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Steiner Education

Vol 34 No 2

Caring for childhood
Waldorf and the Early Years debate

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Steiner Education

ISSUE THEME:
Caring for childhood

"Sanatoria, housing, pensions, scholarships, even better wages—what are these without early culture or education? Sour apples grown on hungry land. The first years decide all."

Margaret Macmillan: Presidential speech to the Nursery School Association.

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Front Cover: *The Snow Queen presides over her
subjects on a Kindergarten winter table in Latvia.*
Photo: Ligita Gaile.

Inside Front Cover: *Table puppets give free rein to the
fantasy of the young child—here both 'puppeteers' and
(off to the right) 'audience'.*
Photo: Ligita Gaile.

Journal for Rudolf Steiner Waldorf Education
(formerly 1930–1995 *Child and Man*)
July 2000 Vol. 34 No.2

Steiner Education is a focus for ideas, insights and
achievements in Waldorf, Steiner and all truly human
education throughout the world.

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*Opinions expressed in this journal attach to the respective
authors and are not necessarily those of the Editor.*

Editorial

The largest alliance for childhood in the world would come about if as many parents as possible would find something in common à propos the healthy upbringing of their children, about which they could whole-heartedly become allied. Not just parents, of course. This applies especially to the early years where childhood is arguably at its most vulnerable. This is a bold claim. It would entail many more people delving into the meaning of childhood in the context of human existence than do at present; for as we stand, many of us drift into parenthood, despite the 'advances' in family planning.

The 'family plan' of *Steiner Education* for the turn of the millennium was first to celebrate the eighty years of Waldorf to date (1919-1999), and afterwards take a look ahead.

Well we *did* celebrate. We focused on what is very high on the list of the most representative and representational of Waldorf achievements—colour. Both numbers last year (vol. 33 nos. 1 & 2) were devoted to this.

With the first number of the millennium, *Facing the Future*, we directed the Janus gaze of education to the broad issues of the day. These included local themes (e.g. the plans for converting a very rectilinear building from Soviet times in Riga, Latvia into a welcoming home for Waldorf), national themes (e.g. the scheme in Denmark, to which Waldorf successfully subscribes, for counselling youths at the top end of the school to help them intensify their commitment to further education) and themes of the Zeitgeist (e.g. the necessity of giving people, where possible during their childhood, a world outlook that has at its heart 'something to live for'—well described and awe-inspiringly exemplified in the life and work of Viktor Frankl who evolved logotherapy as a way of treating those neuroses of our time which result from the vacuum in the soul that results if that 'heart' is not throbbing with sufficient vitality).

In facing the future, the plight of 'humanity in its infancy' (childhood) is naturally that which tugs most at the heart-strings of the educationist. In the present issue of *Steiner Education*, several writers from various walks of educational life, join to chorus their current concerns: a publisher with a background in higher education who has received acclaim for his extensive research into the deleterious effects of TV-watching in childhood; a

Swiss-based medical doctor whose special interest in, and impressive work for, child health provides us with both an illustrious precedent and good, sound advice; a psychotherapist, urgently alerting us to save the present generation from plunging lemming-like down the cliffs of premature learning, with all the anxieties and tensions that inevitably ensue and frequently dog children throughout their later adult lives; a knight errant for childhood, who globe-cantered the early years world, lifting on high her pennon of insight, care, tact and clarity; a 'practitioner' (alias Kindergarten teacher!) who brings us the inside story, the real atmosphere of the Kindergarten in all its fragile tangibility, amber-precious fly-on-the-wall anecdotes, the sound of the child herself fantasy-fresh and crystal-sparkling, as well as her own voice of experience in which courage, love and admonishment mingle harmoniously. And there are other contributors.

With his '*Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore*' ('Six characters in search of an author'), Pirandello (1867-1921), the Italian playwright and instigator of innovative ideas for the theatre, hit upon a title that might arguably be called the archetypal title (*Urtitel*, with apologies to Goethe) for all plays. First it must happen that the plot take place and unfold in the playwright's mind, eventually becoming script; it then embodies and 'dresses' itself in characters; a production is proposed; it attracts actors who sign contracts; they rehearse, speaking and acting and vying with the producer—and there you have it: the box office opens, the first night glitters, and the actors start bathing in the limelight as bouquets pour in!

On the world stage—whose brand new millennium curtain is well on its way up—the greatest drama is that of childhood (though, to our shame, it manifestly doesn't grip the screen-held millions as did the bombing of Kosovo). All children in the world are characters in the drama. And like all drama, it too oscillates between joy and tragedy. But unlike Pirandello's initially forlorn little troupe, these characters have attracted a whole host of gifted and vociferous authors. Titles such as '*Endangered Minds*', '*The Disappearance of Childhood*', '*The End of Education*', '*The End of Evolution*', speak for themselves. An impressive list of such publications could be compiled from just the

references in the articles of this one issue of *Steiner Education*. Look up the bibliographical references and further reading provided by the authors here and you already have a formidable library—and a considerable indictment of much that goes under the heading of education.

However, Pirandello or Shakespeare or any dramatist on a forgotten library shelf is an endangered species—at least a contradiction. What the theatre of childhood lacks—if it is going to escape becoming a museum for an endangered species—is not actors, authors or entrepreneurs: it lacks patrons. Whether we drift into parenthood or not, we might still ask: does the intention of becoming a *patron of childhood*, allied to other patrons, feature as part of our family plan? Administration is, of course, equally implicated—right from local governance up to ministry level. The want of *patronage of childhood* is forcing its characters, the children of the world, into 'careers' that lead to gangsterism, drug addiction, child prostitution, teenage abortions, exam-treadmillism and other -tions and -isms which

cause society to be riven with ever deeper concern; and which read as symptoms of some drastic malaise in modern life.

Of course, one could argue that, just as the mountains must have their climbers, gliders their pilots and the high seas their sailors, so the screen must have its viewers, the exam syllabi must have their candidates, computer games must have their players, league tables must have their competitors, Santa Claus stockings must have their fillers and their emptiers, the whole brave new world of e-commerce must have its e-customers with their e-bank accounts, the gun lobby must have its rights, missiles must have their military targets... The arguments for all the foregoing are powerful.

At the same time, we must surely provide, vigorously cherish, earnestly value, painstakingly validate and generously invest in 'space'—protected space, in more than one sense, it may need to be—where children may have—playing it out healthily to the full—their *childhood*.

B.M.

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The January 2000 Issue: Vol. 34 No.1 . is still available to new subscribers.

Acknowledgement

Steiner Education wishes to thank Sally Jenkinson, the SWSF's Early Years representative in the UK and Ireland for her co-operation in this production. The identifying of the urgent need for an issue on the present theme, so soon after the *Steiner Education* Monograph on the Early Years convinced the Editorial Board to take up the issue again in preference to other themes which are in the pipeline. The Board is also grateful to those contributors who responded so generously to the theme, despite their extremely busy schedules.

With deep concern being expressed for childhood at risk in all quarters of society—from the upper echelons of academia, to parent bodies, to key figures across the political spectrum—gratitude is due those who are indefatigably at work in Kindergartens and in liaison with officialdom to bring focus of educational thought sharply and penetratingly on the need for care in the Early Years.

Ed.

Pulling a Third Way Out of the Hat

A former pupil reflects on modern motherhood and the diverse paths of remaining in the business world or raising a family

by SUSIE DOUCH (né KORTH)

September 1971: my first day of school. I was five years old walking into Michael Hall Kindergarten. In front of me stood a huge rocking horse, a room full of beautiful toys, a kindly teacher and lots of potential friends. It took until break time before I uttered my first words—a mixture of shyness and awe had taken away my ability to speak.

A year of huge enjoyment lay ahead of me before the big step into Class 1. We all lined up outside the old school building to be led in for our first main-lesson with our class teacher—there was one new pupil joining us and our curiosity at the brand new member of our class was only outshone by the fact we were now in the main school.

Every September from then on was a mixture of trepidation for what the next year would bring and excitement that we were one class further up the ladder. Until one day in the summer of 1984 we found ourselves saying good-bye to each other and to teachers we had known most of our lives and we were venturing out into the future on our own.

Continuity was the main factor through all my schooling: I was fortunate enough to be educated in the same school for all of my school years and grew up with my classroom peers. For thirteen years it felt like us—I grew up with so many people I had met that first day in 1971, and went through bad times as well as good with them. The saddest of those times was in Class 2 when our class teacher Mrs Querido died after asthma and heart problems—we were seven years old. While the rest of the school went to assembly, our class sat quietly and painted angels; and for another term I expected her to be there every morning waiting to greet us.

