2

Rudolf Steiner School of New York
Celebrates 75 Years of
Waldorf Education in America

Parent Involvement in
Waldorf Education

A JOURNAL FOR WALDORF EDUCATION

Education as an Art

Waldorf Education gives no answers to the questions people today ask about education—What should we make out of the child? Should we inculcate this or that into him? The usual aim of these questions is intelligence and, of intelligence, intellect, and cleverness, the present time has an incalculable amount. . . .

The ultimate result is that people ask and answer for themselves the questions—What pleases me in the child? How can I get the child to be what I like? . . . But such questions have no significance for the deeper evolution of humanity. And to them Waldorf Education gives no reply at all.

Waldorf Education is not a pedagogical system but an art—the art of awakening what is actually there within the human being. Fundamentally, the Waldorf school does not want to educate but to awaken. For an awakening is needed today. First of all, the teachers must be awakened, and then the teachers must awaken the children and the young people.

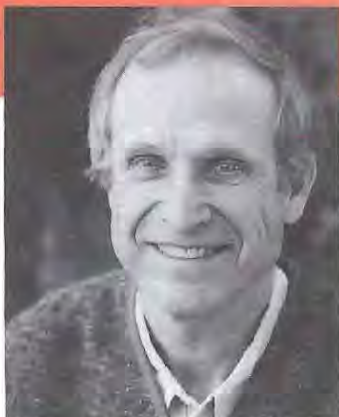
— Rudolf Steiner
The Younger Generation
(Lectures given 1922)

The Rudolf Steiner School of New York, which this year celebrates its seventy-fifth anniversary, for many years published a magazine about Waldorf Education. The magazine was called *Education as an Art*.

A W S N A

CREDITS:

The cover painting is a watercolor done by Julia Howell when she was a fifth grader at the Rudolf Steiner School, New York. This painting and the one on page 31 (by a second grader) are from the upcoming Rudolf Steiner School exhibit: "75 Student Pieces Honoring the Role of Art in Waldorf Education." *Renewal* also thanks Nathaniel Mitchell for the image on page 5; Larry Canner and the Waldorf School of Baltimore for the photos on pages 7, 8, 9, 28, 29, and 30; Joy Chambers for the image on page 15; Anne Riegel-Koetzsch for her illustration on page 20; Justine Belson for the photos on pages 22 and 24; the Rudolf Steiner School, New York, for the archival photos accompanying Lucy Schneider's article; and Arion Press for permission to reprint the wood engravings by Barry Moser from *Moby-Dick* by Herman Melville (Arion Press, San Francisco, 1979), as reproduced in the trade edition published by the University of California Press. These engravings appear in *Renewal* on pages 45–50. The image of the Archangel Michael on page 18 is by an unknown Spanish painter of the early thirteenth century.



From the Editor

BY RONALD E. KOETZSCH, PH.D.

Estonia is a small nation on the Baltic Sea, roughly the size of Connecticut, with about 1.5 million citizens. It is a beautiful country with thick forests of birch, pine, and fir, broad meadows and fields of grain, picturesque farms, cozy fishing villages, and more than a thousand lakes. The center of Tallinn, the capital, consists of buildings and narrow cobblestone streets dating from the sixteenth century.

Despite its small size, Estonia has a rich and active cultural life in which traditional Estonian music, literature, art, and crafts are preserved and practiced. Its mellifluous language was once voted the world's second most beautiful language, after Italian, by—as I kidded my Estonian hosts this summer—a committee consisting of five Italians and four Estonians.

Beginning in the fourteenth century, when the Teutonic knights arrived bringing Christianity, Estonia has been dominated by one or another of its larger, more powerful neighbors—Germany, Sweden, or Russia. For the latter half of the twentieth century, it was part of that gray, rectangular, materialist monolith, the USSR. Rows of grim apartment blocks, built from cement slabs, are a reminder of that time. About ten years ago, the Estonians won their independence, and today Estonia is a prospering, optimistic nation on the verge of entering the European Union.

Waldorf Education and Anthroposophy are thriving in Estonia. There is a K-12 Waldorf school in the university city of Tartu, another in Tallinn, and yet another in the Tallinn suburbs. At the Camphill Village in Pahlka, about fifteen adults with disabilities and special needs live and work with about ten co-workers, running a dairy farm and workshops producing cheese, beeswax, and woven goods. In Tartu, the Maarja Kool (Maria School) educates about sixty children with special needs according to the teachings of Rudolf Steiner. While much of this activity was initiated and has been supported from outside, it is being carried today mainly by dedicated Estonians.

This past summer, I attended the eleventh annual East European conference of Waldorf teachers, Waldorf parents, educational therapists, and school physicians. It was held in the Maarja Kool in Tartu and was attended by over 200 people from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Finland, Ukraine, Sweden, and elsewhere. Dr. Michaela Glöckler, the

head of the Medical Section at the Goetheanum in Switzerland, was the principal speaker.

Michaela's themes were familiar ones:

- the ultimate spiritual nature of the child and of the human being
- the importance of honoring the developmental stages of the child
- the importance of providing wholesome physical activities in the early years and wholesome models, in movement, demeanor, speech, and affect, for the younger child to imitate and internalize
- the importance of the arts as the medium of learning in the grade school years and the danger of burdening the children with overintellectual content and the pressure of examinations
- the onset of adolescence as a profound physical, emotional, and psychological change for the child and an important challenge for parents and teachers, to be met with empathy and understanding
- the need of adults to develop a strong inner life to give them the capacities required to guide children in these times.

Michaela spoke in German, but a translator at her side immediately rendered each sentence or group of sentences into Estonian. Clusters of Latvians, Lithuanians, and Poles in the audience had their own interpreters. Almost every person in the hall took copious lecture notes.

Despite the radically different milieu and cultural context, the Waldorf teachers, therapists, doctors, and parents who gathered in Tartu hold the same vision of the human being and the same aspiration as Waldorf teachers and parents in Tennessee, California, Ontario, Mexico, and elsewhere around the world. They understand the human being as ultimately spiritual in nature, a being created by the spiritual world and with a cosmic destiny. And they want to create an education and an entire human culture that recognizes and nurtures that spiritual nature. Thus, Waldorf Education and Anthroposophy can speak today to people in every country and in every corner of the globe.

EDITOR

RONALD E. KOETZSCH, PH.D.

GRAPHIC DESIGNER & PRODUCTION MANAGER

HALLIE JEAN WOOTAN

ARTISTIC CONSULTANT

ANNE RIEGEL-KOETZSCH

CIRCULATION & ADVERTISING MANAGER

HALLIE JEAN WOOTAN

e-mail: hwootan@awsna.org

COPY EDITOR & PROOFREADER

ANNE RIEGEL-KOETZSCH

EDITORIAL CONSULTANT

CHARLES H. BLATCHFORD, PH.D.

STAFF WRITER

THOMAS POPLAWSKI

PRINTER

SIERRA PRINTING, RANCHO CORDOVA, CA

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

VIVIAN JONES-SCHMIDT

PATRICIA LIVINGSTON

SHYLA NELSON

JOHN WULSIN

MANAGEMENT GROUP

PATRICIA LIVINGSTON

DAVID MITCHELL

JAMES PEWATHERER

Renewal: A Journal for Waldorf Education is published twice a year by the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA).

Opinions expressed in the articles are those of the authors and not necessarily those of AWSNA.

AWSNA does not endorse the products and services that appear in the advertising section of *Renewal*.

Each author holds the copyright to the articles he or she has written. Permission to reprint an article must be obtained directly from the author. AWSNA will provide contact information.

Subscriptions are \$12 for one year and \$24 for two years and can be purchased by contacting the AWSNA office. Foreign subscriptions are \$20.

Selected articles from past issues of *Renewal* appear on the AWSNA website: www.awsna.org

For information about Waldorf Education in North America, including a booklet listing all schools and initiatives, please contact:

ASSOCIATION OF WALDORF SCHOOLS
OF NORTH AMERICA

3911 Bannister Road · Fair Oaks, CA 95628-6805

phone: (916) 961-0927 · fax: (916) 961-0715

website: www.awsna.org · e-mail: awsna@awsna.org

Renewal

DEPARTMENTS

1 From the Editor

RONALD E. KOETZSCH, PH.D.

4 Letter to the Editor

33 School Portrait:

The Rudolf Steiner School of New York City: Celebrating Seventy-Five Years of Waldorf Education in North America

BY LUCY
SCHNEIDER



Books in Brief

21 *In Search of Ethical Leadership*

BY TORIN FINSER

Book Reviews

38 *Education as Preventive Medicine*

BY MICHAELA GLÖCKLER, M.D.

44 *The Spirit in Human Evolution*

BY MARTYN RAWSON

Developmental Dynamics in Humans and Other Primates

BY JOS VERHULST

51 Contacts Information Opportunities

val

A JOURNAL FOR
WALDORF EDUCATION

FALL/WINTER 2003 - VOLUME 12, NUMBER 2

ARTICLES

5 One Step Out of Paradise

Teaching a Waldorf Second Grade

BY WILLIAM TOOLE

9 To Praise or Not to Praise

What Children Need to Hear and Not Hear from Parents and Teachers

BY MARCY AXNESS, PH.D.

13 Toys Are Not Us

Escaping from the Maw of Consumerism

BY THOMAS POPLAWSKI

18 Cow Poop Soup and the Archangel of the Age

A Waldorf Mother Discovers Michaelmas

BY ERIN MINTA

22 The Role of Parents in a Waldorf School

BY LEONORE RUSSELL

28 The Beauty of What One Has Made

Woodworking in the Waldorf School

BY GREGORY ALBRIGHT

31 The Gift of Giving

BY SALLY BICKFORD

40 Imagining a Balance

One Mother's Experience of the Differences between Montessori and Waldorf Education

BY CAROLINA RANDOLPH STEUP

45 The Great White Whale in the Ninth-Grade Classroom

Teaching *Moby-Dick* to Adolescents

BY JOHN WULSIN

Letter to The Editor

The First Waldorf School and Public School Funding

The question of whether Waldorf Education is compatible with state financial support and government involvement is an important and current one. Waldorf-inspired charter schools exist in a number of states, and more are being founded each year. Various public school districts have established Waldorf-based schools as magnet schools and as neighborhood schools. In Canada, many schools receive public funding.

*In his article "In Dialogue with the Worldly Powers: Waldorf Education in the European Union" that appeared in the Spring/Summer 2003 issue of *Renewal*, Christopher Clouder deals with the relationship of the first Waldorf school—in Stuttgart, Germany—with the state of Württemberg. Clouder, using information from an article in a Dutch journal, writes (page 39) that Rudolf Steiner promised the authorities that at certain points in their schooling the children in the Waldorf school would reach the same learning goals used in the public schools. "In return," Clouder continues, "there was public funding for the school, and in the class years between the transfer points the teachers were granted complete freedom in the formation of the curriculum."*

*Gary Lamb, an ardent supporter of the complete independence of Waldorf schools from state funding and control, has written a letter to *Renewal* in response to Christopher Clouder's article and to this statement in particular. We thank Gary Lamb for his interest and his correction and invite comments from others interested in and informed about these questions.*

R. E. K.

Dear Editor:

For anyone who has studied the material available about the early years of the Waldorf School under Steiner's direction and its relation to the movement for educational freedom and threefolding of social life, the idea that the school was subsidized by the government is not within the realm of possibility. And it is an unfortunate indication of how little the original social impulse of the school is known and understood that such a statement could have been accepted as true and published.

For those who need substantive proof that there was no state funding of the school at its inception, I would cite two sources.

The first is a statement by F. Hartlieb, school inspector from the state of Württemberg. In an essay, "The Free Waldorf School at Stuttgart" (London: Anthroposophical Publishing Company, 1928, p. 6), he gives a detailed analysis of his impressions of the school in 1926, a year after Steiner's death. In it he writes:

The school is called the Free Waldorf School. It is free in the sense that it is not bound by any state curriculum—free, too, in the sense that it is not supported financially either by the State or by the town of Stuttgart, but is dependent entirely on its own resources.

The other proof is a statement Rudolf Steiner made in an exchange that took place in 1922, almost three years after the founding of the first Waldorf school and that is recorded in *Soul Economy and Waldorf Education* (Spring Valley, N.Y.: Anthroposophic Press, 1986, pp. 314-15):

Questioner: According to Dutch law it is possible to found a free school, if the government is satisfied of the serious and genuine intentions behind such an impulse. If we in Holland were unable to raise the necessary capital for founding a Waldorf school, would it be all right for us to accept state subsidies, as long as we were allowed to arrange our curriculum and our lessons according to Waldorf principles?

Rudolf Steiner: There is one part of the question I do not understand, and another that fills me with doubts. What I can't understand is that in Holland it should not be possible to get enough money together for a really free school. Forgive me for being naïve, but I do not understand it. For I believe that, if there is enough enthusiasm, it should at least be possible to start such a school.

The other point which seems dubious to me is that it should be possible to run a school with the aid of state subsidies. For I very much doubt whether the government, if it pays out money for such a school, would not insist on the right to inspect it. Therefore, I cannot believe that a free school could be founded with state subsidies which in themselves imply supervision by inspectors of the educational authorities.

These two references should lay to rest any question about the first Waldorf school being subsidized by the state during Steiner's lifetime.

At a time when Waldorf schools in the English-speaking world are wrestling with issues such as state control and funding, it is important that facts concerning the Waldorf school movement's origin and heritage are presented accurately, particularly by all those concerned with and responsible for its future.

Very Truly Yours,
Gary Lamb
Editor, *The Threefold Review*



One Step Out of Paradise

Teaching a Waldorf Second Grade

BY WILLIAM TOOLE

Once when a Lion lay asleep in his lair, a little Mouse began running up and down upon him; this soon wakened the Lion, who placed his huge paw upon him and opened his jaws to swallow the little creature. The Mouse, terrified, piteously entreated the Lion to spare his life. "Please let me go, and one day I will repay you for your kindness." The idea of so insignificant a creature ever being able to do anything for him amused the Lion so much that he laughed aloud and good-humoredly let the Mouse go. Some time after, the Lion got entangled in a net that had been spread for game by some hunters. The Mouse heard, recognized the Lion's roars of anger, and ran to the spot. Without any ado, the Mouse set to work to gnaw the ropes with his teeth and succeeded before long in setting the Lion free. "Was I not right?" said the little Mouse.

—Aesop

The second-grade child is still in the world of innocence and imagination. But he is beginning to awaken to and wonder about the outer world and his place in it. He needs new kinds of images to meet this awakening. Fables are a rich source of simple wisdom about the world, about human nature, and about how to conduct our lives. Thus, in the second grade the children are told various fables from Aesop and from the Celtic, Native American, and East Indian traditions. In these stories, human qualities in exaggerated form live in animal characters. Fables are very different from fairy tales. They are short and spare and often do not end “happily ever after.” They generally illustrate the dire consequences of some human trait such as selfishness.

Fables can often seem strange and heartless to a child. Giving a child a context for the story can prevent this.

contribute to the picture with their own, sometimes surprisingly astute, observations of animals and people.

At the actual telling of the story—if this preparation has been orchestrated artfully—the images of the story fall into place for the young listener, and there is no need to tack a moral to the end of the story. If we need to make the moral explicit, then we haven’t done justice to the story itself. Besides, making such a moral statement only douses the delight of the story with the frigid water of the intellect.

The second-grade child also hears stories of the lives of saints and holy persons who strove to harmonize and balance the antisocial human impulses portrayed in the fables. These saint stories, drawn largely from medieval legends, are quite different from and serve as a clear



The second-grade child also hears stories of the lives of saints and holy persons who strove to harmonize and balance the antisocial human impulses portrayed in the fables.

Fresco of St. Francis by Cimabue (c. 1278) in the Lower Church of San Francesco in Assisi.

Therefore, a good Waldorf second-grade teacher provides a context before telling a story. He builds a picture that characterizes the corresponding animal and human qualities that underlie the story. While the tale “The Lion and the Mouse” does have a happy ending, it still needs preparation for the students get the most out of it. We spend a fair amount of time describing the majesty, strength, and ferocity of the lion. We move on to reflecting on the mouse, so small and timorous, constantly watching out for danger, but also capable of gnawing away at all manner of things. Then we consider people who may be lionlike—perhaps strong in one way or another, perhaps quick-tempered. We describe others who may be more mouselike, observant, quick, working quietly away from the limelight. The children

counterbalance to the fables. When the second grader hears how Saint Francis of Assisi tamed the terrifying Wolf of Gubbio, she recognizes on a deep level that this is a picture of the human being gaining mastery over a part of herself.

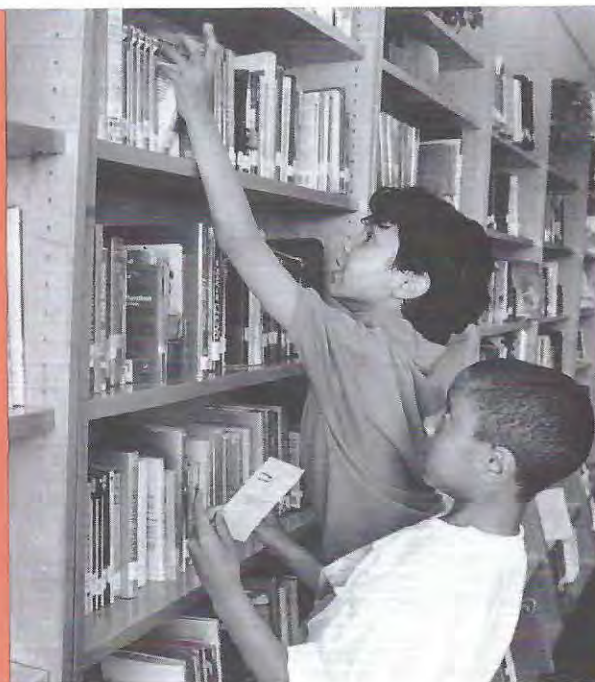
The fables and the stories of the saints speak effectively to the changes taking place within the second grader’s soul. At some point, usually later in the second grade, parents may notice their child becoming a little more critical. A touch of loneliness appears, perhaps alternating with defiance. The child seems subtly estranged from a world into which, without being conscious of it, he had been intimately interwoven. A second grader may even startle us by asking a profound philosophical

question, often at bedtime. One child in my class wrestled with the question: "What if there's nothing?"

This transition to a new consciousness, often referred to as the nine-year change and often beginning to show itself at this time, fully manifests in the third grade. For some children, the process is not over until well into the fourth grade. While this experience can be disorienting for both parent and child, it is a necessary and normal reorientation in the relationship between the child and the world. The glow that had hitherto surrounded the child now wanes. Her sense of being intimately connected to the grandeur of all creation diminishes sharply. It is a loss that a child feels profoundly, although she cannot describe it because she is not in fact aware that there is an "it" to describe.

In the second-grade classroom, basic academic skills develop at a rapid pace. The children make significant strides in arithmetic and in reading. They learn the times tables and basic math facts, including place value. Numbers, in their myriad sequences and patterns, are inherently rhythmic. So, too, is the young child. Times tables, with their repetitive character, readily lend themselves to the rhythmic clapping games that were once a staple of childhood. Moving, clapping, and even stomping while speaking the sequence of multiples raises the times tables beyond the drudgery of rote learning. Place value, so important for the learning of carrying and borrowing, can be taught with a pictorial approach in which numbers in the ones place are the king's jewels. When ten jewels are accumulated, they go into a sack. Ten sacks fill the shelf of a cabinet with ten shelves. The

**Being able to read gives
the child a sense of
independence and power.
He is now free to unlock
and enter entire
imaginative worlds
on his own.**



The transition into a new stage of development is more or less arduous depending on the child and on the support in the immediate social environment. Some parents scarcely notice this change, but over time a new person emerges unmistakably from the struggle. Perhaps we as adults can best support this process by being aware of and understanding it. We can keep events in their proper perspective. Simply to know that the loneliness, the questioning, even the criticism that erupts now is part of an organic life change allows us to continue to stand as a calm center in the child's suddenly disjointed world. The child has a longing for a renewed, more conscious relationship to the outer world, which the third-grade curriculum seeks to address more fully.

vault of the king's counting house holds ten cabinets, and so on. The care with which these mathematical foundations are laid and later reinforced will greatly affect the learning of decimals and percentage in fifth and sixth grades.

Also, one by one, each child at his own time starts to read. Since the start of first grade, a rich language environment has been created as a foundation for this. The teacher has told stories and recited poems. The children have retold the stories in their own words, spoken verses and poems, played word games, and done speech exercises. They have learned the letters of the alphabet, each in connection with a story and a pictorial image. Being able to read gives the child a sense of independence and power. He is now free to unlock and

enter entire imaginative worlds on his own. For some children, those with special learning challenges, outside help may be necessary at some point. When a basic ability to read has been established, concentrated spelling work begins. In the meantime, there is a period of what may be called "creative spelling."

Of course the Waldorf curriculum for the second grade involves far more than basic academic skills. The children continue their observation of the natural environment and the changes that take place in the course of the year. They go on with freehand form drawing, using their crayons to make symmetrical and mirror image patterns. In their watercolor painting and beeswax modeling they depict and render characters

Since the children are beginning the nine-year change, it is important to nurture their social sensitivity and the social being of the class as a whole. Special exercises in eurythmy aim at this, as do games and exercises in Bothmer gymnastics.

Thus, second grade consolidates and carries forward the academic work begun in the first grade. Basic skills and critical faculties develop. The child also progresses in speech, music, the visual arts, movement, and coordination. In sum, there is an experience of a new competence and empowerment. This helps the child through the beginning stages of the nine-year change. By the end of the year, the dreaminess and sense of communion with the world that has characterized the preschool and



A student does a freehand form drawing of symmetrical, mirror-image patterns. This is one of the many Waldorf second-grade activities that go beyond basic academic skills.

from the fables and legends they have been told. They learn to crochet and will make pot holders or other simple items.

Recitation of verses and poems, speech exercises, and simple tongue twisters are a daily part of classroom life. Typically, the children perform a class play at the end of the year, one that still involves primarily choral rather than individual speaking. They continue with their pentatonic flutes and with singing, often doing music that goes along with the fables and other stories. Foreign language study continues, and, as in the first grade, the children learn songs and play language games in one or two other languages, such as German, French, Spanish, or Japanese. Now, though, there is more focused vocabulary work as they learn the names of animals, plants, parts of the body, family members, seasons, foods, and so on.

kindergarten child and even the first grader is fading or has faded away. As the children step over the threshold into third grade, some may already be well into the nine-year change. The curriculum has begun to fortify them for the challenges attending this transition into a new stage of development. In the third grade, this process gains momentum in the whole class, and the teaching, as well as the curriculum, must change with the children.

BILL TOOLE has been a class teacher at the Austin Waldorf School since 1982. He took two groups from first through eighth grade and, after a short break, met his current class as fourth graders in 1999. They are now in the eighth grade. He lives in Dripping Springs, Texas, with his wife, Carol, a former AWS kindergarten teacher who has worked with all ages at the school. His son currently attends the Waldorf high school in Austin, and his daughter is in her first semester of college.

To Praise or Not to Praise



What Children Need to Hear and Not Hear from Parents and Teachers

BY MARCY AXNESS, PH.D.

When my second child was a toddler, the teacher of our RIE class (Resources for Infant Educators) gently suggested that we as parents reconsider our attitudes toward praise. She presented the notion that praise—especially the praise that is often routinely and mechanically doled out to children these days—can insidiously erode a child's inner motivation, pleasure, and self-satisfaction in a given task or activity. Each "Beautiful painting!" "Great throw!" and "Good girl!" repeated throughout a child's development can deflect her focus away from her inner will to create, to play, and to do, outward to our adult response to what she creates, plays, and does.

For the first time, I wondered if praise might be something other than the wonderful self-esteem-building tool it is generally assumed to be. I shared my new insights with my husband, and he began trying in earnest to bite his tongue before uttering such comments as "I like your painting, Ian." He and I would joke over the sometimes unnatural approaches suggested as alternatives to praise, such as "I notice you've used a lot of blue in your painting." Meanwhile, I tried to use this new consciousness to fashion ways of responding to our children that were both respectful and authentic.

One morning our two-year-old daughter Eve called to me, "Come look, Mama!" and when she let me open my eyes, there was her new puzzle, all put together. Rather than the standard, "Great job!" or "I'm so proud of you!" I responded with "You finished that puzzle all by yourself." I simply reflected what was, with no judgment attached. My gratifying reward was Eve's comment back to me: "I smart!"

Expressions of self-esteem don't come more vivid or more authentic than that. But the self-esteem and pride were Eve's, given by herself to herself, and were based on her own appraisal of her own accomplishment.

Roughly two years later, after learning to make comments of encouragement and acknowledgment rather than to praise, I read an article in *Mothering* magazine [Summer 1994] that strongly discouraged those, too!

The author, Naomi Aldort, writes,

Sensitive and smart, [our children] perceive that we have an agenda, that we are manipulating them toward some preferred or "improved" end result. . . . Gradually, a shift occurs. . . . No longer do they trust in their actions, and no longer do they trust us, for we are not really on their side. (P. 41)

Regarding a parent's offering encouragement or demonstrating loving support by commenting on what a child is doing, Aldort says,

Even when we intervene with casual commentary on our children's imaginative play, doubts sneak in. What children are experiencing inwardly at these times is often so remote from our "educated" guesses that bewilderment soon turns to self-denial and self-doubt. (P. 41)

Praise—especially the praise that is often routinely and mechanically doled out to children these days—can insidiously erode a child's inner motivation, pleasure, and self-satisfaction in a given task or activity.

I was reminded of an incident that happened the first time I took Eve to the local children's gym. She was not yet two and was quite taken with all the climbing and bouncing apparatus available to her. She carefully climbed the ladder to the loft atop the slide and stood there concentrating, deep in thought. Just at that moment the facilitator called out, full of cheerful enthusiasm, "Eve, you're way up on top of the slide!" I will never forget Eve's face. It was as if someone had slapped her—such was the shocking intrusion on whatever had been going on inside her at that moment.

As I reflected on what I was learning from Aldort, on my own interactions with my children, and on the interactions I have witnessed between other parents and their children, I wondered why we feel this need, this near-compulsion, to constantly comment. *Why do we have to say anything at all?* The reasons for this are many. One is that nowhere in our society is something allowed

to simply *be*, without commentary, blurbs, hype, or headlines.

Aldort suggests a more insidious cause of our verbal meddling. What we don't trust in ourselves, what we weren't *supported* in trusting in ourselves as children—our natural impulse toward self-directed learning—we have a hard time supporting in our own children.

Soon I discovered Alfie Kohn's extensively researched book *Punished by Rewards*, about the problems

connected to praise, incentives, and grades. Kohn highlights a basic—but rarely noticed—fact about praise:

The most notable aspect of a positive judgment is not that it is positive but that it is a **judgment**. [Emphasis his.] Just as every carrot contains a stick, so every verbal reward contains within it the seed of a verbal punishment. . . . (Pp. 102-3)

Praise is just one side of a two-sided coin, whose other face is criticism.

Kohn comments:

Praise, at least as commonly practiced, is a way of using and perpetuating children's dependence on us. It sustains a dependence on our evaluations, our decisions about what is good and bad, rather than helping them begin to form their own judgments. It leads them to measure their worth in terms of what will lead us to smile and offer the positive words they crave. (P. 104)

One study Kohn cites found that students whose teachers praise them heavily demonstrated less task persistence (i.e., diminished intrinsic motivation) and also were more tentative in their responses, more apt to answer in a questioning tone of voice, and were less likely to take the initiative to share their ideas with other students. Praise was also a factor contributing to a tendency to back off from an idea they had put forward as soon as an adult disagreed with them.

Kohn proposes to parents who worry about seeming like sterile, unresponsive killjoys to their children, that they remember two general principles, standards against which praise can be measured. One is *intrinsic motivation*. Are our comments creating the conditions for our child to become more deeply involved in what she is doing, or are they turning the task into something she does to win our approval? The other is *self-determination*. Do our comments help our child feel a sense of control over her life? If we accept

the understanding of the nature of childhood implicit in Waldorf Education, this principle must be balanced with an awareness that it is not appropriate or healthy for a young child to have control over her life. She needs and craves authority, guidance, and protection rather than self-determination, which is for later stages of development. "That is just the way the carrots like to be cut up," seems a respectful comment in this regard, rather

than, "I like how you cut up those carrots."

Another alternative, suggests *Whole Child / Whole Parent* author Polly Berrien Berends, is to offer celebration in place of praise:

Enthusiasm, love, gratitude!
How happy that looks! we can say. *You must be so glad to see it turn out that way! Thank you for showing me.* To the child, shared discovery and appreciation of what is beautiful is worth ten times more than personal praise and actually furthers creative growth where praise stunts it. (P. 254)

Several years later, the evolution of my consciousness about praise took another leap. A friend was bemoaning the fact that she simply can't "say nothing" when her daughter has just set the table perfectly without being asked or her son has just pitched a shut-out softball game. And since there are so many times she has to correct the children about various things, she feels it important to balance that with positive

feedback when it's deserved. This last comment, especially, caused me to ponder as deeply as I had since first exploring the issue of praise. It seemed an excellent point, so where was the flaw? The flaw, I finally decided, was that, except on issues of safety, there never needs to be any correcting of our children in the realms of creativity or play.

In those realms where correcting is necessary, as in certain chores and personal hygiene, I have relaxed my

One reason we
find it hard to
withhold comment
on our children's
activities is that
we don't trust
their natural
impulse toward
self-directed
learning.

words-off policy. "You put all the silverware in exactly the right places, Eve—thank you!" is a fine balance to having corrected her the day before. In the areas of health and safety, I go all the way and praise, praise, and more praise—for excellent tooth-brushing and for diligent sun-screening, for example.

Around the time my own children were ten and thirteen, they sometimes let me know very clearly that they wanted my affirmation for their accomplishments. I realized that as children get older—beyond the first seven years and the critical development of the will forces—acknowledgment and even, dare I say it, praise are sometimes appropriate. This is especially so when they participate in sports, music, household chores, and other activities for which there are existing, objective standards for excellence. I try to be specific and thoughtful with praise, so that it's meaningful and doesn't smack of garden-variety, Pavlovian, positive reinforcement. And I still believe that for the spontaneous, creative activities that emerge freely from the souls of our children, I should not be giving praise.

At this point in my evolution regarding praise and self-esteem, I hope for several things for my children. I hope that they respect and value the opinions of others and can accept and enjoy sincere praise for their accomplishments. I hope also that they are full of positive feelings for themselves, are grateful for and celebrate their ability to do something well, and are clear that the ultimate arbiter of their achievements lies within themselves.

Children learn and develop by imitating adults around them. They absorb and replicate our ways of moving and speaking and our very consciousness. The most effective way to help our children develop a positive

self-concept and a healthy attitude toward praise is to cultivate these attributes in ourselves and to manifest them daily.

MARCY AXNESS is the mother of two rarely praised but highly valued and much-loved children, Ian, 16, and Eve, 12, who attend Highland Hall Waldorf School in Northridge, California. Dr. Axness

is an educator and counselor who speaks internationally on parenting issues, specializing in prenatal and early development, fertility, and adoption. Her Quantum Parenting approach promotes optimal child development through the thoughtful, practical application of leading-edge research. She may be reached at dr_marcy@quantumparenting.com. Her website is www.quantumparenting.com.

As children get older—beyond the first seven years and the critical development of the will forces—acknowledgment and even praise are sometimes appropriate.

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

Aldort, Naomi. "Getting Out of the Way." *Mothering*, Summer 1994: 38-43.

Berends, Polly Berrien. *Whole Child / Whole Parent*. New York: Harper-Collins, 1998.

Kohn, Alfie. *Punished by Rewards: The Trouble with Gold Stars, Incentive Plans, A's, Praise, and Other Bribes*. New York: Houghton-Mifflin, 1993.

RIE (Resources for Infant Educators): (213) 663-5330. The RIE approach is also outlined in the book *Your Self-*

Confident Baby, by Magda Gerber, widely available at bookstores.

Toys Are Not Us

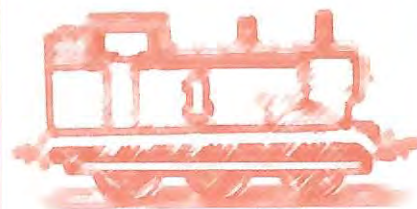
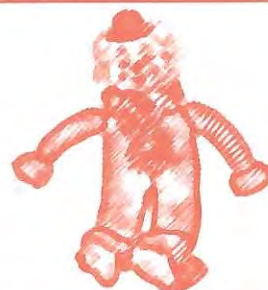
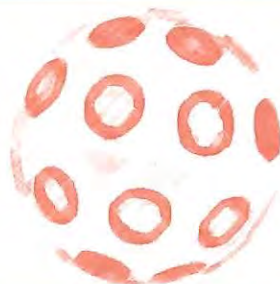
Escaping from the Maw of Consumerism

BY THOMAS POPLAWSKI

Please, dear parent-reader or teacher-reader, answer the following two questions. If you are not a parent of school-age children, use your observation of other homes to answer the second.

- When you grew up, in how many rooms of the house were your toys located?
- In your house today, how many rooms have toys in them?

Your answer to question one probably is “one or maybe two rooms.” Your answer to question two, though, is most likely a resounding “every room in the house!” Heavens, why is this so? What has been going on?



One explanation for this change may be that, because many mothers today are not full-time homemakers, housekeeping has deteriorated since the time of our parents and grandparents. Another reason may be the generally more lax attitude of baby boomers to housekeeping. However, the most compelling explanation is that children today just have many more toys—toys that fill every corner of every room, toys that overflow every toy box that attempts to contain them, toys that spread out like some self-replicating plague!

For the aspiring, mindful parent, the question arises: What effect does this plethora of toys have on my child? Do more toys really provide more outlets for creativity, more stimulation for thinking, or just more plain fun? Or does this superabundance of playthings work against children's healthy development? Does it lay the seed for unhealthy habits with respect to consumerism and waste? Are children being overwhelmed? Is their sense of what is valuable and important in life being skewed?

Manufactured, ready-to-use toys are more present in our lives and in the lives of our children than at any time before in history. This is the result of aggressive product development, advertising, and marketing by large toy companies. These companies are primarily interested in toys that will sell and make a profit, not in toys that will foster the healthy development of children. They are interested, too, in convincing parents and children (the latter being the principal target of their advertising) that "the more toys, the happier the child." Many parents and educators, though, are beginning to question this seemingly benign sales mantra.

Claire Lerner is a childhood development researcher with Zero to Three, an organization that runs preschool educational programs across the country. She maintains that certain types of toys as well as an excess of toys can be harmful. According to Lerner, "[The children] get overwhelmed and cannot concentrate on anything long enough to learn from it." Lerner advises fewer toys for all children and no electronic toys at all for younger children.

Manufactured, ready-to-use toys are more present in our lives and in the lives of our children than at any time before in history. This is the result of aggressive product development, advertising, and marketing by large toy companies.

These conclusions are echoed by Oxford University research psychologist Kathy Silva. Silva has been an outspoken advocate in Britain for preschools that—in direct contradiction to the current government policies—emphasize play rather than early academics. Her controversial research (controversial, because it contradicts the current educational policies adopted by the British government) has pointedly revealed that "children who have a less structured early education, based on play and song, are more likely to stay married, to vote, to read newspapers and stay out of prison in later life."

Silva is also concerned about "the complex relationship between children's progress, the types of toys they are given, and the time parents spend on them." In a large-scale study of preschoolers funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, she found that when children "have a large number of toys there seems to be a distraction element, and when children are distracted they do not learn or play well." Silva also discovered that having fewer toys is associated with less solitary play and more sharing with others.

Silva's research was prompted by the concern that childhood is irrevocably altered by parents lavishing toys, computers, and televisions on their children rather than spending time with them. She is especially critical of all electronic toys, since they restrict creativity and imagination, capacities she terms "the essence of childhood."

Silva summarizes her findings by saying that "children with relatively few toys, whose parents spend more time reading, singing, or playing with them . . . , surpass youngsters even from the more affluent backgrounds."

Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), the founder of Waldorf Education, was clear about what makes up a desirable environment for a young child. He described the child up to the age of seven as one great "sense-organ" that absorbs or takes in everything from its surroundings, including the sounds, colors, and shapes of the physical environment and the emotions, thoughts, and even the moral quality of the human beings. Since children are susceptible to the subtlest influences, Steiner felt that we need to be very conscious of what we place in and what we allow to be in their environment.

Steiner had ideas about toys that, to parents of today, can seem radical. He objected to toys that are complex and detailed. These he felt limit and stifle the imagination of the young child and are more suitable to the abstract thinking of grown-ups. Some of the play of children involves imitating the work and activities of adults. Other, imaginative, play involves the acting-out of stories and fantasies of the children's own devising. In both types of play, children do not need function-specific manufactured toys. They can and will make use of ordinary objects that are at hand. A few cardboard boxes will serve as a bus in which to take a trip; a broom can become a trusty steed; a simple piece of cloth, the curtain for a stage. Using and transforming these common objects in play both exercises and strengthens the child's imagination.

The charming "Waldorf doll"—a simple cloth doll, with barely indicated facial features, is an excellent example of an appropriate toy for very young children. The doll is made of natural materials—cotton, wool, and silk—that have subtle rather than garish colors. It is elementary in form, having a large head, with soft arms, legs, and torso, and facial features defined only by gentle dots. For infants and toddlers, the form of the doll can be even simpler. Created by knotting and in some cases also partially stuffing a single square of soft-colored silk, it can consist only of a head and perhaps arms—the rest of the body being implied by the flowing fabric. The level of detail in these dolls corresponds to what very young children actually perceive.