In Class 8 we toured Britain with our second class teacher, staying in youth hostels, other Steiner schools and camping. We set up a class orchestra and performed Henry V (one especially memorable time being whilst visiting the historic open air Minack theatre on the Cornish coast). I mention this tour particularly because, if nothing else, Michael Hall instilled confidence: we, as a class and as

individuals, had the utmost belief in ourselves.

In the Upper School a lot more time was obviously taken up with O and A levels, but as we were not required to sit more than four or five exams per year, the performing continued. There was the drama club with productions at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and the Class 12 play, inspired by our class guardian Danielle Gaillemain.

Since leaving school I have had many a conversation around the dinner table with ex Michael Hall pupils regarding the pros and cons of our Steiner education. It is so hard to analyse as, until I went into higher education, I had no experience of any other way. I do remember being very frustrated at not being able to read at a young age, so I looked at my books anyway picking up the odd word here and there until I was able to grasp the story. It could (and has) been argued that this was the best way to learn to read. I think the education suits some more than others. For me, with a love of writing and performing, it was wonderful—but I don't think it suits everyone (what school could?)—it depends on a mixture of the child, his class teacher and the academic leaning that the child possesses. In my case, the educational background together with my exam results were sufficient for my further education.

When I left school I wanted to go into publishing although I was only vaguely aware of what this meant. I liked writing and literature but wasn't pushy enough to be a journalist. So I went to the London College of Printing which had a very good reputation for all aspects of communications. I took an HND in Printing and Publishing with Business Studies although the publishing aspect of the course turned out to be minimal. I was fascinated with the business studies: marketing, economics and law, subjects never touched on before; and tried to be interested in the mechanics of a printing press. Some of the course was very dry but I loved being in London and having a whole new post-school life.

I graduated in 1997—the job market was

booming—and was offered a job at Greenaway Harrisons, a top city and commercial printers, as a graduate trainee. This involved working in various departments within the company. In the production division I liaised with typesetting, the machine minders and finishers, to produce the work on time and to specification. In the sales area I had meetings with company secretaries and financial directors of PLCs, handling their Report & Accounts, and in the studio subsidiary I worked alongside the designers and art workers producing concepts for clients.

I stayed at Greenaway Harrisons for three years and gained a lot of valuable print knowledge, but by the turn of the decade I'd had enough of financial print and of living in London and went to America with Nick. We travelled to many different parts of the country and had a ball.

1992 was a big year for us: we got married and moved back to Forest Row. Nick did a degree and then started a PhD in mechanical engineering; we bought a house and I went to work for an advertising agency in Tunbridge Wells. This was in the production department, buying in print and producing brochures for a variety of clients. Without going too much further into my job history, I have stayed in this field ever since. I spent a further two years in a London agency setting up a production department in-house, before moving back to Tunbridge Wells to head up production there, overseeing print suppliers, and handling advertising campaigns. It was a good job and I was respected for what I did, but last year all that changed... I became pregnant.

At first the company seemed pleased and congratulations were in order, but they understandably appeared less happy when I was signed off work for over a month with hyperemesis (a severe form of morning sickness). When I came back at five months pregnant I carried on doing the long hours and driving to different parts of the country to pass jobs on press. I think it fairly telling that the last time I was ill was the day I left work three weeks before the baby was due.

Holly was born in June 1999 and changed everything. Work seemed a lifetime away and my whole perspective on what was important changed. I did however feel I would like to go back to work part-time when she was older but maternity laws being what they are in this country I had to return within 29 weeks or lose my job. So I went back when my baby was five months old and still so dependent on her mother.

But it tore my heart out. I put a proposal to the company whereby I could work a 3-day week and

restructure the department so it did not cost them money. This was met by a flat 'no'. I think there is still an attitude in many companies that working mothers should deny they have a home life in order to be any good at their job.

My mother was at home when I was small. It made me feel secure even if I was at the other end of the house. I was educated in a gentle environment, and had little cause for anxiety. What more could you want for your child in her early developmental years? I didn't want to be a weekend parent yet I needed to work for financial reasons. The options looked bleak. I needed a third way.

This is how 'White Rabbit' came into being. It stands for good luck, and magic—pulling the impossible out of the hat. It took confidence (which started through school), encouragement from my husband, and inspiration from my daughter—I needed to do this for her. White Rabbit Advertising Support Ltd was set up just a few weeks ago by myself and a business partner so that we could work and be answerable to ourselves only. We handle projects through from design, artwork and print, as well as advertising campaigns in the national press. Although it means long hours, they're at a time to suit Holly. I work three days a week and if necessary from home when she is asleep, or in the evenings. On the days I work she is cared for alternatively by my husband and my sister-in-law.

Like all parents I want to do what's best for my child and, like most parents, guilt plays a large part in my emotions. I love my daughter dearly and I want her childhood to be as peaceful as mine. Continuity and a belief in her own abilities will see her through, just as it did me.



The drawings—after Breugel—here and on pp.6-7 are by Anna Nunhofer (see accompanying article).

Wanted: Pied Piper 2000

Happiness, hygiene and health in the Early Years

by BRIEN MASTERS



A mere six years separated Pieter Breugel the Elder's painting of *Children at Play* (1560) from his taking brush in hand before the canvas that was to depict so unreservedly the *Massacre of the Innocents*.

The scene of his *Children at Play* has become familiar today through numerous reproductions. It shows upwards of 200 children in a Flemish street intersection playing some 80 games. Breugel's jubilant celebration of childhood displays movement, uninhibited gesticulation, abundant joy, vigour and daring, group activity, vehement participation, and sheer fun-spurred fantasy. The painter places the viewer at an extraordinarily high vantage point from which we have a breathtaking and unimpeded view of the dozens and dozens of children's limbs, each with a gesture characteristic of the game in which the child is involved and, to a slightly lesser extent, of the strong emotional life that is sparked by the particular moment we are witnessing in the game underway.

Rough and tumble there is in plenty, but no detectable bullying or latent gangsterism. Most of the children are in groups in which social interaction appears to flow and gel as readily as quicksilver in a shallow saucer. The amount of detail packed into the relatively small framework is astonishing. Arguably, there is pedagogical comment too. For example, the three versions of 'Follow m' Leader' shown towards the end of the main street make a fascinating study, from a Waldorf point of view, of the three seven-year phases of childhood. Comparatively speaking, the younger ones are the most *outwardly* adventurous. The middle school group are holding onto belts and hems of skirts while following their leader in rhythmical fashion, who surges and swings this way and that, as the fancy takes him. The adolescents are

involved in a complicated manoeuvre called 'The four sons of Aimon and the horse Bayard' which was a popular game at the time, in which 'Aimon the leader' performed challenging and intricate actions which all 'four sons' would then have to copy, causing considerable adjusting, negotiating and jostling, bustled together as they were and straddled over a long pole—a more mind-riveting and controlled version of the game that they had played with such total freedom in their early years.

There is one adult in the picture: a woman who empties a bucket of slops from a first floor window into the street. *Her gaze does not fall on a single child!* If there ever was a place—a KindergartenUtopia@play.com—in Browning's world network, to which his Pied Piper led the children of rat-infested Hamelin, this could assuredly be it!

Here, though it would be easy to get anachronistically paranoid, let us skim over the glaring absence of supervision, traffic, and safety regulations, with probably atrociously minimal hygiene by today's standards: the message that clarions towards the viewer, louder even than the chorus of jubilant and excited children's voices, is resilient health, abounding soul hygiene, and effervescent child happiness. *Health, hygiene and happiness.*—Were these the 'three Hs' that Blake had at the back of his prophetic mind when he ended his deceptively childlike 'Laughing Song' so inimitably?

*Come sing and be merry and join with me
To sing the sweet chorus of 'Ha, Ha, He'.*

Breugel's masterpiece presents us with a real shop window onto a civilisation that literally *gave space to childhood*. To lament the disappearance of that space without further ado would be tantamount to wishing to annihilate New York, Frankfurt, Johannesburg and a colossal chunk of the mechanised world. Apart from the absurdity, it would not in itself lead to identifying where the massacre of today's innocents is taking place. Neil Postman (1994), in his *The Disappearance of Childhood* took some of the first courageous steps in that process of identification. Following in his footsteps, educationists would now do well to



examine what constitutes innocence—not in the romantic sense used in some schools of educational thought, but as a general metaphor of childhood. The so-called cultural scene today, that encroaches on childhood so perniciously, results from an intersection in which one street is awash with the slops of indiscreetly aggressive commerce (in his recent publication, *The End of Education*, undeflected and still hot on the same trail, Postman (1996) observes that between the ages of as young as three and eighteen, a child will have been bombarded with 500,000 commercials!); and the other street with aspects of hi-tec that have stilled the limbs of childhood with potentially dangerous implications for the rest of the human constitution. It would be a major research undertaking to quantify the 'accident rate' and the 'death toll' of this intersection. There can be a sting in the tail too, even where, on the face of it, things might look as though they are improving. As Professor Jonathan Gershuny put it, commenting on his research sponsored by the Institute of Social and Economic Research at the University of Essex (March 2000): "Children have lost their licence to roam." Statistics showing a slight increase in the amount of 'quality time' parents spent with their children revealed that much of it was because of "increased pressures at school" and because it was just too dangerous for children to be out on their own, contrasting strongly with former times when children spent time in gangs playing and "walking to school on [their] own".