Dolls—and toys in general—that are realistic and over-detailed can bring the child too early into noticing minutiae and thus beginning to think abstractly. This abstract thinking, according to Steiner, should develop later in childhood. While the adolescent and the adult need to be fully awake intellectually, the young child needs not to be. The young child needs to live in the peaceful dreaminess of imaginative pictures. So toys should be simple and few. Steiner held that the child who is allowed to live fully in the world of imagination will, ironically, be better able to develop the capacity for abstract thinking when he or she matures.

A report from the first International Toy Research Conference, held in Sweden in 1976, notes that since the early twentieth century the ideal of appropriate parental behavior has become decreasingly authoritarian and increasingly permissive. With this change has come an expectation that parents be more generous—in terms of gifts and possessions—with their children. These trends, combined with the fast pace of modern life with all its accompanying stresses, has resulted in parents providing children with more and more toys. Unfortunately, many parents buy toys—and, later, televisions, videos, and computers—for their children in order to win personal time for themselves apart from their children and, paradoxically, to assuage their feelings of guilt about not spending enough time with them.

Researcher Edward Melhuish of Birkbeck College in England finds, however, that this parental pattern may be counterproductive. His work points out that "the behavior of children is directly

The charming
"Waldorf doll"—a
simple cloth doll,
with barely indicated
facial features, is an
excellent example of
an appropriate toy
for very young
children.





The materialism of our culture, manifested in consumerism, the mall culture, and the glossy fantasy worlds of mail-order catalogues, is ubiquitous and compelling. Happiness and status are presented as related to the amount of stylish and expensive possessions.

affected not by the number and sophistication of their toys but by the amount of time parents devote to reciting them stories, rhymes, and songs.” He found that those children who spend the most time in these activities at home “are more cooperative, confident and social.” He counters the toy industry’s motto about more toys with “the more books—the better.”

While toys deeply impact younger children, older children are also vulnerable. The materialism of our culture, manifested in consumerism, the mall culture, and the glossy fantasy worlds of mail-order catalogues, is ubiquitous and compelling. Happiness and status are presented as related to the amount of stylish and expensive possessions. Parents need to decide consciously and carefully to what degree they and their children will participate in the consumer culture. It is easy to give up the fight when confronted by the intense energies of older children and to leave them at the mercy of the materialistic ethos. To go against the mainstream on this point requires will and resolve. Some families are drawn to a Waldorf community as an island of sanity. There they find spiritual values that contrast with the excessively materialistic values that seem to hold sway almost everywhere else. They seek other “Amish” families embracing values not driven by television, catalogues, and shopping malls.

An article called “Keeping It Simple” (*Time*, August 6, 2001) tells the story of the Reverend John Omer, rector of a church in Leesburg, Virginia.

As a clergyman, Omer recognized that parents in his congregation wanted help in breaking the habit of overindulging their children. As a father of three, Omer knew the pressures involved very well, so he initiated what he jokingly referred to as “an underground resistance movement.” He gave workshops in which parents could take stock of their family life and how they celebrate the holidays, and then imagine a different, more satisfying picture. Not surprisingly, their aspirations involved less credit card debt and a lot less stuff. Parents began to set limits on the number and the price of holiday and birthday gifts, whether the gift was purchased by themselves or by friends or relatives. Omer observed that the program is successful because in the workshops parents find—for the first time—legitimacy for their frustration and concerns as well as support in dealing with them.

The *Time* article reported on another program, created by Cornell University, called Seeds of Simplicity, which has resulted in the formation of “Simplicity Circles” in over 100 U.S. cities. In these groups, parents share ideas on ways to cut back on material possessions and to promote other values in their families. Jennifer Shields, a parent from Silver Spring, Maryland, decided that on invitations to her child’s birthday party, she would ask that guests give only art supplies. Also, she strictly limits television time in order to keep her child’s gift expectations low.

Other strategies that have emerged from Simplicity Circles include: having "bring no gift" parties with classmates, keeping mail-order catalogues for children out of the house to decrease the frenzy around getting gifts, and limiting trips to the mall so that children view shopping as a planned and not an impulsive activity. With older children, parents find it helpful to discuss underlying issues and to involve children in the decision making about simplification.

A related impulse comes from The Center for New American Values in Takoma Park, Maryland. The Center has an ecological mission and seeks to promote sustainable use of the world's natural resources. It sees the consumption patterns of American society as a major contributor to global problems. North Americans consume and waste a disproportionate percentage of the world's resources and products. We also provide an unfortunate example to people in less developed nations who try to emulate our bad habits. The Center works therefore to change current habits of consumerism.

The Center has launched a nationwide awareness campaign related to children and promoting a philosophy of "More fun, less stuff!" According to director Betsy Taylor, "This isn't about unspoiling kids. It's about reclaiming our kids from a toxic commercial culture that has spun out of control." The organization's website (www.newdream.org/campaign) offers the online brochures "Tips for Parenting in a Commercial Culture" and "Simplify the Holidays." These point out that current marketing hurts children's self-esteem and gives them a questionable worldview and set of values. The brochures also assert that providing a superabundance of toys is a first step in developing a later generation of "hyper-consumers." Some of the website's Action Tips include:

- Buy music lessons rather than fancy electronic gadgets.
- Turn off the Discovery Channel and go out and make your own discoveries.
- Remove the brand logos from clothes—your children's and your own. Talk with children about why you are doing this.
- Urge your school board to stop selling overpriced magazine subscriptions, wrapping paper, and candy bars.

- Make children responsible for age-appropriate chores around the house.
- Refuse to buy war toys and Ken and Barbie dolls.
- Teach children to be doers and creators, not shoppers and buyers.
- Teach children money management so they understand what things really cost.
- Respect the idea that there will always be an aspect of "I want" in a child.
- Don't just turn off the TV, but also show children interesting alternative activities.

Many Waldorf parents are careful about the quality of what they buy for their children. They realize that toys and other possessions can affect a child's development. But the quantity of toys, clothes, sports equipment, and so on, is also important. Too much stuff will distract, confuse, and overwhelm. And for the young child, no amount of things can really replace the love and attention and time of parents.

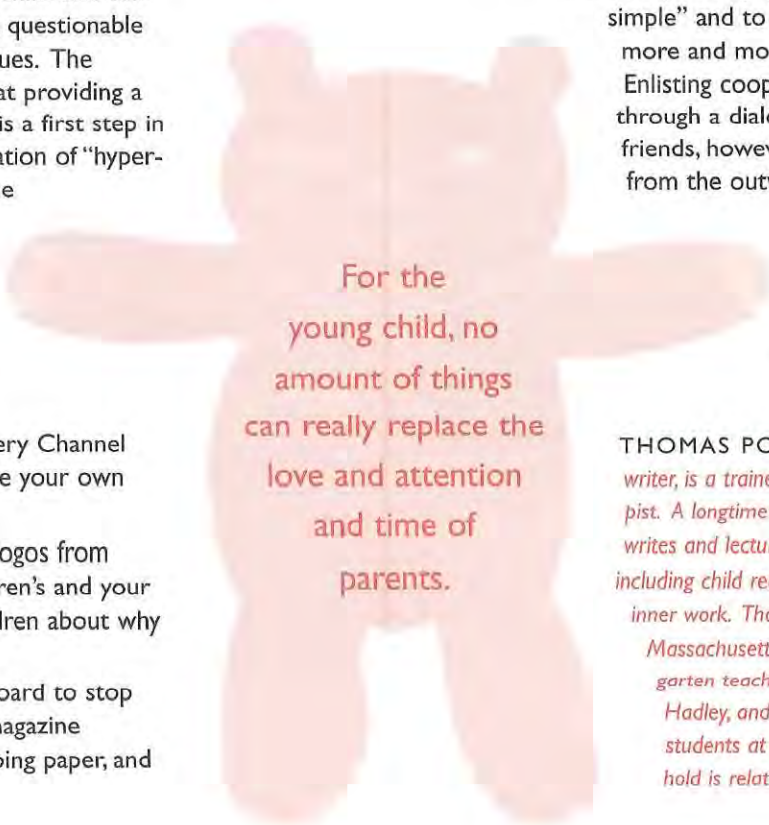
Older children need to learn giving love and attention to others, both within the home and outside the circle of family and friends, in ever widening circles. This unfolding soul capacity to share and to give needs to be nourished and encouraged, not stifled by a preoccupation with getting and accumulating stuff for oneself.

Because of the overwhelming pressures of commercialism, it is very hard for a parent to suddenly embrace

a Shaker philosophy that "it's a gift to be simple" and to resist the intrusion of more and more stuff into the home.

Enlisting cooperation and support through a dialogue with family and friends, however, can help a family move from the outwardly driven "Toys R Us"

way of life to a more intimate and inwardly spontaneous one that appreciates the simple gifts.



For the
young child, no
amount of things
can really replace the
love and attention
and time of
parents.

THOMAS POPLAWSKI, *Renewal staff writer, is a trained eurythmist and psychotherapist. A longtime student of Anthroposophy, he writes and lectures on a variety of topics, including child rearing, education, and meditative inner work. Thomas lives in Northampton, Massachusetts, with his wife, Valerie, a kindergarten teacher at the Hartsbrook School in Hadley, and their two young sons, who are students at the school. The Poplawski household is relatively uncluttered with toys.*

Cow Poop Soup and the Archangel of the Age



A Waldorf Mother Discovers Michaelmas

BY ERIN MINTA

I am a Waldorf parent, and I often experience participating in activities in Waldorf schools as something healing, whether I attend an event or gathering or actively work in some capacity to help create a festival. When I take part, a sense of well-being arises and I feel more connected to humanity, to nature, and to the local and extended community of Anthroposophy. I often wonder, What is it that happens when we gather? How does that sense of well-being arise? Where does it come from? I had a chance to explore these questions when my five-year-old daughter, Molly, and I took part in the Michaelmas festival held at Sunbridge College in Spring Valley, New York.

Michaelmas is the celebration of the feast of Michael (pronounced 'Mī-kī-el, from the Hebrew Mikhā'ēl, meaning "who is like God"). Michael is referred to both as Saint ("holy one") Michael and as the Archangel Michael (a member of the divine hierarchies). He is an important figure in the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions as a powerful being who does battle against the forces of evil and aids and protects the faithful. Michael is often represented in an earthly counterpart as Saint George, a knight in armor on horseback, slaying the evil dragon.

At the festival, Michael Steinrueck, a speech artist in the community, gave a talk on how the Archangel Michael is understood within Anthroposophy. According to Rudolf Steiner, each of the four archangels in turn reigns over periods of human history that last roughly four hundred years. In 1879, Michael succeeded Raphael as the regent of the age. Michael's intention is to unify human beings, to help us transcend the divisions of race, ethnicity, religion, and sex, and to recognize the universal shared humanity of each person. Michael dwells just beyond the sense-perceptible world, ready to help those who aspire to think, speak, and act in a way that promotes the positive evolution of humanity. His presence is helping to bring forth the spiritual warrior within each of us so that we can overcome our spiritual blindness and negative qualities and also confront and transform evil in the world. Michael is also the archangel of courage and strength, guardian of the harvest season, who helps people reap rich rewards for their labors earlier in the year. In other words, he is the archangel of righteous victory.

Besides the talk, the festival included a eurythmy performance, singing by the college choir, and work in the garden. While the talk, the eurythmy, and the music were all memorable and imbued with the spirit of Michael, the work in the garden made a particularly strong impression on me.

The garden is run according to the principles of biodynamic agriculture, founded by Rudolf Steiner a few years after he had founded Waldorf Education. Biodynamics is a form of organic agriculture in that it does not use any chemical pesticides, herbicides, or fertilizers. It does employ a number of special preparations, made from natural materials, that among other things aid the fertility of the soil, promote plant growth, and inhibit weeds and harmful insects.

While I knew we were going to be in a garden, it was okay with me that Molly chose to wear a beautiful but worn-enough-not-to-fuss-about-it calf-length blue velvet party dress. As we approached the garden, however, I began to worry. A table to one side was heaped with fresh cow dung and a separate pile of cow horns; around a circle of benches were large buckets filled with water. I took a second look at my daughter in her blue dress and began to relax when I noticed that it was already torn on one side. Still, I wondered how we'd get through the day without a catastrophe to the dress.

Head gardener Gunther Hauk spoke about "fertile ideas"—ideas that are so practical and pragmatic, so earthbound and sensible, that, in applying them, we are connected to the whole of life and to the cosmos as co-creators. Our work in the garden was to put one such fertile idea into action.

Gunther then spoke about Preparation No. 500, which we would be working with. Each year in the fall, cow horns are filled with cow dung and buried in the earth. In the winter months, Earth's axis is tilted so that it comes under the influence of the northern skies. This, combined with the frozen soil and then the melting snow, creates the conditions for turning cow dung stuffed into cow horns into something that smells and looks like soil. In the following fall, this fermented dung is mixed with water in deep buckets. The solution is stirred forcefully in one direction to build up a deep vortex. Then, the vortex is stopped abruptly and churned in the opposite direction until, again, a vortex is created: over and over again, back and forth, in this way for exactly one hour. The end product of the process, Preparation No. 500, is then wafted all over the garden—directly by hand or with a pine tree branch—to strengthen the plant roots during the ensuing winter.

During the talk I grew uneasy. I couldn't imagine that we would actually be filling cow horns with cow dung—and then there was Molly's dress and all those buckets of water. When Gunther started speaking about the holiness of cow dung, my concern edged toward panic. "Okay, okay," I thought, "I will hear this guy out, we don't have to participate—we can take a walk until the performances start." But then Gunther explained that the cow, with its unique, complex digestive system, digests grasses so thoroughly that what results is very fertile, very pure stuff. Still, I eyed the cow dung with suspicion, thinking, "A rose by any other name . . ." Then Molly made a beeline for the pile and I had to follow.

"It looks like cow poop," she observed, apparently not having grasped what Gunther had said.

"That is because it is cow poop," I replied.

Undaunted, she began to fill the cow horn, using one of the giant-sized tongue depressors provided.

"Stinky!" she said when she finished and turned to join the stirring.

I knew Molly didn't know what she would be stirring, but I did and I hoped to find them handing us more giant-sized tongue depressors. Instead, I found Gunther stirring with his arm in the bucket up to his elbow, demonstrating how to create the vortex. His arm touched the outside of the bucket at all times, making as deep a vortex as the bucket could accommodate.

Suddenly it was 3:00 and the stirring began. Molly jumped right in, interested to see if she could create the vortex. She could, and she stopped it correctly to begin to make it go in the other direction, with nary a drop to

the blue velvet, but not without a splattering to my glasses and lips. I sighed, uncertain which troubled me more. Then she quit. She was done. The trees and shrubs were calling her to play, and she began to harvest leaves to make her own preparation. I looked at the bucket. Fifty-nine minutes to go. I sensed there was something essential to this process that required the human form to come into contact with this brown watery mess, but I didn't know what it could be. I only knew I didn't feel quite holy enough. My stomach lurched, but I dove in and immediately noticed that the fermentation had made the dung smell like earth, only more clean and fertile than any earth I have ever smelled. It was sensuous and brightened my spirits. I felt my life force wake up and quicken as it does in the spring. A cut on my thumb troubled me, and I wanted to stop stirring to ask if I should be concerned about bacteria, but I sensed it was my resistance welling up again, and, besides, no one else was ready to stir, so I kept on. The stinging soon stopped, and I noticed later that the cut had healed.

Finally, others came to stir, and Molly and I took a walk around the campus, meeting up with playmates. On our return, we caught up with the people who were spraying the preparation. Molly, whose dress was now tied into a mini-skirt but was still clean despite a hike up the stream, felt called to help. She was offered a pine branch but preferred to use her hand. She twirled and spun barefoot across the grass, shaking the preparation off her arms fairylike in a dreamy dance, as though she were sprinkling stardust to help the root children into their long winter's sleep. We then joined everyone for bread and honey and tea, all prepared with ingredients from the garden, before we headed up the hill for the performances.

Once in the auditorium, I began to see that our physical work in the garden had prepared us to take in the performances more deeply than we otherwise could



She twirled and spun barefoot, shaking the preparation off her arms fairylike in a dreamy dance, as though she were sprinkling stardust to help the root children into their long winter's sleep.

have. By opening the physical body, we had made space within ourselves and in our hearts so that we were able to perceive the language that music and eurythmy speak—that of the universal soul—from the space of our own personal being. The language spoken that day brought forth the presence of Saint Michael, and we experienced him in our hearts, minds, and hands. We met him, his power and his presence, as qualities within ourselves.

The work in the garden, this human action/will-force, also served to align our wills with the spirit of Michael's intention, helping us to embody and co-create with his intent to aid humanity and the natural world. The cow couldn't have filled and buried the cow horn; we can't produce like the cow. The earth is filled with secrets and treasures. But without our human strength to put a spade into it to open it, or our intellect to comprehend it, its mysteries stay locked inside. Perhaps this, then, is the essence of ritual, festival, celebration, offering—and the work we do to bring them forth: to ready ourselves in the physical so that we can open to the universal self, find our way to that, and, coming back, bring the universal into our personal, singular self. I was reminded

of, and felt as though I experienced, the truth of the saying: Hands to work, hearts to God. But one may add the phrase "... then back again to oneself renewed," and from this comes that sense of well-being, perhaps.

When we parents offer what we can to our Waldorf school community—working to make a festival happen, cleaning the school, or simply taking part in a festival or celebration—we can think about the qualities that Saint Michael embodies—courage, stamina, strength, positive assertion, and victory. And we can ask for his presence to accompany us and for his virtues to guide our actions. Then, at the end of our work or time at an event, we can sit quietly to see what we feel and perceive. The experience of calm steadfastness and peaceful openheartedness that likely will be there is what our children receive every day in the protective and loving hands of Michael—expressed through the physical presence of their teachers and each other.

Molly and I arrived home filled with an earthy, rooted happiness. We felt peaceful and part of the great bridge between Heaven and Earth. We were co-creators with the forces of nature, the rest of humanity, and the cosmos. We slept deeply that night. In the morning, I picked the crumpled blue velvet dress up off the floor and inspected it. It was dirty—perhaps even defeated—but not from the cow dung, or the preparation, or even the stream, but rather from what one would find at any ordinary children's party, where such a dress would be considered appropriate: gooey cookie crumbs.