There are educational factors encroaching on childhood, too, of course.

To remonstrate about those Flemish children being abandoned by the adult world would essentially miss the point. Flanders clearly gave space to the ebullient innocence of childhood. We, by contrast, have largely banished children from the realm of open spaces, as well as shackling their fantasy with the passivity of sitting before various screens and by manufacturing for their sole use the unyielding plastic of the 'finished' toy. And: shackle a child's fantasy and you render him immobile—always with those important exceptions

such as the 'toy' machine-gun etc. Not that it will be easy for parents who want to re-fashion home life on enlightened research. But there are always intermediate steps, as Kate Kellaway amusingly points out (*The Observer* 19 December 1999)—her inspiration being research from Munich which showed that children "do best without any conventional toys... Leave them with empty boxes, wrapping paper,

string and imagination and they'll develop faster" [my emphasis]. Her son used the baguette she had given him to carry back home from the shops, to help fulfil his military fantasies: "[T]he baguette, sadly doubled up in the middle, didn't look too clever by lunch time."

Admittedly, there is a certain degree of safety connected with TV watching or playing video games. The child is not going to get bruised and scratched by the rough and tumble of peers, nor lured by paedophiles lurking on the streets or in public parks, nor endure life-long suffering as a result of sexual abuse. These are severe warning lights whose disco-like pounding no-one can ignore. But they certainly do not represent the only dangers to childhood. Nor is it enough for critics of the over-exposure of children to media—and here the outcry has reached an ear-drumming crescendo over the last decade—to point only to the *quality* of programme (e.g. the inordinate number of acts of violence) as unsuitable. Despite all the Los Angeles gangsterism to which Barry Sanders (1995) draws our attention in his powerful study *A is for Ox*, and the lesser and mini versions of gangsterism across the globe with all the disturbing scenarios to which it leads, research is now showing that there is an even more serious side to the matter than the *content* of what is being viewed. As a result of the physiologically-seated faculties being unexercised (balance, movement, touch, the sense of well-being), the cheated soul seeks recompense in questionable outlets later in life. Moreover, with the soul isolated, desensitised and constantly exposed to 'the virtual', social barriers are compounded that keep psychotherapists and arms dealers alike in business. Thus, even the meekest documentary showing lambs frisking in spring, say, has negative developmental implications if one investigates the resultant neuro-psychology.

The highwayman of past, seemingly less merciful ages, who ended up swinging on the gallows was—we may take it—at least a *whole human being*, who conceivably might have come within a noose of repentance, had he been given the chance, and might therefore have been some benefit to society other

than brutal entertainment for a bloodthirsty mob and nourishment for the crows. Current neurological research (Chilton Pearce, 1992; Aim and Scheynius, 1999) is discovering that the child who is insufficiently active, and insufficiently emotionally developed, is "damaged"—and the word, which might seem to border on the libellous, is used alarmingly increasingly in numerous books and articles—that is, the child results in being *less* than the whole human being she might otherwise have become. We are witnessing an attack on child health on a vast scale. Even with the best of intentions (e.g. where governments provide the funding for videos and computers in the Kindergarten), in reality we are depriving children of some of their basic human needs: movement, social interaction and adult love (—love that goes beyond legislative care). The attack is producing a generation whose ability to use its mind, let alone change it (re-pent) when realising it has been conditioned through some form of totalitarianism, is impaired.

The irony is that the remedy seems so simple: restore what is being undermined; replace what is being systematically wiped out; re-pair the child with its innocence; *restore childhood*. First recognise that formal learning in pre-school is counterproductive, as studies such as that carried out recently by The Institute of Economic and Social Research (Whitburn, 1999) and others show. Then, simply provide a creative space where children can be children—basically where they can play. *But play—in peace*. Not mentally targeted by the politically well-meaning but educationally ill-advised adult, wanting to set them on the highroad of computer literacy, market-economy-know-how and league-table-winning-numeracy. But creative play. Play—in limb-embodied gusto. Play—that trots, canters and sometimes gallops, with mane and tail flying, astride the creative fantasy of childhood—or that whispers in the Wendy house like the wind singing cosily in a winter chimney—not to be highwaymanned at the gun-point of formal learning (however informally dressed) that will end up by hoisting the healthy forces of childhood onto the gallows of 'name and shame', there to be pecked as carrion by 'performance-related pay for teachers'. In a word, play that realises something of Schiller's widely acclaimed assertion that links play with being human in the fullest sense. Though *human being* continues to be the given, *being human* requires fighting for increasingly as the years slip by.

This is not to blow with the bitter wind of ingratitude at what recently took place when the British Government's White Paper revealed that

there had been a change of heart over the content of the Kindergarten day—a change which at least endorsed the admittance of play into the precincts of the 'secret garden' of the early years. This was a major step forward. But 'structure' in play—the compromise to which the Government was prepared to go was termed "structured play"—must, by definition, veer towards *constricted* play. A contradiction. The real structure—if that is the right word—that play has to offer is a healthy basis for the whole of life. Thus more than a *change of heart* is needed. If childhood is to be restored, a significant *change of mind* is needed, informed by an educational philosophy that is thought through and sufficiently far reaching. We must seriously and strenuously sift through the dunes of enlightened research that have been piling up, first taking our heads out of the sands of twentieth century exam-driven traditionalism. As Susan Bassnett, Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Warwick University, argues (*The Independent* 19 August 1998), surely this cannot be unattainable for third millennium intelligence.

The key to that change of mind, I would suggest, is to be gained through activating *metamorphic thinking*. (—An Archimedean way of levering ourselves out of a problem that threatens to become global?)

Goethe, the 150th anniversary of whose death we have just been celebrating, claimed to have discovered through metamorphic-type observation and thinking, the essence of the plant. Bortoft's (1996) thorough investigation into *Goethe's Way of Science* traces the poet/scientist's pathway whereby he arrived at this experience. From that plant essence (*Urpflanz*) Goethe was able in his mind to create "new plants". One might wonder whether, had he been alive today, he would have been tempted to jump on the GMO band wagon. It would seem unlikely. His acquired capacity for plant creating does not echo through the years as a frustrated inclination to dabble in cloning. The point he precisely describes having arrived at would appear to be one of spiritual insight—spiritual insight which then poured out in a torrent of creativity, in an incessant stream of masterpieces, ever stimulating to read, ever pertinent to cite, ever inspiring to set to music, ever instructive to study, ever illuminating to ponder on, ever enriching to live with.

Similarly, metamorphic thinking, based on penetrating observation, accurate research, and developed insight into the nature of the growing child, should produce a form of education in which we would be equipped to cater not for a population that resembles cloned-like consumers with obese

Children active amongst light and life—an Early Years motif.
Photo: Sally Schweizer.

commercial appetites, but one in which the whole human being can begin to be harmoniously developed, and thence the present malaise of society begin to be healed.

However, if we are to get at root causes and not merely tinker with peripheral symptoms, we need to delve right into the depths of human life—that is, into the *early years*. The 'slops' of global warming, nuclear waste, acid rain, denuded rain forests, the next killer to strike after we have devised inoculations against cancer and Aids, ethnic cleansing and its shoals of asylum seekers, youth crime, school killings (the most recent incident was the shooting of a six-year-old in Detroit by a classmate), drug trafficking, child prostitution etc. will no doubt continue to spatter persistently in some form or other onto the highways of our 'comfortable' lives. Without losing the sense of urgency that these global problems and human disasters manifestly demand, we must now re-focus our gaze onto the nature of the human being, especially—and I repeat—in the *early years*. The 'education debate' must not drift listlessly into a euphemism for another world disaster. In face of this, twenty-first century society could do nothing better than make *health in child development* one of its main concerns and aims. Thankfully, there are those, such as Patrick Bateson, Provost of Kings College, Canterbury, who are heralding the way (Bateson and Martin, 1999). Of course, it would be ludicrous to imagine that we could entice children's games back onto our street intersections to replace the carbon-monoxide, the paedophiles, the robots and police sirens that have usurped them. To restore the health, hygiene and happiness of childhood, the fingers of the Pied Piper of 2000 will have to hit upon a new tune.

But hit upon that tune we must, be it Waldorf-wise or other-wise. That is, if we have a mind to stave off the massacre of innocence, the misery of undesirable outcomes, and the smothering of laughter, serendipity, joy, felicitous fantasy, healthy growth, blossoming spirituality and the creative foundations for responsible human life, the essence of whose nature can never be surrogated.



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Psychology and Early Years Learning: Affirming the Wisdom of Waldorf

by RICHARD HOUSE

We should take care not to make the intellect our god. It has, of course, powerful muscles but no personality.
Albert Einstein

The neglect of the emotional

Emotions are at the center of children's relationships, well-being, sense of self and moral sensitivity and are centrally linked to their increasing understanding of the world in which they grow up. Yet we have only recently begun to pay serious attention to the significance of children's emotions.

Dr Judy Dunn (writing in 1998)

In this article I will explore a vital area of early years learning where experientially informed theoretical thinking and empirical research in the broad field of psychology (including psychoanalysis) cohere with Steiner Waldorf educational philosophy. It seems to me that the ever-escalating malaise within state education, and parents' and professionals' ever-increasing disquiet with those trends, offer the Waldorf movement an unmissable opportunity to take our work and values out into a public sphere which is crying out for a humane and demonstrably effective alternative to the assessment-obsessed, anxiety-driven fare on offer in the state sector. One way of doing this is to take every opportunity to write to the press whenever we see an opportunity to challenge current conventional 'wisdom' and set out the Waldorf alternative (see, for example, my article in *Steiner Education*, 34 (1), 2000, 'But what about childhood?'). Another valuable approach is to draw upon the wealth of substantive literature in a range of fields broadly centred in the Psychology discipline in order to vindicate the assumptions that underpin Waldorf praxis. It is this latter approach that I will pursue in this article.

I write as a professional counsellor and psychotherapist of over ten years' standing, and a trained Steiner Waldorf teacher with several years' experience of leading a Steiner Parent and Toddler group. As a counsellor I am particularly interested in

the emotional aspects of human experience and learning—not least because, as Dan Goleman puts it in his important book *Emotional Intelligence*, our "fundamental ethical stances in life stem from underlying emotional capacities" (p. xii), and "emotional [competence] goes hand in hand with education for character, for moral development, and for citizenship" (p. 286). Certainly, the emotional level of experience is being criminally neglected in the current British Government's single-minded obsession with unbalanced and developmentally inappropriate cognitive-intellectual learning at ever-earlier ages. Yet as Susanne Denham has recently written, young children "are more emotionally sophisticated than we ever previously imagined" and "if emotional competence is so very important, it behoves educators... to understand what is really going on in the young child's emotional world" (1998, pp. 9, 16).

In what follows I only have space to consider several interrelated issues: first, the proper role of play in early learning, and the dangers of distorting or subverting its natural expression through adult-centric intrusion; second, the distorting effects of anxiety on healthy learning; and third, the developmental dangers entailed in premature or 'precocious' intellectual or ego development. In future writings I intend to explore a range of other emotion-related issues, including the nature and quality of 'relationship' in early years environments, and its longer term consequences for healthy learning and relational intersubjectivity; and the centrality of 'emotional intelligence' in healthy child development.

The place of play in early development

Play cannot be pinned down, and turned into a product of measurable learning. This is because play is a process [which] enables a holistic kind of

learning, rather than fragmented learning.

Professor Tina Bruce
If we try to cramp and control him by our own notions of what he ought to be, we may close up the very channels which will bring him value and safety.

Susan Isaacs,
Social Development in Young Children

The issue of play and its place in early years learning environments has had a particular prominence in recent times. Early years professionals were truly horrified when, in 1999, the British Government's initial draft proposals for early learning goals failed even to mention the role of play. Following a public outcry at this omission, the Government's revised guidelines invented the notion of so-called 'structured play', being an attempt to preserve their intrusively prescriptive approach to early years 'education' while paying at least some kind of lip service to those championing the central role of 'play' (like the Waldorf movement and the pressure group 'Let The Children Play'). Yet in invoking the notion of *structured play*, not only did the Government glaringly reveal its limited understanding of the place of play in early child development, but its proposals were actually welcomed in the *Times Educational Supplement* of 8 October 1999. I reproduce below excerpts from a letter I submitted in response, but which was not published.

The *TES*'s unreservedly positive reporting of the Government's revised guidelines for early years learning (October 8)... wholly embraced the assumed beneficence of the new guidelines; and anyone uninitiated in these debates would gain the strong impression from your report that the Government has shifted considerably on the issue of 'play' in early learning, and that its revised proposals are universally welcomed in the early years sphere. If anything, however, the new proposals are even *more* dangerous than the original ones, in that at least the latter didn't pretend to be what they weren't...

You state quite rightly that the "key concept [of the new guidelines] seems to be the idea of 'structured and focused play'". Yet the notion of "structured" play is a fundamentally incoherent, self-contradictory concept... My dictionary defines 'play' as "freedom of movement, space for this..., especially as spontaneous activity of children" (my emphases). As soon as an assessment-obsessed, objectifying 'educational

gaze' overrules and intrudes into the young child's world, its activity necessarily and by definition ceases to constitute 'play'. The Government's terminological sleight of hand could easily distract attention from its unchanged prescriptive agenda, and must not be allowed to slip through without challenge.

It is... difficult to overestimate the damage that will result from the premature over-intellectualisation of the child's early years—as Rudolf Steiner pointed out some 80 years ago. Perhaps I would do well to remain in my current professional field rather than move into education, as these fundamentally misguided early years policies are likely to keep an army of counsellors and psychotherapists in work for decades to come!

What I would like to do here is to cite some literature on play from authoritative non-Waldorf sources in the broad field of psychology, which thoroughly support the approach to play quite independently advocated by Steiner Waldorf educational philosophy.

The distinguished early child psychologist and psycho-analyst Susan Isaacs has some very interesting things to say about the crucial foundational importance of play. For Isaacs, the child's imaginative play "is a starting point [or necessary foundation—RH] not only for cognitive development but also for the adaptive and creative intention which when fully developed marks out the artist, the novelist, the poet... In his make-believe, [the child] takes the first steps towards that emancipation of meanings from the *here and now* of a concrete situation, which makes possible hypotheses and the 'as if' consciousness (1930, p. 104, her emphases). *It is exceedingly difficult to imagine how anyone with even a rudimentary understanding of the young child's archetypally momentous yet infinitely delicate developmental process could seek to impose a distorting adult agenda upon it—a highly complex process in which the child is freely and imaginatively "re-creating selectively those elements in past situations which can embody his emotional or intellectual need of the present, [as] he adapts the details moment by moment to the present situation"* (ibid., her emphasis).

Several years later, Isaacs was to write that the lessening of inner tension and anxiety resulting from free dramatic play "makes it easier for the child to control his real behaviour..., helps to free the child from his first personal schemas, and to enhance his



'Happy as a sand boy': sunlight and shadow at play—a recipe for serenity and security in action.
Photo: Sally Schweizer.

readiness to understand the objective physical world for its own sake" (1933, p. 210). And in a truly magnificent section in her *Social Development of Young Children*, Isaacs offers us a perspective on play in the early years that should surely be compulsory reading for all professionals and education policy-makers. I quote selectively from it to give the reader a flavour of the Waldorf-affirming wisdom it contains:

Play... is supremely the activity which brings [the child] psychic equilibrium in the early years. In his play activities, the child externalises and works out to some measure of harmony all the different trends of his internal psychic life..., through his own wishes and impulses... *Play is indeed the breath of life to the child*, since it is through play activities that he... can work upon his wishes, fears and phantasies, *so as to integrate them into a living personality*.... [The] passive work of the educator in leaving the child free to make-believe is as valuable a part of his function as his more active services—a point sometimes lost sight of in the modern nursery school [*plus ça change...!*—RH]. [The child's] indirect expression of unconscious phantasy... can never appear at the behest of the super-ego [i.e. via external didactic instruction—RH]. It is always the fruit of the child's own creative wishes. *If we attempt to control and contain it, we simply make it lifeless and formal*.... [H]ere... the educator... must be passive and merely supporting.... The inner flux of forces within [the child's] own mind... is beyond our power to affect and control by any deliberate act.... [We cannot] determine the lines

upon which his individuality shall develop, and what his actual solution of conflict shall be. The more clearly we ourselves recognise this, the greater support we are likely to be to him. (Isaacs, 1933, pp. 425-7 *passim*, my emphases)

Finally in this section, here is the psychiatrist and phenomenologist John Heaton on play.