ERIN MINTA *has a master's degree in community counseling and is studying integrated kabbalistic healing. She lives in Warwick, New York, with her husband, Marek, and their six-year-old daughter, Molly, who attended nursery and kindergarten at Dayspring Community School, a Waldorf initiative in Goshen, New York. She is grateful to the many kindhearted anthroposophists in southern New York State for their patient listening and considered answers to her endless questions. She is grateful especially to those who have guided her as a mother and Molly as an incarnating being.*

BOOKS

in Brief

In Search of Ethical Leadership

BY TORIN FINSER

REVIEWED BY RONALD E. KOETZSCH

Steiner Books

Great Barrington, Mass., 2003

171 pages • \$19.95

Torin Finser is a veteran Waldorf class teacher, director of the Waldorf Teacher Education Program at Antioch University of New England, and a consultant to Waldorf schools. In his new book, *In Search of Ethical Leadership*, Finser ranges widely, from problems in contemporary business and world affairs to Greek tragedy, from ancient Egypt to the Eightfold Path of Buddhism, from the Knights Templar to Rudolf Steiner, Anthroposophy, and Waldorf Education. Throughout, however, Finser's central assumption and his pressing question remain constant. To solve the problems that beset the world today, true leaders—persons possessing wisdom, will, self-sacrificial altruism, vision, and courage—are needed. How can we create, nurture, and develop such leaders?

At the outset, Finser points out that the tragedy of 9/11 was an opportunity for our political leaders to use the "moral-spiritual capital" created by the sudden death of so many innocent persons to solve the problems that lay behind the attack—in particular the ongoing conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians. If the ingenuity and resources that have been expended since then on waging war had been applied to that problem, it might have been solved, and a root cause of animosity might have withered. Instead, our leaders have led us down a path of retaliation and revenge that has cost more thousands of innocent lives and billions of dollars and that has no end in sight. Why are our leaders—in schools, communities, corporations, local, state, and national governments, and religious institutions—so little like the great spiritual leaders such as Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr?

A keen observer and analyst of social realities, Finser points to a number of disparate factors that he sees creating the inadequate leadership we have today:

- an educational system that focuses on intellectual development and on marketable skills and that rewards those best able to regurgitate information on demand
- a system of higher education in which students are pampered into an attitude of entitlement, i.e., "the world owes me"
- an entertainment culture that glorifies slickness, superficiality, cynicism, and violence, and that nurtures passivity and an inability to listen
- a corporate culture in which an action's effect on the bottom line is the ultimate measure of its worthiness or unworthiness
- a political system in which duplicity and pandering to the lowest instinct of the electorate are the stock-in-trade of most politicians

please turn to page 39



The Role of Parents in a Waldorf School

BY LEONORE RUSSELL

A main issue today in all schools—public and independent—is the relationship of parents to the school. Almost all parents today ask: What is my relationship to the teacher, to the school, and to my child's learning? How can and should I be involved in my child's education?

In premodern times, a child destined for formal learning was sent to a monastery or convent or to the home of a learned man, perhaps a distant relative, to learn how to read and write and become educated in the mores and wisdom of the day. In the early days of European settlement in North America, children were put in the charge of a teacher, sometimes near, sometimes far away, or they were sent off to a boarding school. The pursuit of learning often involved separation from family, and parents had little say about what and how their children

were taught. Even forty or fifty years ago, most parents played a minor role in their children's formal education. A friend of mine who attended public schools in New York City in the 1950s recalls that his mother went to his school just two times each year—to get a brief report from his teachers on his performance—and that his father visited but twice during my friend's entire schooling, each time for a graduation. For a parent to question or criticize what was happening in the school was almost unthinkable.

The situation today is very different. Parents invest time, energy, and money in their children's schooling. They are often critical of the educational system and teachers as well. Many turn to independent schooling in order to have a voice in the quality of their child's education. A former independent school headmaster once remarked: "The biggest problem now in independent education is the parents."

The issue of parent involvement is especially intense in Waldorf communities. Parents who discover Waldorf Education and choose it for their children often feel a sense of relief and enthusiasm, a sense of "coming home" when their child enters the school. They see the school as a mutually supportive community where parental involvement is encouraged and feel a very strong connection to it. They often make major sacrifices in supporting the school financially and with time and energy. Parents' expectations are high about the school, their role in it, and what their child will experience there. When reality falls short of expectations, they do not usually remain silent. In addition, Waldorf Education controverts mainstream education on many points, a fact that often raises questions and concerns in parents.

The relationships in a Waldorf school of teacher to child and parent, of parent to school, and school to community are important and complex. Siegfried Finser (a founder of the Rudolf Steiner Foundation, an anthroposophical financial institution that arranges loans and grants for Waldorf schools) has remarked: "The

teachers incarnate the child; the parents incarnate the school."

In other words, teachers have the task of educating the child and preparing him or her for life in the contemporary world. The parents make this possible with their support, especially by integrating the school as a cultural institution into the community. Parents and teachers and the school exist in a relationship of interdependence. Parents, without the school, would be busy homeschooling. Teachers, without parents committed to their children having a Waldorf Education, would be involved in another vocation. Parents create the need for the school to exist and provide the teachers with their livelihoods. The teacher embarks on his vocation and develops himself as a teacher in response to the child's need. The resulting relationship continues for many years and deeply affects the lives of the adults involved as well as the development of the child. Waldorf schools have the unique benefits and problems of this interdependent relationship.

Parents as Co-workers with the Teacher

In the time a child spends outside of school—which is by far the greater part of the child's life—parents provide the physical, emotional, and psychological support that the child needs. Also, within the family, parents create a particular social, cultural, and spiritual environment that nourishes and directs the child on the path of life. Waldorf schools embody a distinct way of life that in many aspects is in direct opposition to the mainstream culture. Insofar as parents can incorporate that way of life into the rhythms of the home and reflect the ideals and values of the Waldorf school, they support the work of the school and the healthy development of their child. For example, reciting a blessing and an expression of thanks before a meal, minimizing passive, media-based entertainment (television, videos, and computer games), and maximizing creative, active pastimes (music, crafts, drawing, painting, hiking, nature observation, and the like) will connect out-of-school life



to what the child experiences in the Waldorf school and make the latter seem less different and isolating.

A home life that supports the school's values is important for adolescents as well as for the younger children. Parents whose children are in the upper grades or in a Waldorf high school need to support the work of the school at home just as they did when their children were in the early grades. They need to be aware of and involved in the daily life of their adolescent children. It is not a time to give in to the tempting inner voice that says, "Well, I've gotten them through the difficult early years—now they can pretty much take care of themselves." Teenagers require a different kind of parenting, more subtle and less obvious—but they need parenting. Parents can provide discipline and boundaries, and they can create a moral and healthy atmosphere at home in which teenagers will learn and grow. A rich family life supports the work of the school.

One important job of parents is to balance their children's school involvement with their other activities, religious, social, and athletic. Children who are overscheduled and stressed from too many activities cannot learn well in school. Family life suffers as well.

Parents can help at school through being assistants in the classroom, accompanying the class on outings and trips, and in many other ways. Sometimes parents may bring their own knowledge, skills, and capacities to the children in the classroom. A father who has a construction firm might make a presentation to the class during the fourth-grade block on house-building. A mother who is an accountant might help during the seventh-grade block on business math. The same possibilities

exist in the high school when the students' studies intersect with the parents' particular areas of knowledge or skill. Parents can bring in new craft skills and can arrange class outings and trips, community service, and, for older students, vocational internships. In one school, two mothers amassed a library of 11,000 books; it was the best elementary school library in the region! Thus, both

outside and inside the school, parents can greatly help the teachers and the school in the work of educating the child.

Parents as Creators of Community

Parents can cultivate personal relationships with other parents, with school staff, and with teachers other than their children's class teacher. In doing so, they help create the social fabric of a mutually supportive community based on respect and trust.

The class as a community is very important to children, parents, and teacher alike. The class celebrations and events create an extended family for all. The usually stable class population provides emotional support for children who are experiencing separations and disruptions in the family. The family of the class can be a mainstay in a student's life. The ongoing relationship between parents and teachers is a support both for the adults involved and for the children.

Parents as a Source of Administrative and Financial Support

In many schools, the organization of festivals, fairs, and other social and fund-raising events is done by parents. Parents also usually manage the school store—on a volunteer or on a paid basis. Annual giving and capital fund campaigns depend on the energy and dedication of parents. Some parents serve on the board of trustees of the school or on a particular committee, such as the building committee or personnel committee.

The financial stability of the school is the gift of the parents. In addition to paying tuition and supporting fund drives, they bring professional and life experience in many areas—finance, law, institutional organization, construction, public relations, and so on—in which the faculty probably has little experience. They help the school relate to the world at large in a healthy manner. They make it possible for the ideals of the school to enter society as a healing cultural force.

Parents also are crucial in publicity and outreach for the school. Each is a de facto ambassador of the school. Each time a parent speaks to someone in the community about the school in a positive way, he is greatly helping the school. Each sincere appreciative comment takes on a life of its own and can affect the attitude of many people toward the school. In the same way, each critical or demeaning comment can undermine, far beyond its intent, the school in the eyes of the community. Enthusiastic sponsorship by the parents is the basis for successful enrollment, public relations, and the financial health of the school.

Parents as Students of Waldorf Education

For parents to effectively fulfill any of the above-mentioned roles, it is important that they study and gain a deep understanding of the Waldorf curriculum, the distinctive Waldorf pedagogy, and the view of child development that supports Waldorf Education. This will help them understand, appreciate, and evaluate what the teachers are doing in the classroom or what is going on generally in the school. Often a parent, sophisticated perhaps about mainstream educational approaches, will criticize what is going on in her child's Waldorf classroom without understanding the rationale behind it. Sometimes, of course, a parent's criticism is justified, but an understanding of Waldorf Education will help prevent unnecessary concerns.

In this study of Waldorf Education, the parent has the class teacher as a mentor. The standard

training of a Waldorf class teacher is a two-year, full-time program, or the equivalent. Hence, the trained Waldorf teacher has dedicated much time to the study of Rudolf Steiner's ideas about child development, curriculum, and pedagogy and how they fit into modern educational theory. Also, she has worked hard at developing herself through a meditative practice and through the arts. Ideally, this study, artistic activity, and inner work are an ongoing part of her life.

Also, the teacher has a certain amount of practical experience in the classroom. For some this experience may be decades long, for others just a few years, and for new teachers a matter of months. In any case, the

Subscribe

*to the magazine about Waldorf Education
that offers parents and teachers
information and insights that are both
illuminating and practical.*

Renewal

Waldorf teacher brings to the enterprise of educating a child a rare and remarkable perspective and expertise. It is a perspective and expertise that few parents, regardless of their experience as parents and their sophistication about other approaches to education, are likely to have.

Thus it is appropriate that the teacher, on matters that relate to the Waldorf view of child development and to the curriculum and pedagogy, inform and mentor the parent. This can take place in parent evenings and in one-to-one interactions. The parent should be able to look to the teacher to find out about the philosophy

behind the education, how the school works, how the curriculum meets and supports the child's changing nature, and so on. In her classroom interactions with the child, the teacher may provide models of attitude and behavior toward the child that the parent may find helpful outside of school. The teacher may be able to give help with dysfunctional behaviors of the child that take place within the family life but not in school.

In these interactions, the teacher needs to step out of the role of authority—appropriate with children in the elementary school classroom—and address the parent as a peer, as a fellow student on the path of learning.

Nothing is more deadening to a parent-teacher relationship than a condescending approach on the part of the teacher—"Here is the cosmic truth on this issue. Please be quiet and listen carefully to me."

It is important that the teacher focus on asking the right questions rather than giving answers before the questions have been asked. This means developing a culture of inquiry. Class meetings should begin with the questions being carried at that moment by the parents. Parent-teacher conferences also should begin with a question or questions and should explore various avenues of inquiry before a solution is discussed.

The teacher must be willing to listen openly and respect the parents' ideas and viewpoint. While being faithful to the long-tried principles of Waldorf Education, she must be willing to enlarge her own perspective. The parent is also a necessary mentor for the teacher. At the very least, a mother or father can provide valuable insights into their child's personality, development, and role in the family. Often, parents have many years' experience in raising children, sometimes more than that of a young teacher. The main concern of both teacher and parent is, of course, the healthy development of the child, and they can work cooperatively toward that end.

Renewal

☐ One-year subscription \$12 or ☐ Two-year subscription \$24

Name (please print)

Address

City

State

Zip

Phone Number

E-mail Address

☐ Check Enclosed ☐ Visa ☐ MC ☐ AMEX

Card Number

Exp.

Signature

Thank you! Please mail or fax this form with payment to:

AWSNA/Renewal

3911 Bannister Road · Fair Oaks, CA 95628

phone: (916) 535-7595 · fax: (916) 961-0715

The parent, for his part, can respect the teacher for her training, experience, and commitment to the child and still feel comfortable expressing his own point of view and trusting his own intuition. He should not be afraid to ask any question or raise any issue. He need realize, though, that in the end it is the teacher who must deal with the children in the classroom and do so according to her own insights and judgments. In the same way, the parent must be the final arbiter of what transpires in the home.

The parent-teacher relationship needs to be open, honest, and direct. Each person must feel free to speak his or her mind freely. Opinions and feelings that are not openly expressed, but that find their way to the other person via a third party, are not helpful. They undermine trust. Of particular importance in this relationship is the ability of each person to admit an error or failure of judgment. Teachers and parents are human beings, and as such they are capable of making mistakes. Honest acknowledgment of one's own mistakes and forgiving and forgetting the mistakes of others are essential to every human relationship, including that between parent and teacher.

Schools need to provide learning situations for parents other than that based on the teacher-parent relationship. In a parent-only study group, for example, parents can work with other parents who are also meeting the ideas of Rudolf Steiner for the first time. Lectures and courses taught by Waldorf educators or by experts in Anthroposophy from outside the school community are also helpful. Here the class teacher-parent relationship is put aside, and the parent is simply an adult student working out of a free spiritual interest and striving. Parents can receive learning that relates to their own lives, not just to the education of their children.

Teachers can and should encourage this involvement. But they should do so gently and with the realization that the study of Steiner and Anthroposophy, even as they relate to education, is not for every parent. These activities should be offered without any pressure to attend. Those able to benefit from them will find their way to what they need.

Recently, in many parts of the country, programs in anthroposophical foundation studies have been established. They seem to meet a strong need among parents and are thriving. Parents study Anthroposophy and the principles of Waldorf Education and also experience the transformative effect of the same arts and crafts that their children are doing in school. The opportunity for parents to receive something resembling a Waldorf education deepens their understanding of and support for what is happening in the school's classrooms. It also enriches family life. Quite importantly, it gives the child a model for lifelong learning.

In a Waldorf school, each parent is of course concerned about the welfare and the education of her own child, about her child's finding his true destiny and life path, and developing the capacities and strength to realize that destiny. The teacher is concerned about the child in the same way. Ideally, parent and teacher also are concerned about all children in the class and about all children in the school. And both are concerned about the future of the school and its ability to fulfill its task for future generations of parents and children. They see Waldorf Education in its larger role as a healing force in society and as a positive factor in human evolution. By working together consciously and with sensitivity to the needs and gifts of the other, both parent and teacher can address all these personal and larger-than-personal concerns.

Thus parents have a multifaceted role in a Waldorf school. They are important members of every aspect of the life of the school. In the founding, development, and ultimate success or failure of almost all Waldorf schools, parents have played a critical role. As one parent chair said in her speech at an all-school opening: "Welcome to the Waldorf School! Welcome to the adventure!"

LEONORE RUSSELL *is a trained eurythmist who for many years taught eurythmy at the Waldorf School of Garden City (New York). She also served there as chair of the high school, director of admissions, and teacher of literature. Currently, Leonore consults with Waldorf schools on questions of school and community development. She uses eurythmy in her work with school faculties, boards of trustees, and communities.*



The Beauty of What One Has Made

Woodworking in the Waldorf School

BY GREGORY ALBRIGHT

The Waldorf curriculum has a three-part purpose: to engage the cognitive, sentient, and volitional capacities—thinking, feeling and willing—and thus develop the whole child. Teachers strive to engage these aspects of the children in each lesson. Some subjects, such as art and music, particularly engage the heart or the realm of feeling. Others, such as the traditional three Rs, are more in the head or thinking realm. Woodworking is an essential part of the Waldorf curriculum. Like the other handcraft classes, it particularly engages the child's limbs, the region of volition or will. Woodworking, in helping children to work with their hands and involving them in long-term projects, develops their will forces. While many beautiful and useful objects result from the woodworking classes, the true fruit is the child's capacity to conceive and carry a project to completion.

At the Upper Valley Waldorf School in Quechee, Vermont, children begin woodworking twice a week in the fifth grade. However, the foundations for woodwork begin in kindergarten with their first experiences with wood. In their morning play, the children hammer, drill, and saw. As they approach first-grade readiness, they build and sand a little wagon or boat. In the early grades, children work on projects with their class teacher, making birdhouses, swords, mallets, lanterns, or kites. In third grade, the children learn about carpentry and apply their new understanding of measurement, usually to build a shelter. Classes at our school have built a two-story tower, a little stone house with a truss roof, and a village of debris huts. If the third-grade project has been ambitious, it may extend into the fourth-grade year. On the school campus, one can see tree houses, cold frames, and small outbuildings from these activities. Often fourth graders make wooden shields as an accompaniment to their study of the Norse myths.

Twice-weekly woodworking classes begin in the fifth grade. At the outset, safety rules are laid out clearly and explicitly. The children learn to always cut away from themselves, to keep a safe distance from other children working nearby, to wear goggles, and to keep their tools sharp. They start to learn about the different types of wood and the trees they come from—maple, pine, ash, and others. Over time, they learn each wood's particular qualities—hardness, color, ease of working—and about working with the grain.

In their first projects, the fifth graders start with greenwood—direct from the tree—wood that has not been milled, dried, or cut into boards. Typically, the students are to first carve a simple convex form, such as a mouse. This is an exercise in bringing symmetry and order to something found in nature. We go out into the woods to find a tree whose wood will serve well. Then we bring home branches thick enough from which to carve the little mice. Each child saws off his section of the bough. At last comes the moment when the children each receive a knife with which to carve.

Very soon their persistence may be challenged. Cries like “Oh, my piece is too hard!” or “My knife is not sharp enough!” may be heard.

“Even mountains wear down in time. Keep going. You’ll finish,” the teacher may reply.

The children try to cut so that the nose of the mouse falls right on the pithy, concentric center. They are amused to see how the emerging mice begin to resemble the pine cones that hung from the branches that they cut. This is an opportunity for a meditation on form. The children notice the way the grain moves and see that the knife works one way better than another. They are learning about wood, are learning to see the world in the grain of the wood.

From the convex forms of a mouse or darning eggs, the class moves on to more challenging forms. Often the next project is a large bowl or a candleholder. The bowl starts out as a kiln-dried square block, cut with a machine. This is very different from the fragrant and sticky piece of pine that was part of a freshly cut bough. Now the task is to bring an organic form to the block. In the process of eliminating the squareness and creating both concave and convex surfaces, the children begin to impose their individuality upon the wood block. Each form reveals something of the spirit of each child.