[P]lay is the performance of the movement as such. It is nothing to do with the attitude of a subject who must take up a playful attitude to an object 'play' in order that playing can occur... *If this is not realized, then play becomes distorted, as is commonly done in... educational... circles*.... In play there is a suspension of belief and non-belief... —to [the child] there is no conceptual distinction between being and playing.... The game absorbs the player into itself and thus takes from him the burden of [self-aware] initiative.... Play does not allow the player to behave towards it like an object.... *[it] does not point to purposes beyond itself, it celebrates itself*. It creates a structure in which the identity of the player is lost.... *Its nature is completely distorted* if it is considered psychologically as a known thing about which assertions can be made *and which people then set forth to cultivate*. (1978, pp. 124-5, my emphases)

In this light, the British Government's championing of so-called "structured" play is comprehensively exposed for what it is—a self-contradictory and incoherent notion rooted in quite fundamental (materialistic) misunderstandings about the nature of human 'coming-into-being' and existence.

Anxiety and the adult-centric disruption of healthy early learning

...how serious a mistake it would be to try to *make* little children grow along the lines which these records show they can follow. They must be given a large measure of freedom to imagine or to think as the need and occasion arises. If we tried to *teach* them these things formally, OR TO EXERT PRESSURE UPON THEM IN THESE DIRECTIONS, we should simply waste our time, and MIGHT EVEN DO POSITIVE DAMAGE.

Susan Isaacs, *Intellectual Growth in Young Children*, italics hers, capitals mine

While Rudolf Steiner was still alive Susan Isaacs took part in some very detailed qualitative research into young children's behaviour at the Malting House School in Cambridge (1924-7), part of which is exhaustively written up in her book *Intellectual Growth of Young Children*. The book is notable for the recurrent vindication which it offers to Waldorf educational philosophy. Not only was Isaacs deeply aware of the need to respect *and not to intrude upon* children's early development (cf. the above epigraph), but—being a psycho-analyst—she was also highly attuned to the deleterious effects of *anxiety* upon learning.

According to Isaacs, "mental alertness and an active interest in objects are very dependent upon freedom from anxiety and inner tension" (1930 p. 104). For her, make-believe play (which I would argue *must* be freely chosen, if it is to fulfil the following purpose) brings "indirect aid to the intellectual life... by giving external body and form to the phantasied wishes and guilts of infancy, *and thus allaying anxiety*" (ibid., my emphasis). In other words, rather than having an inappropriate over-intellectualised and prematurely 'objective' concreteness eternally foisted upon her, the young

child needs an *unintruded-upon* space in which to play with, elaborate and work through her deepest wishes, anxieties and unconscious fantasies, in order to gain competence in healthily managing *with her own freely developed will*, her curiosities and anxieties about relational being and human existence.

Couple this with the psychoanalytic insight on the way in which *emotional* states are unconsciously transferred between people—with young children being particularly susceptible to 'picking up' and being (a)(e)ffected by others' emotions *long before they are remotely able consciously to understand, process and integrate such intersubjective influences*—and we have a lethally poisonous cocktail (which, if we were being uncharitable, we might call a 'Woodhead-Hodge'). Imagine, for example, the 'inner tensions', and resultant anxieties and developmental distortions, that are being set up within young children through their being preoccupied by, and having somehow to manage the irresolvable conflict between their own nascent inner will forces on the one hand, and an externally imposed adult-centric agenda on the other. It's little wonder that, within a few years of these imposed



A caravan about to cross the Sahara? The Lord Mayor's procession? A farmers' blockade at Dieppe? Morning surgery at the post-natal clinic? Waiting to check out at the supermarket? Or waiting to check in at the airport? Guests assembling for a wedding? A fence round the kangaroo enclosure at the zoo? Or just a jaunty line of wickerwork prams, baskets, and goods and chattels? Photo: Sally Schweizer.

regimes of early formal learning, children suffer a malaise in their healthy capacity to learn (which is then responded to by simply *ratcheting up* that very same poisonous world-view rather than dropping the rampant 'control-freakery' for long enough to allow insight into what might be going wrong).

Imagine, further, the effects upon young children of being 'force-fed' Early Learning Goals by adults trying to pretend that they aren't so doing (and hence, incidentally, offering children quite appalling models of *inauthenticity* to imitate...); with those adults typically carrying with them all the *anxieties* associated with OFSTED (as Chris Woodhead chillingly called it, "a very fine, sharp instrument"—BBC news, 2 August 1999), learning targets, impending inspections...; and with young children *unconsciously picking up all such anxiety and perhaps unwittingly making it their own* (given that they are developmentally nowhere near yet able to differentiate between their own autonomous feelings and those they are absorbing from the adults and the environment around them). And all this before we even begin to consider the likely effects on young children of adults relating to them with an adult-centric *preoccupying agenda* of learning goals which cannot but compromise the extent to which those adults are capable of a *full emotional and relational engagement* with the young child—and again, with the child learning through modelling and imitation that *human 'relationship' entails being preoccupied with one's own agenda*, rather than respecting and trusting the will and freedom of children to find their own developmental path (as so clearly argued by Susan Isaacs, earlier). No wonder our culture displays increasing signs of difficulties in relationship, and of a 'pathological narcissism' and its associated 'character disorders'.

Seen in this kind of light, then, what is happening in state early years education is nothing short of the criminal violation of early childhood; and the long-term 'psychosomatic' and psychological price our children are likely to pay for this violation is quite incalculable.

The pernicious deforming effects of premature cognitive-intellectual development

Children who are pushed too hard academically, and who consequently advance temporarily beyond their peers, may ultimately pay a price in terms of lost opportunities for development.

Professor Patrick Bateson and Paul Martin

There is a substantial psychotherapeutic literature on the dangers of premature intellectual/ego development which strongly supports Rudolf Steiner's insightful cautions in this area. Psychotherapist Robert Royston, for example, describes how "intellectual inhibition and dysfunction" in adult life can be traced back to "a dominating autocratic object" who, in the patient's childhood, established a relationship of domination in which the child's own natural integrated development was disrupted. Thus, "the child's developmental agenda and establishment of an independent self are impaired in service to the [intense narcissistic] needs of the object" (p. 15). Intellectual blocking and the negation of memory are the kind of adult symptoms which result from the person's inability to digest mentally such a bad childhood experience. Moreover, such debilitating adult psychological symptoms are exceedingly difficult to treat successfully, because the patient tends to feel compelled to defeat the therapeutic healing process (p. 17).

It should be noted that, in psychoanalytic object relations theory, an 'object' can be defined as any human person or *cultural-environmental influence* which the child 'imbibes' (or 'introjects', in object-relations terminology) and makes part of her developing psyche. Royston continues: "In psychodynamic terms, the autocratic object gives *the self of the subject no space to flourish* and instead *pushes its own narcissistic needs centre stage*, forcing the other, in a variety of different possible ways, to bear witness to the object's superiority" (p. 17, my emphases). And further, the autocratic object "uses its interactive power to stifle the individuality of the child and will not brook independent ideas or challenge to his or her often dogmatic ideas and maxims" (ibid.); and the autocratic object tends to operate "through a range of covert, almost invisible interactions" (ibid.). Now the reader will probably already have divined my argument—namely, that the intrusive adult-centric, over-intellectual agenda of the state's early years environment constitutes an "autocratic object" which may well be doing systematic and untold damage to a whole generation of cognitively hot-housed children. And it should also be clear from this example how we can use the clinical evidence from psychotherapeutic data to verify the insights that Rudolf Steiner bequeathed to us nearly a century ago. (The reader is referred to the book by Corrigan and Gordon [1955] for a comparable discussion of what they term "the mind object", and its debilitating pathological effects on human development.)

Discussion

Materialistic learning... dominates education... Education... has become an institution whose purpose... is not to make culture, not to serve the living cosmos, but to harness humankind to the dead forces of materialism. Education, as we know it, from pre-school through graduate school, damages the soul.

Robert Sardello

If the above analysis is anything like right, then we might already expect to be witnessing signs of the harm being done by the current early years educational regime—though of course it is essentially impossible to separate out the respective effects of the educational environment *per se*, and the pernicious effects of modern culture more generally (e.g. Healy, 1990). Take the recent article in *The Observer* newspaper ('Mind control drug threat to children', 27 February 2000), a highly disturbing front-page story which reported on the frightening scale of medically diagnosed child "behavioural disorders", with "tens of thousands of schoolchildren with mild behaviour problems [now] being drugged with Ritalin... simply in order to control them". It is by no means far-fetched to propose some kind of causal relationship between the burgeoning and comparatively recent epidemic in child "behavioural disturbances", and recent (and 'autocratically objection'-able!) early years policy "innovations" which demand a relentless and intrusive "control-freak" surveillance, measurement, assessment and testing of children's developmental process—not to mention the forced imposition of premature, adult-centric cognitive-intellectual learning at ever-earlier ages.

In England, Ritalin prescriptions have risen from 3,500 in 1993 to no less than 126,000 in 1998—a 36-fold increase in just five years. The article highlighted psychiatrists' proposed new drug-prescribing powers for behaviourally 'disordered' children—which represents a chronic misdiagnosis of what is at root a profound educational and *cultural* malaise. For rather than 'attention deficit' and 'hyperactivity' being medically pathologised and their sufferers subjected to normalising biological treatment, these symptoms are surely far better understood as children's *healthy* response to, and unwitting commentary on, technological culture's ever-escalating manic over-stimulation, and the routine violence it is doing to children's healthy development—not least its cognitively-biased distortions of early child development. And

until our policy-makers develop the insight to recognise and to respond to this malaise at a *cultural* level rather than at an individualised medical level, the prevalence of children's behavioural difficulties will inevitably continue to escalate—Ritalin or no Ritalin.

Another tell-tale sign of the damage being perpetrated on our young children is the recently published research by Dr Judith Whitburn of the UK's prestigious National Institute of Economic and Social Research, reported in the *Times Educational Supplement* of 28 January 2000 ('Nursery lessons "damage" learning', p. 6). Whitburn found that because English children start school so young "many do not have the social and behavioural skills necessary to learn" (ibid.); and before long, the effects of the *head-start* (!) which they receive from early formal schooling are more than swamped by a learning malaise around the age of six or seven—leading in turn to significant underperformance in maths compared with their Japanese counterparts who start formal schooling later. In a letter published in the *TES* of 18 February 2000 ('Stop damaging nursery children', p.18), I wrote: "it seems highly likely that [Whitburn's] findings will apply to educational performance in general.... In the light of these findings it will be extraordinarily irresponsible if the Government persists with its massively over-prescriptive formalisation of our early-years learning environment."

Conclusion

The lucid interpretation, the concise formulation, can be a misleading picture for the child; and indeed, a strain — *an impossible demand on his emerging powers of representation*. The nursery age child is not struggling for clarity, she is struggling for articulation.

Adam Phillips (my emphasis)

Overall, then, the principal concern of this article is that those whose early childhood development is inappropriately intruded upon and distorted are likely to end up either suffering from emotional-behavioural disturbances in childhood, or — as child psychotherapist Adam Phillips has graphically argued in his important contribution to the Anna Freud symposium (Ward, 1998) — they may well end up on the analyst's couch many years down the road. And such pernicious long-term effects certainly won't be picked up by Education Secretary David Blunkett's researchers until it's far too late to do anything about it.

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No problem to bring the ski-sloped mountains to Mohammed. The predominating 'bodily' senses—movement, balance, touch, well-being—provide the basis for later developmental stages.
Photo: Sally Schweizer.

Some Further Reading (Non-Waldorf)

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Non-Verbal Education

Medical-pedagogical praxis in the pre-school years*

by MICHAELA GLÖCKLER

It is not moral preaching and not reasoned instruction which work on children in the right way: that which works is what the adults in their surroundings do visibly before their eyes.

Rudolf Steiner

Typically, human beings never finish learning, and even when getting older they'll keep adding new things to what has already been attained. At the same time, it is obvious that the degree and manner of learning changes during the course of life. Every stage of life is specially adapted to certain learning processes. This shows above all in the first twenty years where, along with bodily growth, the soul-spirit's ability to take things in and readiness to learn is buoyant. With this sketch as background, we may focus our attention on the pre-school years.

The development of learning ability up to the beginning of adulthood

During the course of their development children learn in different ways. In the first years it happens through imitation: e.g. walking, talking and thinking, the handling of objects, getting dressed and undressed, eating habits, shaking hands when meeting people, and much more. What lies behind this? Learning through imitation means teaching yourself according to a perceived role model. Without any explanations or pedagogical instruction being given, the child takes in all the events happening around it, practising out of its own inner drive until it has attained the corresponding skills. Children do not learn to speak through explanation, nor do they learn to walk through instruction in how to move. They learn these complicated and far-reaching human capacities solely through

their own inner drive, modelled on the pattern provided by adults. This concentrated, imitative learning of the child—an activity which is kindled by the role model and tirelessly practised—is here termed non-verbal learning i.e. learning without words. Parents who endeavour to set an example for their children in this manner could therefore be called non-verbal educators.

An example might make clear what is meant by this. In a doctor's practice it often happens that when a mother and child come into the surgery a problem arises. The doctor has greeted the mother and then



... The following is a chapter—minus the questions and answers at the end of the original—from Dr Glöckler's book: *Elternsprechstunde*. It is printed here with the author's kind permission. Something of the consultational/advisory style of the doctor's surgery has been slightly emphasised in the translation.

"I'm too busy to come and play." The mystery of imitation—see articles on pages 17-22 and 23-28.

Photo: Sally Schweizer.

turns to the child who also holds out her hand. Often with little children it's not the right hand but the left. The mother who knows about non-verbal education will look on calmly while the child gives the doctor her left hand, with the doctor taking it in a friendly way; whereas the mother who is not accustomed to this method of child-upbringing will tell the child to give the doctor the 'proper' hand. Ashamed or disappointed, the child withdraws her hand. The spontaneous readiness to greet vanishes; sometimes the hand sinks down listlessly or slips behind the back, and a difficult situation arises. How different it is for the child who shakes hands out of pure imitation, where it is left to the doctor to determine whether, after having taken the left hand and said 'Hello', he also does the same thing with the right hand, or simply leaves it at one handshake, knowing full well that things will correct themselves between the ages of five and seven.

If people correct children verbally in the pre-school years, their age-appropriate mode of learning is not supported, bringing an element into their education which is only applicable to a later stage of life. Since a pre-school child is able to understand the meaning of an action intuitively and then imitate it, it is not ready to take on board explanations about the deed. The readiness for action—both the will and the physical motoric (i.e. its movement) is still bound to the sense experience. The eminent French developmentalist Piaget identified this phase of sensory-motor intelligence (*senso* stands for sense experience; *motor* stands for organs of movement i.e. the muscular system). Intelligence and meaning are not yet abstracted independently from the bodily experience, but work directly, intuitively through the senses, so that the movement, dependent upon the senses, happens as one, unified, imitative process. In the most intelligent way, children can do what they see and repeat what they hear. Everything that they experience is understood immediately, even if they have no words or concepts for it. The whole sense world is experienced directly and 'sensibly'—it instantly 'makes sense'! This only changes when thinking becomes emancipated from the body at which point direct sense experience is lost. When this emancipation occurs, sense experience is accompanied more and more by thought. It is more conscious. This later mode of learning, grounded in thinking, is much harder to attain and goes much more slowly than the intuitive pre-school mode.

It is therefore important not to shorten the imitative phase by developing abstract intelligence prematurely. However, this is exactly what happens

when the little child is educated verbally, through explanations being offered. Moreover, this premature awakening of abstract intelligence lames the imitative faculty. Waldorf Kindergarten teachers experience this often, for example, when a child of four is admitted who has already 'enjoyed' this mode of verbal education. Such children are often seen standing apart or loitering around with their hands in their pockets watching what the others are doing. They have no inclination to enter into the games that are going on so uninhibitedly and imitatively. It usually takes six months or longer till they are ready to join in and, through seeing what the others are doing, become just as involved.

Why is it so important that pre-school children have the opportunity to imitate as much as possible? This is because every activity, and especially every physical skill which arises through imitation, not only results in an ability for later life but also gives impetus to the healthy development of physical functioning during those years. We must not forget that children are not only learning; day by day they are growing up. Learning and growing are inextricably bound together. So the question is: does every learning process also support the child's physical development? It is obvious that physical development in children is best stimulated by copying and participating in activities that require skilful dexterity rather than by sitting still (as for instance in front of the television), or playing with electronically controlled toys and games where a minimum of skilful movement is required. It's also good, where possible, to avoid being hemmed in in small apartments without any interesting things going on, which stimulate imitation. Rather give them the possibility to bring all their physical capacities into play (particularly their movement capability, sense of balance and their fine and gross motor skills).