I have my students also make a mallet from the wood of the honey locust. The project takes about twenty-six classroom hours. In completing such a long-term task, the children learn persistence. In an age of ubiquitous instant gratification, in which waiting is equated with unhappiness, such a project is a healing antidote. The children also experience the joy of making something that is useful and beautiful. The item becomes imbued with a meaning and value that something store-bought can seldom possess. The children use their mallets in their later woodworking, usually preferring it to the other mallets that are available.

Rudolf Steiner suggested that the deep study of matter and of material objects leads to the spiritual world as surely as does religious and spiritual practice. “Matter is revealed spirit; spirit, revealed matter,” he said. In woodworking the child focuses on a piece of wood, and this focused work in the shop can, for the children, begin to open a window into the spiritual.

Further projects include a stirring spoon carved from a butternut or mahogany board or from a section of cherry, lilac, or maple cordwood. These woods have different qualities. The teacher may choose a certain wood to suit the temperament of a certain child. A piece of especially hard red birch or walnut may be given to challenge a child particularly able at woodworking.

Finishing a project always involves a dialogue between the student and the teacher. The young woodworker is usually a poor judge of the smoothness of his or her own piece. I have my reading glasses at hand when I know children are close to finishing their projects. Pieces of work close to completion are held up in the sunlight in front of the window and inspected for the slightest scratch. The child may have to use the rough sandpaper again to remove a nick created by the gouge and then sand with the fine sandpaper. This momentary

A student applies the finishing touches to the roof of a structure built by her class.



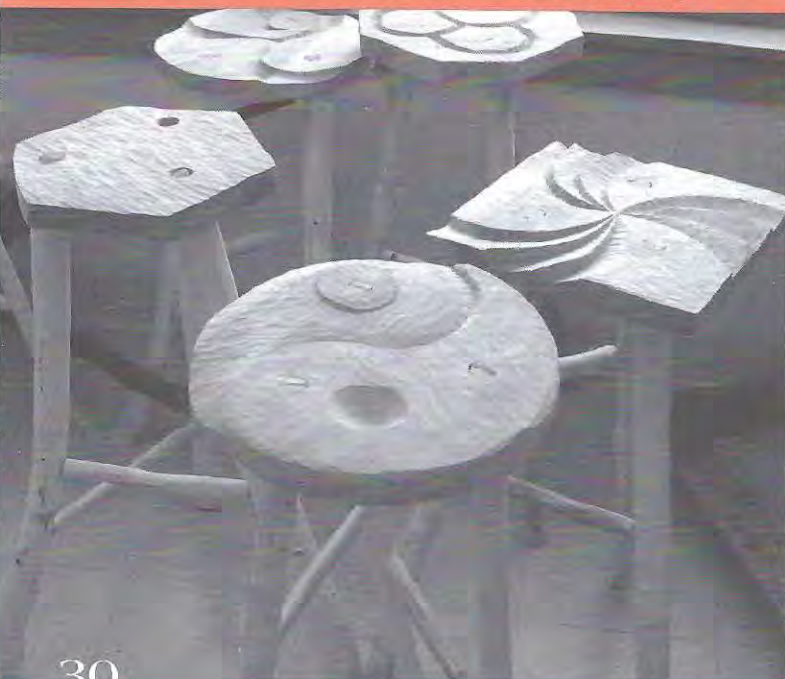


A wooden bowl and spoon carved by a fifth grader.

setback gives the child the experience of pursuing excellence. If this is developed as a habit, it will go far beyond the woodshop. It is satisfying and confidence-building for students to behold their well-made creations. The self-esteem and personal competence that this experience creates carries over to other classes and activities.

One recent seventh-grade class made marionette puppets. Each child made a puppet that reflected his or her body proportions and used a proportional divider to get the right measurements. This exercise related to their main lesson study of physiology. The puppets were rigged, provided with costumes (made in handwork class), and later used in a performance. In grade eight, the students work to make their projects more individual. Objects made have included a toolbox, a stool split from a green log, and a small table.

Wooden stools built and carved by eighth graders.



With each new assignment the students use new tools and techniques. Of these, the carving knife comes first; then come rasps, rifflers, and sandpaper; and then mallets, scrapers, and gouges for the bowls and spoons. The working toys built in the seventh grade require additional tools and techniques. As the older children become skilled in using tools, they are free to use the special tools needed to express their genius: drawknives, scorps, augers, planes, and Japanese pull saws. In the eighth grade, the children study the Industrial Revolution in main lesson and in that year may learn to use a jigsaw or a band saw in wood shop.

In contrast to life one hundred years ago, life today almost entirely lacks the repetitive and rhythmic work that once characterized daily activity. We often consider such activities drudgery and are happy for the tools and services to eliminate them. We want to spare our children such work and as good parents look for ways to make things easier for them. All this convenience has a price, and symptoms of this can often be seen already in the kindergarten. There it is common to see children who cannot muster the will to dress or put on their shoes! We need to look for ways to make things a little harder for our children, to help build their forces in healthy ways. We need to see that they succeed at their tasks, step by step, and don't become discouraged. And we need to ensure that we can offer a balance of head, heart, and hands in the curriculum each week.

All woodworking classes end with a thorough cleanup. Here, too, the children learn to respect and care for the tools and other items they use. Each is returned clean to its proper place. The children sweep the floor clear of sawdust and woodchips and do so with the same care and attention as they use in carving the wood with a knife. In every detail of the work, things are done so that the child's basic life forces, what Rudolf Steiner called the etheric body, are strengthened. This strengthening of the life forces and the activating of the children's will forces improve their capacities in all subjects and activities. The children develop a foundation for initiative and positive action that will serve them throughout their lives.

GREGORY ALBRIGHT *was raising bees in California in 1985 when he discovered Rudolf Steiner's lectures on bees and beekeeping. This led to an interest in Steiner's other work, including Waldorf Education. Greg has a B.F.A. from the San Francisco Art Institute and did his Waldorf teacher training at Antioch University-New England. He has been a class teacher at the Upper Valley Waldorf School in Quechee, Vermont, for ten years. His love for wood and his joy in sharing this love encouraged him to research and to develop the woodworking program at the school. Greg is currently doing research into color and also is teaching the first grade.*

The Gift of Giving

BY SALLY BICKFORD



My daughter, Morgan, and I have been part of the extended community of the Rudolf Steiner School in New York City for nine years. My experiences at the school, as well as my particular destiny, allow me to offer our school and the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America a unique perspective on fund development. I was raised in a family that considers charitable giving and volunteer work a natural aspect of life. I have been blessed to find myself drawn close to the heart of a variety of organizations through making financial resources available—along with advice and trusteeship.

Convinced of the unique value of Waldorf Education, I have come to love this education and the way in which inner wholeness is carried out into the global community by our graduates. Having a strength and security in their thoughts and actions, they are becoming our agents of change, our future thinkers, leaders, and healers. I believe in the education that my daughter is receiving, am grateful for her place in the school, and feel honored to be a part of this dynamic entity. It brings me great personal satisfaction and peace of mind to connect to and belong to something that has such potential to change the world for the better. To that end, I gladly give what means I can and remain a dedicated volunteer and advocate.

Waldorf schools, as independent schools, do not receive state support and must rely on individuals and other external sources to be financially viable. Free gifts, crucial to a school's survival and existence, supplement tuition fees, the major financial source. In every school, a cycle of fund-raising events marks the year's seasons and helps to balance the school's operating budget. Capital fund drives finance new buildings while other campaigns underwrite scholarship funds. Similarly, the Association of Waldorf Schools depends on fund-raising for its work of championing the positive values in Waldorf Education and giving schools advice and help. Through these activities, parents, students, alumni, and teachers all play a role in both the local and the dynamic larger network or global community.

Increasingly, Waldorf schools, even new initiatives and fledgling schools, recognize the importance of carefully planned fund development. Many employ a professional fund-raiser. These development professionals recognize that various people bring different strengths and types of expertise. They find meaningful ways to match enthusiasm and talent with the real needs of the schools. Finding and befriending the major donors is an important part of the development director's work.

Working in partnership with the school development director, I discovered much about the relationship of donor and fund-raiser. I was excited to work for the school in this capacity and to learn that others shared my sentiments and enthusiasm about Waldorf Education. It is clear that even in these difficult economic times, substantial financial resources are close at hand.

There are many significant and rewarding ways that our financial resources can be used to benefit the world around us. Making a donation—giving something to a cause that lives in one's heart—has the potential to elevate and ennoble the human spirit. Regardless of their means, people know that a gift, whatever the size, brings a sense of expansion, helping one to feel more fully alive and part of something bigger than one's self. It is easy to share with others what we feel passionate about. By listening for these awakening passions in others and asking them to contribute to something that seeks to benefit humanity, we can make the act of giving an opportunity for free and joyous participation.

If development professionals approach their constituents inside and outside their communities with a sense that they are indeed sharing a vision and inviting individuals to take part, they greatly improve their chances of success. There exists a harmonious rhythm in the asking and giving. When donors give—and they need to be asked—they also want and need to feel a part of something beyond the donation. Askers need to make their appeal with confidence, graciously accept the gift, and then offer back to the donor a sense of belonging and community. What is happening here is a transformation of wealth, a metamorphosis of the world's riches. Money as a form of energy or spirit can be transformed, renewed, and directed to noble endeavors.

Some people enjoy contributing time and wisdom in the form of volunteer work on fund-raising projects. This is as important as financial assistance and deserves acknowledgment and support from the development personnel. At the New York school, we started with the thought that all the parents and friends of the school are willing, even eager, to help. People like to help and they like to be useful, if they are allowed. They just need to be invited. So, asking is the first step in involving people.

We asked people to host social events, to get involved in building community with us. We believed that if we developed a strong community and shared an accurate view of the financial needs, we would be building a foundation from which to effortlessly ask for money. We informed people about the school and helped them gain a sense of community and shared responsibility for its financial life. We developed easy-to-follow, easy-to-be-a-part-of guidelines for major events. With careful shepherding, the whole school community began to enjoy and benefit from this working together. Best of all, we had and have a lot of fun with each other in the process.

What is critical about building relationships with individuals donating time and money is the concept and practice of inclusivity. The feeling of parents that they are a part of the school, that they belong as much as their children do, is crucial to developing a strong, supportive school community. There can be an information gap in the beginning for newcomers, and they can feel intimidated, but this is the perfect opportunity to reach out and invite new parents to become involved, to be part of the community, and to share in the responsibility for the financial health of the school. Every person is part of making the school a success, and every voice and strength is needed.

Since becoming involved in the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America, I have been excited to learn about the hundreds of schools on our continent and around the world. I see the Association as uniquely able to promote, support, and protect Waldorf Education as a whole by representing its member schools and teacher education institutes. The Association is an increasingly influential voice promoting educational policies that take into account the developmental stages of childhood. These are crucial times for the development of policy in education in North America, and Waldorf Education is ready and able to make its voice heard in that arena.

To me, the amount of human striving it takes from such loving, gifted people to bring this remarkable education to our children is impressive. I am inspired again and again when I connect to this worldwide educational movement that I am a part of, and invite you all to join me in this meaningful work in your school and beyond.

SALLY BICKFORD has chaired the development committee and the board of trustees of the Rudolf Steiner School of New York City. She is currently a member of the board of trustees of AWSNA, holding the position of vice president of development, and is a member of the Donors' Circle. She lives in New York City with her daughter.

The Rudolf Steiner School of New York City



Celebrating Seventy-Five Years of
Waldorf Education in North America

BY LUCY SCHNEIDER

When the Rudolf Steiner School of New York City opened its doors in September 2003, it celebrated its own seventy-fifth anniversary and, with a much wider community, marked seventy-five years of Waldorf Education in North America.

The first Waldorf school was founded shortly after the devastation and chaos of World War I. Emil Molt, a German industrialist, asked Rudolf Steiner to develop a school for the children of the workers in his factory, the Waldorf-Astoria Cigarette Factory, in Stuttgart. On September 7, 1919, the Free Waldorf School opened its doors to 243 children in eight grades. Today, when it takes years of struggle for a Waldorf initiative to mature into a full school, this seems a remarkable feat.

The Rudolf Steiner School in New York City did not emerge from such devastation. Its seeds were slowly cultivated and nurtured by a small group of individuals who boldly traveled to Europe to explore Anthroposophy and the new educational impulse that grew from it. They were musicians, artists, and poets, and certainly not teachers. Rudolf Steiner's vision of the human being entered into them and, inspired to bring this worldview to life in America, they returned to found the New York school.

The future enters into us, in order to transform itself in us, long before it happens.

—Rainer Maria Rilke, *The Journal of My Other Self*

In 1928, in a brownstone in the Murray Hill section of New York City, five teachers and twelve children came together to form the first school in North America. Classes were held during the day in rooms that after school were turned back into a home at night. The twelve students ranged in age from kindergarten through the ninth grade.

The following year the school was incorporated under the name, Rudolph [sic] Steiner School. It would not be until 2003, when the school, in the process of reviewing its bylaws, would discover and correct the misspelling of Rudolf in the articles of incorporation!

From such modest beginnings, the school grew into the thriving and vibrant community it is today, with thirty-seven full-time teachers, six part-time teachers, five assistants, and an administrative staff of eighteen, working to support an enrollment of 337 students.

The early years were not an easy time of steady, incremental growth. Rather, affected by the Depression and World War II, the school went through years of slow consolidation and inner growth. The school remained an elementary school, and classes

frequently had to be combined. The faculty in those years was comprised of mature and experienced teachers and a new generation of young teachers, a balance as essential today as it was then. Their enthusiasm, as well as their determination and perseverance, must have been remarkable.

The school moved twice before settling, in 1944, into its present home—an elegant townhouse on East 79th Street, right next to Central Park and just around the corner from the Metropolitan Museum of Art. That same year, faculty joined the school who would guide it through the next three decades. Enrollment grew rapidly in the following decade but then fell drastically. At that time, faculty chair Henry Barnes, discussing with his colleagues the gravity of the situation, offered those who might wish to seek a more secure situation a graceful opportunity to do so. Not one chose to leave.

From this crisis arose a new vision of the future, one that continues to shape the school today. Reviewing the past and reflecting on what it truly means to be a faculty-administered school led the school to reconstituting the board of trustees and rewriting the bylaws.

Expressing the aspirations of the faculty, Henry Barnes said, "It's not that we want a big school in Manhattan; we want a good school."

Another outcome of this crisis was exactly the opposite of what one might imagine. Rather than taking a conservative posture and consolidating, the school made a decision to expand. The school came to see that, in the competitive educational milieu of New York City, the lack of a high school was a disadvantage. The parents who were concerned about placing their children in private secondary schools began to seek other schools as early as sixth grade in order to ensure places for their children. Francis Edmunds, a leader of Anthroposophy and Waldorf Education in England, advised the school during these years. Edmunds firmly supported the need for a high school in order to reduce attrition and also to give parents confidence that what was begun in the elementary school years would be brought to fruition in the high school years.



A room on the top floor of the 79th Street building was used by the first class to continue on past the eighth grade, and in 1959 this group became the first graduating high school class. By that time, there were seventy-three students in the high school, and another building just a block away had been purchased for them. Total enrollment in the school was close to 300.

Among the teachers who moved from the elementary to the high school were Henry Barnes, Christy Barnes, Amos Franceschelli, and Nanette Grimm. These gifted teachers and those who soon joined them would over the years shape a high school curriculum that has become the standard for Waldorf high schools all over North America. That they were all available at the same time was nothing short of a miracle.

During the 1950s the school community of faculty, students, and families grew. Many initiatives, including faculty study groups and in-house teacher education and mentorship, began and were made the responsibility of the experienced faculty. The teacher training institutes, to which today all Waldorf schools look, did not yet then play a significant role. Guidelines for study, self-evaluation, mentorship, and evaluation by advisors both within the school and from other schools were formed. These processes are still in use, and they are evaluated by the faculty every year. The school strives to maintain a strong and healthy environment in which both students and faculty can grow. Many of the faculty who joined the school during these years went on to start other Waldorf schools and other anthroposophical initiatives.

Another initiative—parent education—began by Patricia Livingston, became an essential part of the faculty's responsibility. Parent evenings and study groups were organized to help parents develop a deeper understanding of Waldorf Education. Today, a parent education committee, comprised of parents and faculty, takes responsibility

for seeing that a vital program is available to parents. A separate booklet is enclosed in the summer mailings describing the workshops, lectures, and study groups that are scheduled throughout the year.

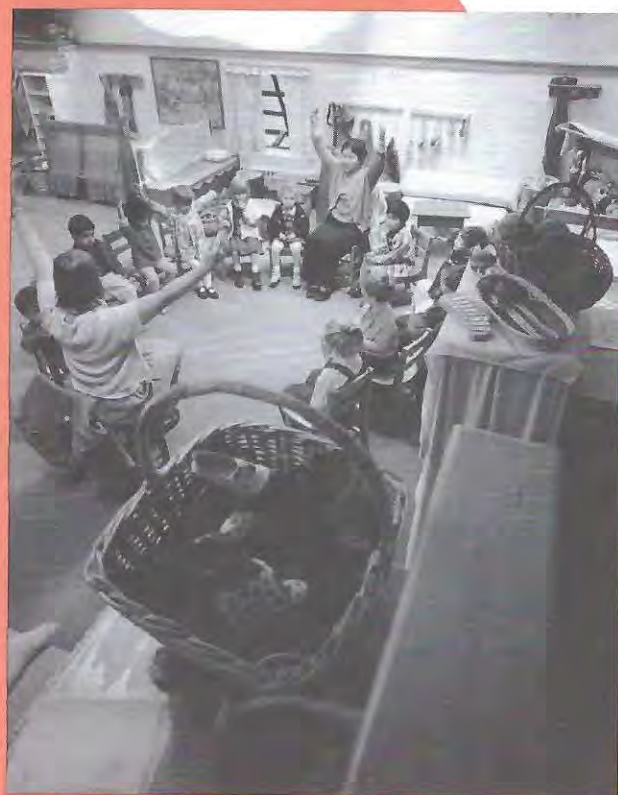
During these years, parent involvement in the school community grew stronger in many areas. Parent volunteers worked endless hours to create the annual fall fair, special events, and other fund-raising activities. Parents offered their expertise as guest teachers in the classroom. In 1953, the parents produced the first *Rudolf Steiner School Newsletter*, a publication prepared by parents for the parents. Parents also became involved in supporting the work of the admissions office. These impulses initiated by parents all continue to play a vital role in the school. For example, today a parent enrollment committee works with the admissions office to support open houses, to attend events in the wider New York City independent school community, and to advise on the school's admissions materials.



Chaos often breeds life, where order often breeds habit.
—Henry James, *The Education of Henry James*

In the 1980s, in part because of demographic and economic changes in New York, the school experienced declining enrollment, greater demands for tuition assistance, and increased debt. By 1989, it was on the verge of bankruptcy. Again, as in the '50s, the school had to reevaluate every aspect of its work, to reexamine its governance and what it means to be a faculty-administered school. Some thought the problems stemmed from poor governance, while others thought they stemmed from an inability to communicate our message to the wider community. There were as many reasons given for the crisis as there were individuals to express them.

At community meetings, individuals were



wrongly blamed, it was recommended that the board of trustees resign, and the college of teachers (then called the faculty council) was asked to disband.

Fortunately, the board of trustees did not resign and the faculty council did not disband. Rather, they came together with several younger parents who were ready to seek a solution and bring the school into the future. These new parents recognized that while external problems were real, there were internal and systemic issues that needed to be addressed. They were able to shed light on the difficulties without blaming and while maintaining a deep respect for the idea of a faculty-administered school. A five-year strategic plan was drawn up.

There was no question that the school had to get its house in order. The habits of the '70s that had carried over into the '80s gave way to action and change. The faculty council, at Michaelmas, rededicated itself to its responsibility for the destiny of the school and, with the "retired" but wise and vital Henry Barnes as guest, changed the name from faculty council to college of teachers. Just as Saul had been transformed before he changed his name to Paul, so this group of colleagues had reexamined their relationship to this particular Waldorf school before changing their name. It was an ideal that needed to become a reality.

On a more outward, visible level, changes were also made. Committees, empowered to do mandated tasks, were formed to deal with every aspect in the life of the school. A steering committee, not unlike an executive committee of the board, was formed to supervise the administration of the school. Comprised of parents, trustees, and members of the college of teachers, this committee gives the parents an active voice in the decision-making process. In the critical summer of 1990 it met at least once a week. Today it is mandated to meet at least once a month.



The parent association of the school was strengthened, and today it serves as a vital link between the parents and the rest of the school community. A subcommittee of the parent association, the parent council, is a group of elected parents who serve as a liaison between the parents and the college of teachers and the board of trustees. It functions, in a sense, as an executive committee of the parent association. The members discuss issues relevant to the day-to-day life of the community. The chair of the parent council serves on the board of trustees.

Over time, the school expanded its administrative staff to ensure the efficient handling of daily operations. It was no longer possible to assume that full-time teachers could take on the tasks of running a school in New York City without a strong administrative staff. Today the school has two admissions officers, a school administrator, a business manager, and a director of development. In addition, the upper school admissions officer is the college guidance counselor.

Not incidentally and perhaps most heartening to note, throughout these years of anxiety about the future of the school, the parents never questioned Waldorf pedagogy, and they stayed. There were concerns, but there were procedures in place to address them.

In recent years, many new programs have been put in place: an after-school program; June days for younger children; and Summer Interlude, a music program for older children. Elective courses, previously available only to eleventh and twelfth graders, were opened to ninth and tenth graders. Community service became a requirement for all high school students, and all seniors do an internship. The school introduced the use of computers in grades seven through twelve, and the faculty continues to explore the role of technology in our program.

In 1990 the Rudolf Steiner School of New York City made an effort to embrace the wider community of independent schools in New York City and in New York State. The school joined the New York State Association of Independent Schools and just last year completed its

second decennial accreditation with that organization. This most recent evaluation of the school was done in cooperation with the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America, which also gave its full accreditation.



The school also became a member of the Guild of Independent Schools of Greater New York and the Independent Schools Admissions Association of Greater New York. Just as the school has benefited from its long-term association with AWSNA, it has been enriched by its association with these other organizations and by having the opportunity to develop relationships and engage in dialogue with peers beyond the circle of Waldorf educators.

The school looks to the future with a sense that its house is in order, but with an awareness that the danger of complacency and habit is real. Many of the goals of the first strategic plan have been substantially, if not completely, met. A remedial program is in place. The New York Steiner School Foundation has been formed to secure an endowment for the school. Faculty salaries have been increased to levels that are generally competitive with the current market in New York City, and the fund for faculty development has been increased significantly. A second strategic plan was announced in September 2002.

While for a time the school considered relocating so that both lower and upper schools could be in one building, the immediate goal is to maintain and improve the two beautiful current buildings. The school is preparing for a capital campaign to build an endowment to ensure the future of Waldorf Education in New York City in the twenty-first century.

For the past decade, the school has been experiencing the tension that lies between the polarities of chaos and order. And it is in the tension between polarities that the potential exists for bringing the future into the present and transforming it within ourselves, so that it can become a reality. We are grateful for our past, mindful of our responsibilities for the future, and eager to make the present—the seventy-fifth year of Waldorf Education in North America—exciting and productive.

LUCY SCHNEIDER is the faculty chair of the Rudolf Steiner School of New York City. She adds a special note: It is impossible to name all of the individuals who are a part of the biography of our school or all of the initiatives that began here or elsewhere because of the dedication and inspiration of those who were at one time among us. This year, in honor of the seventy-fifth anniversary, the school will publish an archival history, edited by Jann Gates (high school history teacher, college guidance counselor, and parent of an alumna) and parent Gretchen Weir. This comprehensive volume will contain reflective essays on the history of the school as well as brief biographies of the many individuals and families who helped to shape the Rudolf Steiner School of New York City. The author is grateful to Jann Gates, whose research for this volume provided the basis of much of the information in this article, and also to Henry Barnes, who contributed certain historical insights.

Book Review

Rudolf Steiner College Press
Fair Oaks, Calif., 2002
370 pages • \$26.95

Education As Preventive Medicine A Salutogenic Approach

BY MICHAELA GLÖCKLER, M.D.

REVIEWED BY RONALD E. KOETZSCH

In recent years, a new paradigm in medicine has been emerging. Traditional allopathic medicine defines health as the absence of disease and focuses on finding medicines and procedures that remove pathological symptoms. In contrast, the new salutogenic model (from the Latin, meaning “the source of health”) focuses on health and on the factors that promote it. It is a preventive approach that tries to create a healthy condition that will resist disease.



Education as Preventive Medicine
A Salutogenic Approach

Rudolf Steiner, in founding Waldorf Education, conceived of education as salutogenic, as promoting lifelong health. For the growing child, every influence and experience affects the developing physical and psychic organism. Proper upbringing and education can lay the basis for physical and mental health that will

last a lifetime. Every aspect of Waldorf Education—for example, the content of the curriculum, the emphasis on age-appropriate learning and activities, the methods of teaching, the daily and weekly schedule—is meant to promote the health of the child and to prepare him for healthy and productive life. For Steiner, a central aim of education is to establish the health of the child.

So important was this therapeutic function of education for Steiner that, two years after the founding of the first Waldorf school in Stuttgart, he recommended that the school engage a school physician. Soon a young doctor, Eugen Kolisko, took up this work, practicing the anthroposophically extended medicine that Steiner was developing at the time. This salutogenic approach employs homeopathic and natural remedies, plus artistic and other therapeutic activities to build up immune resistance and, if an illness has arisen, to enable the patient to overcome it. Today, many Waldorf schools in Europe and a handful in North America enjoy the services of an anthroposophical school physician.

In *Education as Preventive Medicine*, Michaela Glöckler, formerly a physician at a Waldorf school in Germany and now head of the Medical Section at the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland, has created a valuable resource for doctors, teachers, and parents. Dr. Glöckler draws from the lectures and writing of Rudolf Steiner; from current medical research, from the writings of other Waldorf educators and physicians, and from her own vast experience. She presents much fascinating and practical information about education, health, and the relationship between the two.

Among the many factors discussed that promote health in children—both in the moment and over the long term—are:

- **observance of daily, weekly, monthly, and annual rhythms in the life of the school and of the child**

Dr. Glöckler cites the importance of the seven-day cycle and argues for a six-day school week (common in Europe), since with one day of rest it provides a seven-day rhythm.

- **proper diet**

Steiner emphasized the importance of foods grown according to biodynamic methods.

- **regular involvement in the arts—including eurythmy, music, painting, drawing, speech, drama, and beeswax and clay modeling**

Each of these arts puts the child in contact with cosmic laws that promote healthy development and functioning.

- **humor in the classroom**

Teachers in their teaching should make their students laugh and also arouse in them inner feelings of empathy and compassion. Rudolf Steiner said, “It is a poor teacher who instructs for two hours and doesn’t make the children laugh.”

- **special dexterity and coordination exercises and, for younger children, exercises in “body geography”**

Also for younger children, these may include drawing inward- and outward-moving spirals, and drawing circles and other geometric forms using a pencil held between the large and second toes.

- **learning to count starting with the whole**

The children can learn to count by starting with a pile of apples, for example, and removing them one by one, rather than by starting with one apple and adding others to it. According to Steiner, the former method encourages thoughtfulness and generosity and the latter acquisitiveness.

- **teaching subjects when the children are ready for them**

History, for example, should be introduced only after the age of nine. Prior to that, the children are not really able to comprehend and internalize the subject.

- **homework assignments that arouse the students' interest and enthusiasm**

Ideally, homework should be done happily and voluntarily.

- **teaching left-handers to write with their right hand**

While Steiner indicates that it is important that left-handers learn to write with the right hand, they may do artistic, athletic, and other activities with the left hand.

- **reserving soccer as an activity for children until after they have reached puberty**

The sport promotes an aggressiveness, egotism, and competitiveness that is inappropriate for younger children.

- **good human relationships characterized by love, honesty, and respect for the autonomy of all involved**

A child who has been deprived in other areas can, with the help of loving relationships, still thrive and develop properly.

This is a book that one can read through but also keep on hand to dip into and refer to again and again. It contains countless little gems. A few, such as the following, remind us that some things have not changed much since Steiner's time.

In a lecture in 1921 entitled "Education for Adolescents," he observed:

We must prevent girls in their teens from becoming superficial, mere spurious devotees of beauty. We must prevent teenage boys from developing into young hooligans.

(Cited in *Education as Preventive Medicine*, p. 197)

Fortunately, Rudolf Steiner gave hints on how these two challenges can be met. Girls should be inspired to find pleasure in the good and should be exposed to spiritual ideas in a way that appeals to their aesthetic sense. Boys should be assured that with the proper effort they will grow into "fine, strong" fellows and should be roused to a sense that they are permeated by the divine.

Books in Brief

In Search of Ethical Leadership, continued

- an underlying materialistic worldview that puts value on instant gratification and on the acquisition of personal wealth, status, and power.

Finser calls for leaders who have imagination, problem-solving ability, compassion not only for other human beings but for the entire environment as well, leaders who are self-aware, active servants of the common good, willing to sacrifice their own welfare for the good of others. In addition, he cites factors that will, he asserts, nurture such leaders. Not surprisingly, many of these practices and values are present in Waldorf Education and Anthroposophy. They include:

- a beautiful and orderly school environment that nourishes the soul of the child and also teaches care and consideration
- an education that develops the capacities of imagination, creativity, moral conscience, clarity and independence of thinking, compassion, the ability to listen, and the will to improve the world
- an education that emphasizes the arts, the acquisition of practical skills, work in nature, and social service, as well as intellectual development
- colleges that include four hours of practical physical work and/or community service a day for all students, regardless of their economic situation
- the training and mentoring of young people by experienced, mature leaders
- training in making values explicit and in making conscious decisions at moments of moral choice
- an individual, inner, meditative discipline that furthers the development of imagination, intuition, conscience, and compassion.

Torin Finser has much to offer, both theoretical and practical, to the current discussion on how to deal with the challenges faced at every level of society. We can hope that some of what he brings is given serious consideration and taken up in practice.

Imagining a Balance

One Mother's Experience of the Differences between Montessori and Waldorf Education

BY CAROLINA RANDOLPH STEUP



Waldorf Education was founded by Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925) in Germany just after World War I. Montessori education was developed by Maria Montessori (1870–1952) also in the early decades of the last century, as a result of her work with disadvantaged children in Italy. Today Waldorf and Montessori are perhaps the two best-known and widespread of the alternative educational approaches. For that reason, they are often—by the poorly informed—confused one for the other, and also often compared with each other.

The two approaches are quite different, even perhaps opposite. Montessori emphasizes early intellectual development and the preschool acquisition of reading and math skills. Waldorf tries to keep the young child in the kingdom of childhood—the world of play, fantasy, and imagination—and places strong emphasis on the arts and handcrafts.

In choosing to send our child to a Waldorf or a Montessori school, in choosing to become a Waldorf or

Montessori teacher, each of us expresses a preference for one over the other. Assuming that our decision is a serious and informed one, we are saying to the approach that we have not chosen, "I respect and appreciate what you are doing but prefer another approach for myself and my child."

The writer of this article has had experience of both Montessori and Waldorf and prefers—for reasons she makes quite clear—the Waldorf approach. We publish this account of her experiences and conclusions not from a desire to criticize or discredit Montessori but to make clear the differences that exist between it and Waldorf Education.

We invite those who have had different (or similar) experiences to share them with us for possible publication.
R.E.K.

In her article, "Montessori and Steiner: A Pattern of Reverse Symmetries,"* Dee Joy Coulter argues that Rudolf Steiner and Maria Montessori formed their respective philosophies in direct response to the societies and eras in which they lived. Thus she writes,

Steiner, a male in a masculine country at the end of a very masculine act of war, was asked to instill the feminine principle of honoring the basic goodness and inner wisdom of the child by reintroducing the arts and reawakening the heart forces.

Montessori, in contrast, was to bring the masculine service of enculturation to the children of her already art-laden, "feminine" country . . . building up skillful means in them so that they could take their place in the society.

Steiner and Montessori each attempted to bring balance to the children, to provide them with an education that, in essence, ran counter to the attitudes that permeated their respective societies.

Given that providing this balance for our children is an obligation with which Coulter charges us all,

it is hard for me to accept her conclusion that Montessori and Waldorf have equally beneficial roles in modern America. My experience has shown just the opposite. Montessori education is aligned with and reinforces our fast-paced, achievement-based society. It is Waldorf Education that, focusing on bringing the spirit into education, in fact provides the necessary counterweight.

My elder daughter, Madeleine, toddled off to a Montessori preschool/kindergarten at age two and a half and blissfully "worked" her way through four years there. Her sister Louisa started at Montessori when she was three. Within six months, she was hiding under a table when it was time to go to school. We took the hint and let her stay home. One day, not long after her release, her godmother stopped by and commented on the cleanliness of my white walls. "Louisa washes them," I said. "It's one of her favorite things to do." Louisa's godmother slapped hand to forehead. "Of course!" she said. "The child should go to the Waldorf school!"

Louisa did go to the local Waldorf preschool/kindergarten and loved it. She happily played her way through another three years, leaving only when she had crossed the rainbow bridge and could no longer stay.

My two daughters are about as different as peas and giraffes. Madeleine is emotionally tempestuous, quicksilver active, and achievement driven. She loves to draw and to write but seems uncomfortable playing with dolls or entering into other overtly imaginative play. Extremely verbal, she started reading at four and has never stopped.

Louisa moves at her own stately pace—somewhat slower than a snail's—and is remarkably even-tempered and peaceful. She began speaking late and with poor pronunciation, and even now her speech can be difficult to understand. She learned to read at four, but with little motivation, and at five declared it to be a waste of time. Occasionally she reads, but mostly she is involved in a world of her own making—a realm where dolls and stuffed animals,

Steiner and Montessori each attempted to bring balance to the children, to provide them with an education that, in essence, ran counter to the attitudes that permeated their respective societies.

and even she herself, have several different names and personalities.

My daughters' differences in temperament made it easy for me to rationalize their different preferences in schools. Madeleine was happy at Montessori because she could move quickly from one activity to the next, now learning the continents, now parsing out simple sentences, now doing mathematics drills. Dreamy Louisa was much happier polishing brass and baking bread than learning to multiply. Naturally one school couldn't fit the needs of them both. I congratulated myself on finding the right school for each of them, said a prayer of thanks for having both options available to us, and let it go at that. All was well.

I might have been able to stay in this state of ignorant bliss if life had not stepped in and rerouted me. But Madeleine graduated from Montessori and needed an elementary school to attend. There were not many options: I had large public schools or small Catholic schools to choose from. There was no Montessori or Waldorf school, or anything even remotely alternative.

After much waffling and whining, I settled on a small Catholic school with multigrade classrooms, figuring it could best handle her needs. Madeleine was settled. Then came dilemma number two: Should I make life easier for myself and move Louisa from Waldorf to the Catholic school for her kindergarten year? Common sense said yes, unless I wanted to spend all day in the car. The Waldorf teacher said no, and promptly subjected me to an avalanche of books and articles on why Waldorf Education was important for young children.

This was my first brush with Rudolf Steiner, Anthroposophy, and the fundamentals of Waldorf Education. Until that point, since my girls were both quite content, I hadn't troubled myself with educational philosophy. As I read, however, I found myself confused. How was I going to reconcile the Waldorf principle of protecting the wonderful fairy bubble of childhood, a principle that I instinctively and wholeheartedly embraced, with the fact that my older

daughter, whose fairy bubble had been an early casualty, seemed to be thriving? I couldn't answer the question.

I read more. I attended parent meetings at the Waldorf school. I spoke to Louisa's teacher. Everything I read, everything I heard made me more convinced that the Waldorf way was clearly the best for my children, and, yet, there was Madeleine sitting in a corner reading and grinning. I gave up trying to understand, consigned myself to a life in the car, and kept Louisa at the Waldorf kindergarten.

She flourished, as expected. Madeleine, in her new school, did not. Far ahead of her fellow first graders academically, she soon left the second graders behind as well. By Christmas, her teacher consulted with us about moving her into third grade. She shone; she was brilliant; she was her teacher's dream.

At home, she was a nightmare, beset by temper tantrums, hysterical weeping, and insomnia. The only time she was calm was when she was reading, which she did obsessively and compulsively. The counselor we took her to diagnosed school anxiety and suggested an Independent Education Plan, which would effectively take her out of the classroom entirely.

Finally, the ideas I had absorbed from my reading of Waldorf theory kicked in, and we removed Madeleine from both the school and the counselor. It seemed clear to me that she was suffering, not from school anxiety, but from a complete lack of balance in her life. Her academic drive, encouraged and nourished by her Montessori teachers, had completely distanced her from her peers, who treated her more as an interesting curiosity than as a friend. The atrophy of her imagination and faculties for play had only exacerbated her isolation. What she needed was to relearn how to be a child.

Here Rudolf Steiner's notion of "reintroducing the arts and reawakening the heart forces" came in. Since we had taken Madeleine out of school and were homeschooling, we went back to the Waldorf basics. We derived the letters of the alphabet from fairy

I congratulated myself on finding the right school for each of my daughters, said a prayer of thanks for having both options available to us, and let it go at that. All was well.