Every act of learning is at the same time an act of will. Learning requires effort. With pre-school children, the will is still integrally bound to the sensory activity, without any intervening cognition. Uniquely, this gives the possibility for optimal learning in accordance with the functions of the sense organs and the interest with which the child uses his sense organs to take in the world. Some children have more interest; some less. There are those with the possibility of wide-awake attention, and those whose powers of attention are weak. The adult must know how he can awaken the children's interest and gain their attention. This happens when whatever needs to be done is undertaken joyfully and with enthusiasm. Something done with care and

in a loving, enthusiastic manner evokes the child's interest much more than when you do things in a listless, disinterested or even grudging way. Something similar can be seen also with older children. For example, when it is a question of who should clear up after the meal, if someone jumps up and says, "I'll wash up today. Anyone coming to help?" and has already disappeared into the kitchen to make a start, others will much more easily follow suit than when everyone gets up quietly after the meal and tries to make himself small in the hope that someone else will step in. The more convinced an adult is about what he does, the more attractive it is for the imitative situation of the child. All this changes when school begins and the child's readiness to act becomes more independent of sense impressions. As motivation, he now needs his feelings to be stirred, for between the change of teeth and puberty the feeling life develops. The children now do not react primarily to what they see and experience, but to what they feel. They judge everything they experience according to feeling. Sympathy and antipathy play a big part in this. Which teacher they like, which clothes please them, which pupils in the class are 'dim' (as the children put it)—all this is affirmed and discussed. What pleases them and what doesn't play a big role in all they do. The teacher must succeed in arousing feelings which give wings to their willingness to learn. However, with learning always being bound up with effort, it can't only be a matter of the pupils learning what they enjoy learning. It is much more important that the pupils learn to love making an effort of will in the whole process of learning. They can achieve this when they come to like the adult concerned. Indeed, just at this age we meet the phenomenon of those pupils making good progress in the subjects where they like the teacher. For example, a child who has never understood anything in mathematics suddenly becomes quite a successful pupil after a change of maths teacher, with the new one having a good connection with the child.

At this age, naturally, verbal education is necessary. It is also appropriate because the intelligence of the child has become emancipated to the extent that she can retain in her memory what the teacher has said. She grasps the meaning which is contained in word and sentence independently of outer action. This ability appears towards the end of the Kindergarten i.e. when it is time for school proper to begin.

You can recognise the above in how children listen to a story. As long as they remain in the non-

verbal mode of learning their memory is not yet independent. They love to hear the same stories again and again and to play the same games over and over. Grownups are often amazed that the children don't get bored. They don't because their memory has not yet reached this level of independence: the intelligence lives completely in activity. The children have, so to speak, a repetitive memory. In the repetition of an event or story they feel that they know it already. The pleasure of remembering only stirs whilst re-enacting the event or re-hearing the story, and not in the independent way that is later the case.

This new mode of learning spurts forward between the 6th and 8th years. You notice it when one day the child doesn't want her beloved bedtime story, but instead wants to hear something new. When she no longer lights up happily when mother says that it's time for 'Snow White', but objects: "I know that one so well already, I want a different one,"—then this moment has come. As long as the children are glad to hear the same story repeated again and again they are still in the non-verbal phase in which intelligence is not accessible to them *in abstracto*.

After puberty, eagerness to act requires yet another motivation. Neither example or feeling alone provide sufficient motivation. Young people must see for themselves what they have to do. It becomes more and more evident that adolescents will only do what they understand, whilst acknowledging the reasons. Will and readiness for action have now become dependent on thinking and on insight. Young people do not want to carry out an action primarily to please an adult, but because they see some justification for it. If these different modes of learning in childhood and youth are taken into account, the task of education is made easier. If not, problems and conflicts arise which have to be overcome every single day and are deleterious for the climate of learning.

How does one learn to educate non-verbally?

We are often faced with the predicament: how to react in the pre-school years when the child refuses to do what we ask. How do we get the child to do what we want without a huge torrent of explanation and justification? Here one can learn a great deal in one of the Kindergartens where non-verbal education is practised. In the Waldorf Kindergarten, for example, it works as follows. When the children are playing outside, walking on stilts or building little dens, and it's time to come indoors to eat, many of them get upset at the thought of their fun being curtailed. It is a great help, in such circumstances, if

the meal is always at the same time and the children are accustomed to it. Habit is an important support for non-verbal education. It becomes self-evident that you follow the routine.

The Kindergarten teacher goes from group to group, singing the song which she sings every morning, signifying that they leave their treasured game and come in to eat. A few children are already following her. This extends into a little trail which affects the others. More and more join in until the whole group go inside. No scolding, no admonition, no telling off—simply a going inside embracing everyone.

A mother once said to me, “When I hear you speaking like this I find it all perfectly understandable; but then when I’m at home I always ask myself: where’s my clarity disappeared to? It doesn’t work as I hoped it would.” This is the kind of problem which confronts people who are embarking on non-verbal education. So why is it so difficult? Why is it hardly possible today for an adult to refrain from a whole rigmarole of explanations when he wants something from a child? He has to learn that instead of words he needs to act concentratedly. One has to do something that mostly doesn’t happen today: unite oneself with what one wishes in such a way that one can perform it almost as a ritual—through one’s whole disposition, bring it to full expression. For when I speak about something and simultaneously think about it, I’m immediately distanced from it. I think ‘about’ it. I talk ‘about’ it. I am not *it*. I am not *in* it—not completely at one with it. It cannot speak out of me, manifest through me.



The seriousness and 'sacredness' of what's all in a day's work lies at the core of experiential learning. Photo: Sally Schweizer.

This disconnected ‘talking about a thing’ is rampant today. With one person you talk about something in one way and with another person you talk about it in another way; opinions have something relative about them; you don’t want to tie yourself down. This is typical of the intellectual culture in which we live. One distances oneself; one doesn’t take things seriously but remains ‘objective’. Seldom is it necessary to really throw yourself heart and soul into something. Many pupils are not used to taking seriously something that’s been said by an adult. They think everything can be discussed and made negotiable—that ultimately it is not decisive. And then they’re extremely surprised when they meet a grownup whose every word carries weight.

Today we have all been brought up in this rather hazy, noncommittal way of life. This means that a degree of uncertainty will have brushed off on us. Most people have inferiority complexes in that they clearly feel they don’t really understand a lot of what is going on in the world. This kind of uncertainty in judgment, resulting in being unable to form an opinion, is widespread; so relativity is also widespread—the feeling that what one thinks oneself has only limited value; everything could actually be quite different. Openness and critical distance are naturally an indispensable precondition for a genuine and realistic striving after knowledge. But they are undermining for the phase of non-verbal education. At that age children simply want to experience the meaning in everything that confronts them. If the adult cannot give this meaning because he is not convinced, or is uncertain, or experiences things as relative and only of limited importance, the child does not receive what she needs. She loses confidence, and through this many typical educational problems belonging to this age group ensue.

The rediscovery of body language

Nowadays there is a whole spectrum of psychotherapies—different schools ranging from sensitivity training to Gestalt therapy—which aim to convey to people what they think and feel inwardly, and how to relearn to express this in an honest way, through the body as well, and to show this in body language. It has been shown that many people become ill through unbearable tension arising between what they experience inwardly and the façade that they show to the world. It is not that I am recommending the above-named psychotherapeutic methods for learning how to educate non-verbally. I merely want to emphasise that the possibility of

non-verbal education—that is the ability to show through body language without words what one is thinking and what is meaningful—is something which is very foreign to the adult of our time, with symptoms of illnesses often appearing in consequence.

For learning how to educate in a non-verbal way I have two recommendations. Firstly eurythmy, where in every movement something meaningful and entirely in correspondence with feeling and thinking is brought to expression, providing one practises diligently. Secondly acting or drama, where one learns to move expressively and only to say what one really has to at a particular moment. It would be ideal if parents of pre-school children would get together in groups, and act small scenes in mime in order to express thoughts and feelings, patterns of behaviour, commands and taboos, as well as everyday problems in a non-verbal way. They should then exchange feedback about what they have experienced. It is fascinating to see how engaged children become when an adult makes an interesting movement or when his face has a meaningful expression which is inclined towards mimicry. They love this sort of thing. Not wanting to let him escape from them, they’ll do everything he wants. They love to provoke simple expressive reactions in adults, and like it when their parents show their emotions.

In this connection, it often happens that children in the Kindergarten pick up all sorts of rude words and trot these out provocatively in one or another situation. A typical case might be as follows. A mother meets an acquaintance on the street and begins a conversation. Little Johnny stands there and begins using rude words: crap, shit, wee-willy-willy. With interest he observes how the friend becomes embarrassed and the mother becomes uncomfortable [not least if it’s a Waldorf Kindergarten he attends!—trans.]. Meanwhile he is relishing the scene. But if the grownups continue talking unperturbed and ignore his silly prattle as a sign that it doesn’t cut any ice, the child will soon stop trying it on.

How does it happen that children instinctively know either that they have succeeded with such provocation or that it’s not worth their while? Had he just been walking with his mother alone, in all probability he wouldn’t have come out with anything of the sort. Such words only came into his mind when his mother started talking to her friend.