I might have been able to stay in this state of ignorant bliss if life had not stepped in and rerouted me.

tales, studied the qualities of the numbers 1 through 10, and introduced the four processes of math through gnome stories. I bought her a doll, taught her to knit, and painted with her as often as we could. Twice a week she went with Louisa to the Waldorf school, where she sewed and baked and, yes, played. After a month, she had color in her cheeks again and her insomnia was basically gone. By the end of summer, she was once again fairly happy and healthy. And now after eighteen months of an education based on using her head, her heart, and her hands, rather than just her head, her imagination has begun to flourish.

My point is *not* that her Montessori preschool education caused Madeleine's breakdown, for obviously other factors came into play as well. Perhaps a larger elementary school would have been able to offer her more balancing activities. Perhaps a more experienced teacher would have known how to challenge her without isolating her. Perhaps more experienced parents would have seen the warning signs earlier and known what they meant. Perhaps a different child would have been able to bend with the breeze, instead of snapping.

Regardless—the important lesson to be learned here was that surrounding Madeleine with rhythm, imagination, and beauty allowed her to heal. I could no longer dismiss Waldorf schools as unsuitable for academically driven children; in fact, it seemed as though they might be the most suitable of all.

Madeleine's difficulties are not, unfortunately, unique. I have been astonished at how many mothers, on hearing her story, say to me, "Oh yes, I noticed the same thing about my child. When he gets home from school he's unbearable."

These mothers invariably continue by attributing the behavior to overtiredness and boredom, but apparently they see nothing wrong with their children coming home every afternoon worn out and spiritually drained. And the children—instead of spending the afternoon and evening relaxing—typically are engaged in a bewildering after-school parade of music, dance, sports, and religious activities. Children today, from elementary school through high school, rarely

have a block of time when they can sit back and just relax.

The lives of our children, of course, only imitate the lives of their parents and teachers. We adults suffer the same deprivation and accept it as normal. We place more and more emphasis on achievements and possessions, on what we can do and what we can get. As a result, we have no time, or energy, to sit and be quiet, to daydream, to play, to replenish our souls and nourish our spirits. Gradually these things have become less important than having a big car and nice house, or belonging to a new organization. No wonder the Montessori method of guiding children from one type of work to another with no "wasted" time in between appeals to us. It duplicates precisely what we do in our own lives.

Coulter writes that Montessori's educational methods were designed to "diminish the excessive imaginative life of children who used that realm as an escape." Few, I think, would argue that today's children suffer from an excess of imagination, just as few would claim that ours is a particularly art-laden society. Rather, it seems that present-day North America has much more in common

with the Central European culture that called forth Steiner's Waldorf school.

If we want balance in our lives, we should follow his lead and "rekindle" our imaginations.

REFERENCE

*Coulter, Dee Joy. "Montessori and Steiner: A Pattern of Reverse Symmetries." *Holistic Education Review*, September 2002. <http://oakmeadow.com/resources/articles/coulter.htm>

CAROLINA RANDOLPH STEUP
lives with her family in St. Cloud, Minnesota, where she attempts to find the balance it's so easy to write about. Though not short on imagination, she does tend to forget to allow space in life for just sitting and being. She credits her husband and daughters for patiently teaching her—in a myriad of ways—the necessity of slowing down and regrets that she is not a quicker learner.

The important lesson to be learned here was that surrounding Madeleine with rhythm, imagination, and beauty allowed her to heal. I could no longer dismiss Waldorf schools as unsuitable for academically driven children; in fact, it seemed as though they might be the most suitable of all.

A Review of Two Books

REVIEWED BY
RONALD E. KOETZSCH

Developmental Dynamics in Humans and Other Primates Discovering Evolutionary Principles through Comparative Morphology

BY JOS VERHULST

Adonis Press • Ghent, New York, 2003 • 412 pages • \$39.95

Darwin's theory of evolution has been a primary shaper of the modern secular, materialistic consciousness. It holds that the human being is the end product of an evolutionary process based on impersonal chance, genetic mutation, and the survival of the fittest. The human being, rather than being the crown of creation, formed in the image of the Creator, is the johnny-come-lately offspring of the primates—the gorillas, chimpanzees, and baboons. Most of us have been so indoctrinated into the scientific and political correctness of this theory that we can hardly imagine an alternative, other than a literalistic Bible-based Creationism—"This is day six, so that must be a human being."

Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925), the founder of Waldorf Education, himself a trained scientist, offered an alternative view. All animal forms, he said, are based on a cosmic human archetype and are divergences from this archetype, usually emphasizing one or another of its characteristics. What the fossil record reveals is the gradual development, driven by this cosmic human archetype—by the human spirit—toward the manifestation of the full human being in physical form:

When our earth came into existence, man was a purely spiritual being; he began his career by building for himself the simplest of bodies. The whole ladder of living creatures represents the outgrown stages through which he has developed his bodily structure to its present stage of perfection.

(Rudolf Steiner, Lecture, October 5, 1905)

Recently, two books have been published that deal with evolution and this dissident viewpoint. One is by Martyn Rawson, a longtime leading Waldorf educator in Great Britain. In *The Spirit in Evolution*, Rawson explicitly takes Rudolf Steiner's teachings about the origin and nature of the human being as his basis. He then looks at and evaluates current mainstream evolutionary theory in the light of Steiner's view. Rawson's basic assumption throughout is that the human spirit, both collective and individual, is primary and preexistent, and the process of evolution is the unfolding in the manifest physical world of the striving and aspiration of this spirit.

The result is an engaging and accessible presentation of Steiner's view of the human being and of evolution, plus an incisive survey of the latest discoveries and theories in the scientific world. There are fascinating sections dealing with, for example, explanations of the process by which human beings came to be bipedal (walking upright on two legs); the relationship of different methods of making stone tools to different stages of the evolution of consciousness; and the development of language. Chapter 7, "The Ancients," gives a helpful overview of the current hominid fossil record. Chapter 8 is a survey of current knowledge regarding the last 100,000 years of development and of explanations regarding the emergence of modern human beings. A glossary at the end of the book explains important technical terms.

This book is meant for the lay reader with an interest in human evolution and an openness to understanding it in terms of human spirituality.

The Spirit in Human Evolution

BY MARTYN RAWSON

AWSNA Publications • Fair Oaks, Calif., 2003 • 318 pages • \$22.00

In *Developmental Dynamics in Humans and Other Primates*, Belgian scientist and anthroposophist Jos Verhulst presents and, in the light of current knowledge, elaborates upon the work of Louis Bolk. Bolk (1866–1930) was a professor of anatomy at the University of Amsterdam who dealt with the question of human origins and evolution. Working independently of Steiner, he rejected the Darwinian hypothesis and asserted that there was an intrinsic driving force behind the evolutionary process that led toward the development of the human form.

In their early stages, the embryos of human beings, mammals, and birds are almost identical. At certain points in their development, the nonhuman embryos, of an eagle or a lion, for example, diverge from the human pattern and go their own way. Bolk observed that the distinctive human form is created in part by a process of fetalization or retardation, that is, the retention of certain characteristics of the embryo, for example, the rounded head and lack of body hair.

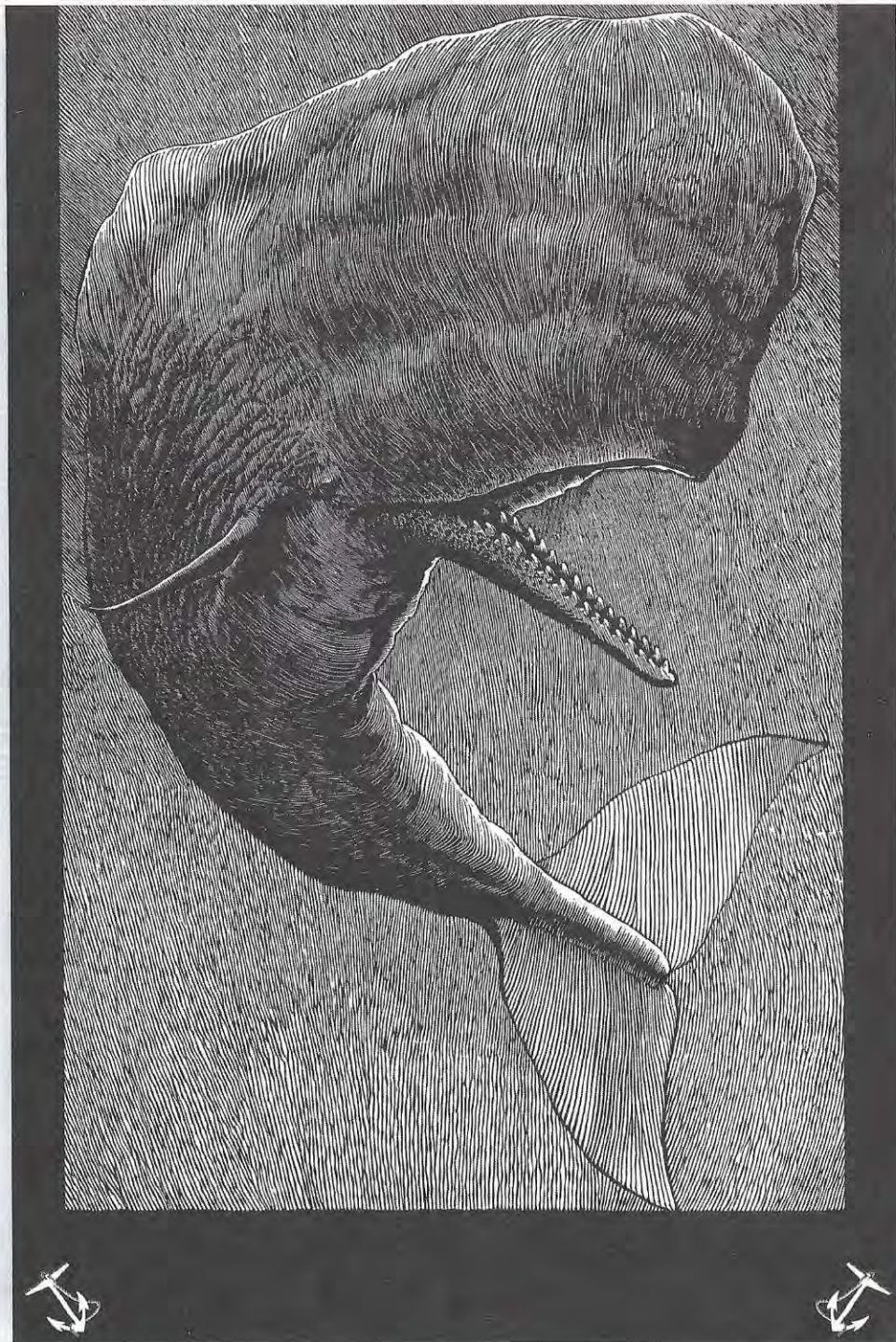
Striking photographs in the book show that for some primates, such as the chimpanzee, this divergence occurs largely after birth. The chimpanzee fetus has a round cranium, flat face, and its hair is restricted to its head. At birth, it much resembles a newborn human baby. Within a few months, however, the chimpanzee has taken its own developmental path and has developed a flattened skull, protruding jaw, and a cover of body hair.

Verhulst adds to this the concept of hypermorphosis, first put forth by Steiner. This holds that the distinctive human form is also the result of the further development of certain aspects of the embryo, such as the forebrain, the larynx, and the leg and heel. These developments give us our ability to think, to speak, and to walk upright—capacities that make the human being unique and "human."

For Verhulst and for Bolk, as for Steiner, the human archetype, gradually manifesting in the physical forms of life, is the driving force in evolution. It is the central trunk in the evolutionary tree from which have sprung all the various forms of animal life.

Developmental Dynamics is a technical and challenging work. Every part of the human anatomy is included as Verhulst examines changes in the rates and timing of development as the source of our evolutionary heritage. This book will be a delight to the scientist and specialist, but a challenge, albeit a well-illustrated one, to the lay reader.

Nevertheless, its central message, much the same as that of *The Spirit in Evolution*, is an important and inspiring one—that there are scientifically respectable ways other than Darwinism to explain the fossil record and the origin of the human being. We do not have to think of ourselves as a little higher than the apes. We may dare to think of ourselves rather as a little lower than the angels.



The Great White Whale in the Ninth-Grade Classroom

Teaching *Moby-Dick* to Adolescents

BY JOHN WULSIN

John Wulsin here describes, with contagious enthusiasm, how Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* is taught in the ninth grade at the Green Meadow Waldorf School in Spring Valley, New York. It should be noted, however, that some Waldorf high school English teachers believe that the novel should be taught in a later grade, the twelfth, for example. This question often engenders lively discussion among Waldorf high school English teachers.

The edition of *Moby-Dick* that John uses with his students is a reprint of a magnificent, hand set, beautifully illustrated edition that was published first in 1979 by Arion Press. Its remarkable woodcuts by Barry Moser (some of which are reproduced here, with the permission of Arion Press) depict whales, whaling vessels, the tools and stages of the whaling process, whaling ports, and seascapes. None of the central human characters in the novel is portrayed, however, so that the readers are free to create their own imaginations of Ahab, Ishmael, Starbuck, and the others. The reprint edition is available through the University of California Press at www.ucpress.edu.

R. E. K.

Moby-Dick for ninth graders? In a Waldorf school? Why rush the students into intellectuality? Why waste such profound wisdom on ninth graders? Save it for when their thinking can do the novel justice!

These are valid objections. Yet still we Waldorf high school English teachers do teach Herman Melville's great tale of the sea to freshmen.

It was Christy Barnes, a gifted poet, a speech artist, and for many years the English teacher in the high school of the Rudolf Steiner School in New York City, who introduced Herman Melville and his great novel to the Waldorf secondary school curriculum. Back in the 1960s, Christy was concerned about the low level of vocabulary of her ninth graders. She decided to expand their consciousness through language, through Melville's language in *Moby-Dick*. She knew her students were not ready for philosophy but that they were—as Rudolf Steiner had suggested—ready for adventure, and she taught the book as a great adventure tale. She had each student write a page in the style of the novel, using alliteration and turning adjectives into adverbs. She knew that using imitation was the key to teaching *Moby-Dick* to ninth graders successfully, letting them write as Melville wrote.

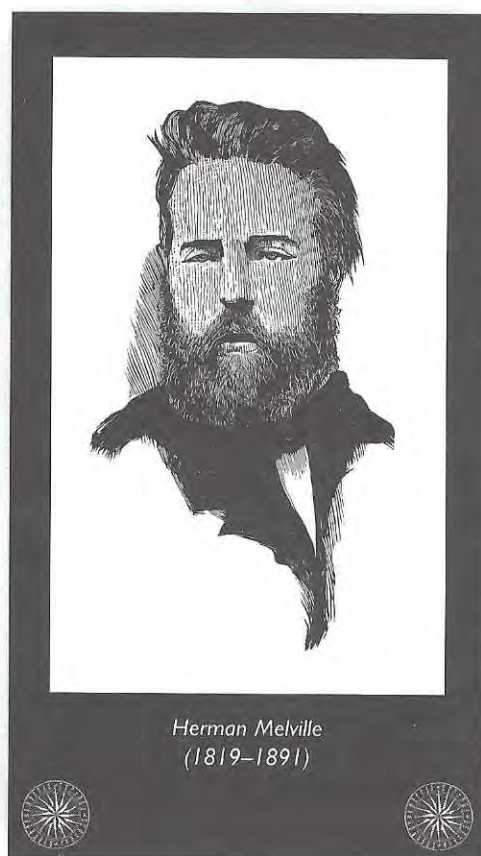
Since 1980 I have, with colleagues, taught the novel to some fifteen groups of ninth graders. It is a challenging book but can be approached with flexibility. We don't require the students to read it all. We omit chapters and at first assign just twenty pages a night, later around thirty. We use the Arion Press edition, with large print and superb woodcut illustrations. The three- or four-week main lesson block spent on the book is consistently an appropriate, powerful, and memorable experience for the students.

Part of the reason is that the novel as a genre serves to balance the other ninth-grade English main lesson—the story of drama. Whereas drama provides a mirror for the newly emerging soul life of the adolescent, the novel, as a literary form, incarnates the reader in time and space. The early English novel in particular is consistent with the ninth grader's need to be oriented to the moment. It dwells neither in memories of the past nor in imaginations of the future. Fielding's *Tom Jones* and Richardson's *Moll Flanders*, for example, take place in the familiar, known world of England and are peopled with fairly normal characters. The typical early novel sanely orients the ninth graders, the "freshmen," in the contemporary world.

By the early 1800s, the English novel had become too sane, rational, and prosaic. Later in the

century, though, writers from America and Russia—Hawthorne, Melville, Tolstoy, Dostoyevski, and others—gave the novel new life. They did it by infusing their works with the spirit of the three original forms of literature: the epic, lyric, and drama.

The epic, typified by Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, tells the story of an aristocratic hero engaged in either a great battle or a long journey. The epic extends over long periods of time (ten years at Troy) and/or great distances (the entire known world of the Mediterranean) and typically includes an almost encyclopedic knowledge of the world. The human adventure is supported or thwarted by many types of beings, from supernatural gods to elemental beings of water and fire. The epic is usually recited in the third person narrative voice: "Then the soldiers . . ."



Herman Melville
(1819-1891)

The drama, with its birth in the Dionysian mysteries at Eleusis, originally portrayed characters struggling with fate, and the action occurred in one day and in one place, the palace of Oedipus at Thebes, for example. The gods, dominating the action completely in Aeschylus' early play *Prometheus Bound*, have receded by Sophocles' *Oedipus* to the background influence of Apollo's oracle of Delphi. Still, though, they pull the strings of destiny. The story is told, not in the third person, but through immediate dialogue between first and second person—I and you—communicating to each other, and amplified by the chorus.

The lyric, given birth (as far as our written records of Western literature show) by Sappho, is essentially the song of oneself. The "I" sings, using images of nature, to express a condensed version of a feeling or experience. "Swallow, swallow, Pandion's daughter of wind and sky, why me / why me?"

One valuable aspect of working with *Moby-Dick* is that the students can develop an eye and an ear for epic, dramatic, and lyric passages in this prose novel of the 1850s. The students can find and write out in the main lesson book two examples of each genre. They can also compose a few lines imitating the epic, dramatic, and lyric modes.

An example of epic prose:

In old Norse times, the thrones of the sea-loving Danish kings were fabricated, saith tradition, of the tusks of the narwhale. How could one look at Ahab then, seated on that tripod of bones, without bethinking him of the royalty it symbolized? For a Khan of the plank, and a king of the sea, and a great Lord of Leviathans was Ahab. (Arion Press edition, chap. 30, "The Pipe," p. 130)

An example of dramatic prose:

MALTESE SAILOR.

Me too; where's your girls? Who but a fool would take his left hand by his right, and say to himself, how d'ye do? Partners! I must have partners!

SICILIAN SAILOR.

Aye; girls and a green!—then I'll hop with ye; yea, turn grasshopper!

LONG ISLAND SAILOR.

Well, well, ye sulkies, there's plenty more of us. Hoe corn when you may, say I. All legs go to harvest soon. Ah! Here comes the music; now for it!

AZORE SAILOR. [Ascending, and pitching the tambourine up the scuttle.]

Here you are, Pip; and there's the windlass-bitts; up you mount! Now, boys! [The half of them dance to the tambourine; some go below; some sleep or lie among the coils of rigging. Oaths a-plenty.]

AZORE SAILOR.

[Dancing]

Go it, Pip! Bang it, bell-boy! Rig it, dig it, stig it, quig it, bell-boy! Make fire-flies; break the jinglers!

PIP.

Jinglers, you say?—there goes another, dropped off; I pound it so.

CHINA SAILOR.

Rattle thy teeth, then, and pound away; make a pagoda of thyself.

FRENCH SAILOR.

Merry-mad! Hold up thy hoop, Pip, till I jump through it! Split jibs! Tear yourselves!

TASHTEGO. [Quietly smoking]

That's a white man; he calls that fun: humph! I save my sweat.

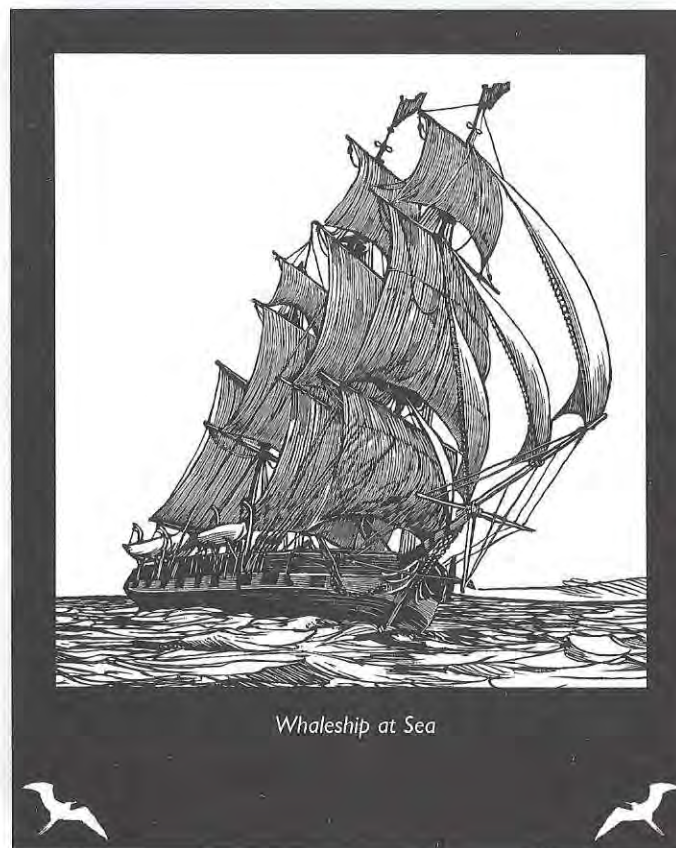
OLD MANX SAILOR.

Wonder whether those jolly lads bethink them of what they are dancing over. I'll dance over your grave, I will—that's the bitterest threat of your night-women, that beat head-winds round corners. O Christ! to think of the green navies and the green-skulled crews! Well, well; belike the whole world's one ball, as your scholars have it; and so 'tis right to make one ball-room of it. Dance on, lads, you're young; I was once.

(Chap. 40, "Midnight, Forecastle," p. 176)

An example of lyric prose:

Some days elapsed, and ice and icebergs all astern, the Pequod now went rolling through the bright Quito spring, which, at sea, almost perpetually reigns on the threshold of the eternal August of the Tropic. The warmly cool, clear, ringing, perfumed, over-flowing, redundant days, were as crystal goblets of Persian sherbet, heaped up—flaked up, with rose-water snow. The starred and stately nights seemed haughty dames in jeweled velvets, nursing at home in lonely pride, the



Whaleship at Sea

memory of their absent conquering Earls, the golden helmeted suns! For sleeping man, 'twas hard to choose between such winsome days and such seducing nights. But all the witcheries of that unwaning weather did not merely lend new spells and potencies to the outward world. Inward they turned upon the soul, especially when the still mild hours of eve came on; then, memory shot her crystals as the clear ice most forms of noiseless twilights. And all these subtle agencies, more and more they wrought on Ahab's texture.

(Chap. 29, "Enter Ahab; to Him, Stubb," p. 127)

It's good for our budding scholars of literature to understand how these original, primary forms of the human story have informed the novel, the "new" form of the human story, infusing its prosaic world of contemporary, linear time and three-dimensional space with the flavor, even the spirit, of epic, dramatic, and lyric language. However, this awakening scholarly activity has importance in other dimensions, on other levels, for the ninth graders.

Rudolf Steiner speaks of the epic, with its origins in Ionian Greece, especially Ephesus, as particularly serving the birth of a culture. It does not merely reflect a people's way of life, it engenders new life

patterns and rhythms, even—through the dactylic hexameter (six repeated patterns of long-short)—down to the rhythm of breathing. The epic vivifies and renews the life forces—the etheric body—of the singer, of each listener, and, today, of each reader.

Rudolf Steiner says that the language of drama stimulates, exercises, and unfolds the soul body (or astral body) of the developing people, as the whole community struggles, through conflicts in relationships, to find and fulfill its destiny. Working explicitly and consciously with dramatic passages helps to awaken, animate, and strengthen the newly emerging inner soul life of the ninth grader.

Lyric poetry, according to Rudolf Steiner, exercises the individuality of both the singer/speaker and the listener/reader. Thus the passages reflecting the beauty

of nature promote introspection and help to arouse consciousness of one's unique self.

As our ninth graders are attuning their ears and eyes to the nuances, the distinct character of epic, dramatic, and lyric passages in *Moby-Dick*, they are homeopathically awakening and quickening their own growing life bodies, soul bodies, and emerging individualities. It can be enjoyable for everyone, after about a week, during roll call, for the teacher to ask each student to answer "Aye, aye, Captain." By addressing the teacher, who represents in the classroom the only fully mature Ego, or higher self, and sounding "Aye, aye" in response to their own individual names, the ninth graders are unknowingly vivifying their own emerging Egos.

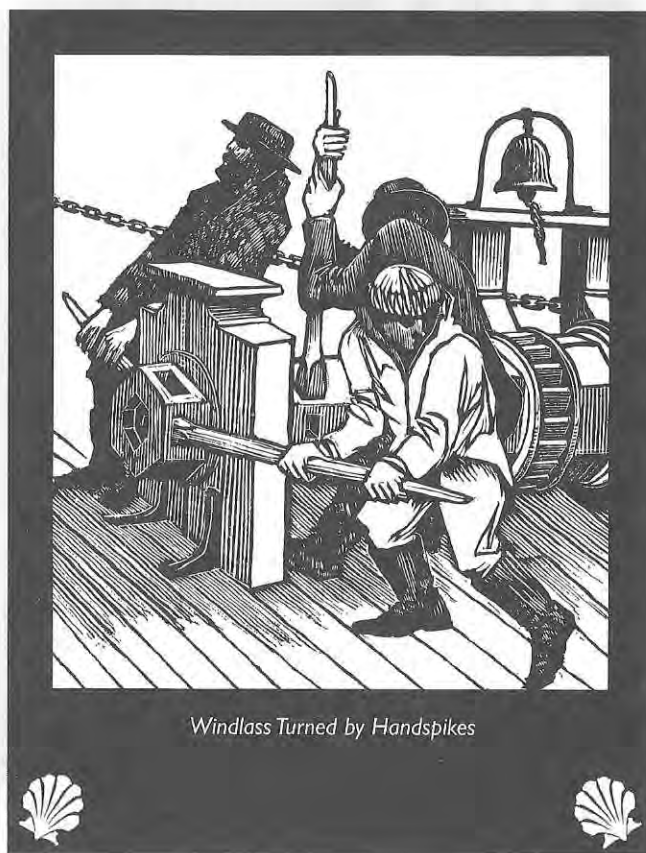
There are no female characters in *Moby-Dick*. Nevertheless the girl students (and women teachers) are able to enter into it enthusiastically and wholeheartedly. Part of the reason is that the novel is universal and archetypal, and the issues raised transcend the difference between male and female. Part, also, is that the compelling action of the novel calls up and enlivens the adventuresome, rugged elements in the otherwise

feminine being. Besides, there are sensitive and subtle passages that appeal deeply and directly to the feminine soul:

It was a clear steel-blue day. The firmaments of air and sea were hardly separable in that all-pervading azure; only, the pensive air was transparently pure and soft, with a woman's look, and the robust and man-like sea heaved with long, strong, lingering swells, as Samson's chest in his sleep.

(Chap. 132, "The Symphony," p. 543)

There are moral and social lessons embedded in the story that are memorable and instructive for the boys and girls. In the scene of the shark massacre, the sharks—feeding on the harpooned whale—get into a frenzy and feed on each other, and even on themselves (p. 310). It is a potent image of the eventual



Windlass Turned by Handspikes

self-destructiveness of the gang behavior to which both girls and boys are prone, though the forms may differ.

Related Activities

For ninth graders studying the novel, *Moby-Dick* offers a number of enjoyable, grounding, practical activities. The students can draw a map of the New England coast with its whaling ports. Then they draw a map of the world, showing the routes of Herman Melville's own voyages, both "outward bound" through the southern Atlantic out into the Pacific and "homeward bound." They can indicate also the route of the *Pequod*, down around the Cape of Good Hope, through the Indian Ocean, the Java Straits, and into the China Sea. Also they can draw a whaling ship in detail, learning the names of the masts and sails, as well as the location of the foc'sle, the galley, the captain's quarters, the try-works, and the blubber room. They can draw pictures of the characters—of Ahab, Queequeg, Starbuck, Ishmael—and of *Moby Dick* himself.

It's also good to have three-foot lengths of rope available, so that students can learn and practice the basic knots, which were essential to sailors then and which will always be useful: the overhand knot, the square knot, the sheet bend (for tying two lines together), and most important of all, for safely mooring a boat (and for securing one's life while rock climbing), the bowline. The students can also draw these knots. Tying one of the knots on request can be part of the exam.

A visit to a whaling port is ideal. At Mystic Seaport, a reconstructed whaling village in Connecticut, students can go aboard the *Charles W. Morgan*, the only remaining wooden whaling ship from the nineteenth century heyday of whaling. It happens to be the sister ship of Melville's *Acushnet*. At Mystic, our students stay two nights, sleeping on the 120-year-old Danish training ship, the *Joseph Conrad*. They learn more detailed whaling history, bend iron mast rings in the forge, copper-rivet white cedar planks in the boat-building shop, make hemp rope, learn songs to raise the sails by, climb the rigging, heave an actual old harpoon, carve designs in "simshaw" (a hard, ivory-like plastic), hear stories enacted by historical role-players, plot a course with charts and compass, become better acquainted with the stars in the

planetarium, and see original film footage of one of the last regular whaling voyages.

New England was the center of the world's whaling industry in the early 1800s, and, in Massachusetts, former whaling ports at Salem, Gloucester, New Bedford, and Nantucket can be visited. In New York, Greenport, Hudson, and South Street Seaport also offer educational opportunities related to whaling, as does San Francisco on the West Coast. The Gulf of California,

between Baja California and Mexico, is still today the breeding grounds for many types of whales. Even if a school is far from an old whaling port, a visit to a working fishing village will widen horizons of land-bound, suburban students.

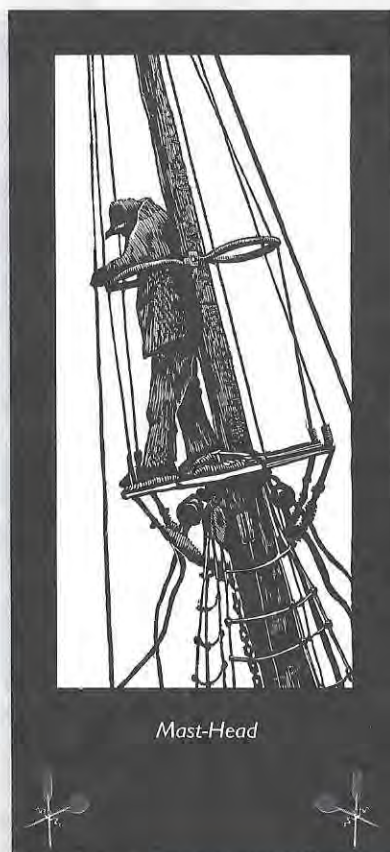
However, even without a class trip there are rich possibilities. The class might visit an old barn and listen as the teacher, settled high in the rafters, reads the opening chapter. The imagination adapts. Later, when in the novel the crew has lowered for its first whale chase, the teacher can have eight students sit on the floor in an imaginary whaling boat, with three rows of two, a harpooner in the bow, a mate in the stern. As the mate calls "Stroke!" the six rowers move together, sending their imaginary oars through the imaginary water. One of the whaling songs the students are learning can accompany this synchronized rowing rhythm.

Moby-Dick reveals a whole world at work. The *Pequod* is a microcosm, yet

the physical facts of its structure, its movement across our globe, and the activities necessary to make it work, all guide the ninth graders into experiencing certain timelessly true laws of the physical world.

Vital Language: Individual and Group Speech

The language of *Moby-Dick*—there's nothing quite like it. It's certainly not underwritten; it is the opposite pole from Hemingway's prose. One might say that the language alone is reason enough for ninth graders to work with *Moby-Dick*. Its language is the most vital of any American novel. The novel offers an unusually rich treasure trove of words—*ubiquitous*, *circumambulate*, *twain*, *succor*, *unctuous*, *scud*, and so on. Every night the students can look up five words—many of which will come from the practical world of the whaling ship and



Mast-Head

its activities—and each morning add five more words a classmate has put on the board. This greatly expands the students' conceptual awareness.

Other activities can engage the students dramatically and artfully in the book's language. All members of the class can memorize one important passage from the book. Each student can seek out epic, dramatic, and lyric passages, looking for an especially appealing passage to learn by heart. The whole class can be involved in dramatic readings of certain chapters such as "The Quarter-Deck," and "Midnight, Forecastle."

On the final day of the block, each student recites his or her own passage to the class, creating a pleasing "re-hearing" for everyone as the passages are spoken in chronological sequence. This is a memorable artistic experience for the student who has made the words part of life for many days and nights.

Humor

The ninth grader needs humor, Rudolf Steiner said, for the soul to grow healthily. *Moby-Dick* is surprisingly permeated with a wry and subtle humor:

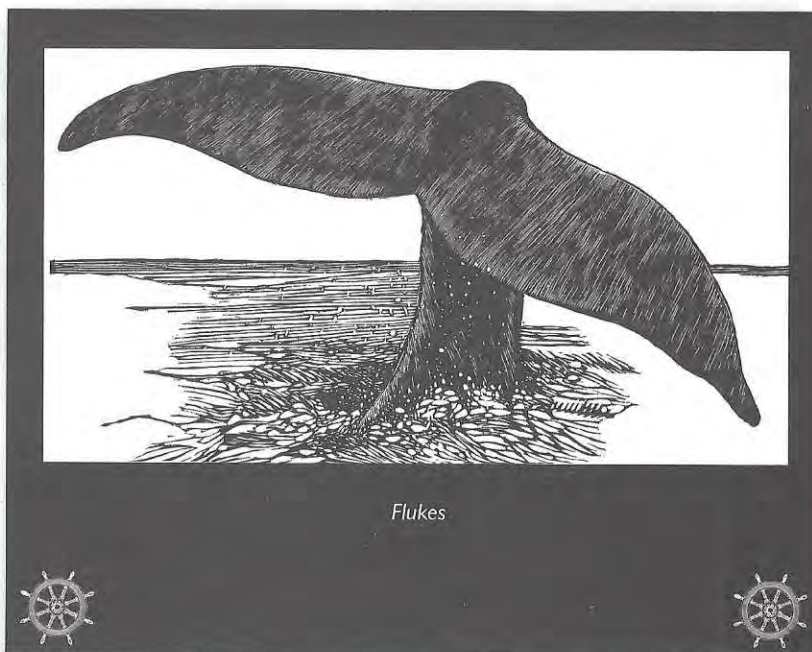
Nantucket! ... There is more sand there than you would use in twenty years as a substitute for blotting paper. Some gamesome wights will tell you that they have to plant weeds there, they don't grow naturally; that they import Canada thistles; that they have to send beyond seas for a spile to stop a leak in an oil cask; that pieces of wood in Nantucket are carried about like bits of the true cross in Rome; that people there plant toadstools before their houses, to get under the shade in summer time; that one blade of grass makes an oasis, three blades in a day's walk a prairie; that they wear quicksand shoes, something like Laplander snow shoes. ... But these extravaganzas only show that Nantucket is no Illinois.

(Chap. 14, "Nantucket," p. 64)

Such play of language stretches and delights the imagination and creates an atmosphere of humor, almost like a fragrance.

And thus have these naked Nantucketers, these sea hermits, issuing from their ant-hill in the sea, overrun and conquered the watery world like so many Alexanders; parcelling out among them the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian oceans, as the three pirate powers did Poland. Let America add Mexico to Texas, and pile Cuba upon Canada; let the English overswarm all India, and hang out their blazing banner from the sun; two thirds of this terraqueous globe are the Nantucketer's. For the sea is his; he owns it. ...

(Chap. 14. cont'd., p. 65)



Like Whitman at his best, Melville with his mock-epic, hyperbolic wordplay stimulates imagination, develops consciousness, and perhaps engenders a living humor in the reader, a healthy life force in the ninth grader, for resiliently riding through the tempests of adolescence.

Moby-Dick is an adventure all ninth graders are capable of experiencing.

And if they have the opportunity to do so, they are the mightier for it.

JOHN WULSIN was born in Cincinnati, Ohio. He worked for *Outward Bound* on Hurricane Island, Maine, and in the Austrian Alps before discovering Waldorf Education. After receiving his Waldorf teacher training at Emerson College in England, he earned degrees in English and American language and literature at Harvard and Columbia. John has been teaching high school English and drama at the Green Meadow Waldorf School in Spring Valley, New York, for twenty-six years. For many years John also has taught poetics at the Eurythmy School of Spring Valley. He serves on the Arts Council of Rockland County (New York), the Eastern Regional Committee of AWSNA, and the editorial board of *Renewal*. He is the author of *Proverbs of Purgatory* and *Laws of the Living Language* and is the editor of *The Riddle of America*, all published by AWSNA Publications. John and his wife, Jane—a class teacher at the school—have four children, all of whom are graduates of Green Meadow. This year John and Jane are enjoying a sabbatical, mostly in Latin America.

The full version of this article, which includes selections relating the novel to certain aspects of Anthroposophy, can be found on our website: www.awnsa.org.