Once again: in the non-verbal phase, children instantly absorb the meaning of all sensory experiences. They do not experience the sense

experience separate from rational understanding. So it is possible for them intuitively to grasp the moral qualities in the soul life of the adult. That which occurs for us adults in later life only on special situations—when, for example, we sense that there is an ‘atmosphere’ in a room we’re entering, or when we notice that two people are in love with each other—this is a daily and ongoing occurrence for children. As soon as the mother meets her friend, the child feels that her interest has been deflected from him towards the other person. Through his provocative behaviour he would like to bring it about that he is once again the centre of attention. However, he must learn that this can’t always be; and the mother achieves this when she is quite consistent in doing what she considers is right—in this case, continuing to talk to her friend. If she empathises with the child, and understands how he feels a little forlorn, it will be easy for her, even while she’s talking, to keep casting a glance at him, or make some little movement so that he doesn’t feel left high and dry. In this way she can pre-empt the child’s becoming provocative.

Conditions for free and responsible action

There is yet a third hindrance vis-à-vis non-verbal education: the wish of many parents to allow their child to be free—not to direct. Hence, in order that he is not alienated, the three-year-old is asked what he would like to eat or what clothes he’d like to wear. Whoever realises that children of this age learn through example and are prone to taking on board any uncertainty in the adult’s attitude (for example that he is indecisive about what he wants and therefore asks the child) will change his stance for the sake of the child. Freedom can only develop when one has achieved one’s own mature insight. Of course, there are preliminary stages in the development of freedom. In the non-verbal phase of education this consists in allowing the child to imitate what he sees *unrestrictedly and without reserve*. He must be allowed to move freely. The house should be so organised that one doesn’t have to prohibit the children from this or that; rather should their impulse towards activity be allowed free rein. The example comes from the grownups, but the way in which the child responds is freely experienced and freely formed. Similarly, later at school, when the children learn something because they like their teacher, the element of freedom plays an important role. Because the child likes doing something, she feels free, even if the impulse for the activity has originated from an adult and not from herself. If children have been allowed to develop



Two 'men in a boat'—and in and on their magic carpet of fantasy. Photo: Ligita Gaile.

through these preliminary stages, they will also be in the position after puberty, when independent thinking and powers of judgment ripen, to act out of free, self-determined insight and personal understanding. Only then is true freedom possible.

To summarise: in the pre-school era, the key is *trust in adults and free play of movement*; in the school years, *love and joy in doing*; and in adulthood, recognition for what is true and right is the precondition for *free and responsible action*.

Adults who bring trust towards the child so that she will make use of her freedom when she is mature enough for it, will feel themselves in the time up to then as proxy, merely replacing those capabilities over which the child has no sovereignty during the course of his education; and they will hold back wherever the child has reached a sufficient degree of independence. Correspondingly, the child initially brings to the adult, and especially in the pre-school years, deep trust that he will do what is right. An infant lying with open arms and open eyes, having his nappy changed, is at the same time an archetypal image of trust-filled bliss. She allows everything to happen to her. Something of this original trust persists through the whole pre-school period, expressing itself also in the need to give herself over to imitation. The child regards everything that happens around her as worthy of imitation and trust. That is why it is so important that this trust is not betrayed. It is betrayed, however, when the child experiences that an adult does not know his own mind. Likewise, when the course of the day lacks regularity and rhythm and security. But if good

habits are instilled in the form of a definite sleeping-waking rhythm, in regular meal times, and regular alternation of play and rest, the child feels herself safe and protected, experiencing the course of such a day as something into which she may gladly enter.

Without such clear and well formed structure in the daily round, the growing organs of the child do not get the start in life which they need. Foundations for good functioning of the organs are laid when there is a regular alternating between making demands on the child and leaving her in peace. Many functional instabilities, in the sense of psychosomatic disorders in later life (automatic nervous system), have their roots in bad eating habits in early childhood. If children only eat according to fad and fancy, with no appetite at meal times because they've been nibbling and snacking in-between, the digestive organs will fail to learn to work together strongly and regularly and then to relax.

As can be gathered from the above, it is straightforward to understand the principle of non-verbal education; the challenge is to put it into daily practice.

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Creating a Meadow for Childhood

Education for a New Millennium
What do young children need today?

by SALLY SCHWEIZER

A five year-old on parental knee with opened book: "Wait, I haven't seen the picture properly." ¹

Another child of the same age is alone in front of a video and, as the pictures race by, accepts the situation silently, passively.

Example and love

The greatest tools we have as early years' educators are example and love. The young child is defenceless, trusting, without judgment or discrimination. This is the time of greatest learning. By three the child has learnt the particularly human qualities of walking, talking and first thinking; and taken the first new step in consciousness. "I'm taller than my neck," a three-year-old was heard to say.

What is right to offer the child under seven to learn when he absorbs so much so fast? The delicate senses are all-embracing; the child absorbs willy-nilly the world around, recreating it through the divine gift of imitation in play, speech and behaviour. Many children today have had to close themselves off

from a world with which they cannot cope by forming a hard, protective shell in their soul. One sees pale, defined faces, almost lumpy. Gone are many true children's faces, soft, round and rosy with bright eyes shining into the world.

Why? What is lacking that this has become so? Children in all strata of society are at risk: poverty and discrimination as well as affluence and over-



A shaft of morning sunlight, biscuits for break and always in the background, the long journey of life calling 'the rider' into the future. Photo: Sally Schweizer.

stimulation create an environment in which children cannot thrive. Urban living exacerbates the effects. All parts of their development may be attacked by harmful influences and images around them. Many children are drowning in a bog of commercialism and media; speed and greed rule. Uncertainty and confusion abound. One blinks and it's all changed, accelerating so fast that we are left gasping. Too much, too often, too early..., strength is sapped. Do we uphold the need for a proper childhood? Or do we dress children as little adults and plunge them into the realms of adult emotions and intellect in the hope that they will become clever and knowledgeable as early as possible? To what detriment? Research finds that those given early schooling do no better than those starting later. Does early exposure to ICT lead them to access information they really need, or does living in a wholesome environment do it anyway? Children are our future. How can we help them to face the world today?

Moral life

Every child has an individual spiritual nature as well as an earthly one; it is up to us to nourish both. Then s/he will be able to stand in the world with courage and responsibility. Working with festivals has a healing quality and deepens children's moral understanding. It helps counteract the breakdown of traditions and out-of-season peculiarities (e.g. strawberries in winter). It covers every aspect of learning with its preparation and celebration, bringing a magical depth of spiritual and soul experience to child and parent alike, so healing in our world of untruths, cons and hype. A foundation is laid to help the child withstand later pressures of prestige, and temptations such as drugs, smoking and alcohol. Our daily rituals such as the non-denominational verse and candle lighting at break give the children a sense of occasion and continuity. Celebrating each child's birthday kindles self-respect.

Four-year-old, of a Daddy Longlegs: "What do they eat?"

One six-year-old to another with long golden hair: "Did God make your hair?"

Religious feeling is at the heart of the 0-7-year-olds' learning. I am not, of course, linking this with any form of creed or organised religion. Wonder is the basis of their search for knowledge. This quality is disappearing, often replaced by only factual and even useless information, and yet it is vital also to

the adult. As a six-year-old said, "Heaven is more higher than space." The true scientist must, next to clear analysis, also be a creative wonderer with reverence for life. We must not be fooled into answering *all* the children's questions! but can be silent and leave space for their own answers. As, for instance with the seven year-old who said: "How can a pyjama case walk?... (pause)... You mean....*magic*?"

Precocious, hardened children become softened and their senses opened through our education. We care for the room and garden. Even sawdust goes on the compost heap, as well as apple maggots to finish eating, and we rescue lost worms for the flower bed. Listen to this:

Four-to-six-year-olds weeding around the bonfire, finding worms: "There are three under here."

"This one is so fat, he's eaten a lot of bonfire."

"This one is so small, it was only born last week."

"This one was only born this morning."

"This tiny one just now while we were having break!"

"I'm going to make a bed under that bush for this one."

What a wealth of 'Desirable Outcomes'²—all at once!

We care not to waste anything, even water; the future of the planet is at stake, but it is also a picture of caring for each other. We collect just four or five frogspawn eggs, wait for their metamorphosis and carry the tiny frogs back to the pond. The Waldorf approach is very practical—out of life and living itself, and relevant to everything the child should be learning at this age. The child needs this living integral experience to accumulate knowledge, for he lives in the moment. In winter a candle or two illumine the room instead of electricity—this is cosy and *real*.

Home life

A six-year-old: "I've got to go to afternoon care because it's booked and paid for."

A five-year-old in afternoon care: "Mummy and Daddy aren't *working*! They're always going in bed."

Many children suffer from the breakdown of family life and the vanishing of the extended family. Their parents love them but are stressed; TV and computer may replace their care. When women return to work

soon after the baby's birth, the child feels lost, however loving the carers are. Single parents struggle to cope on their own; many parents are both working and don't have enough time for their children. Routines are haphazard. In today's hustle and bustle many are not allowed the time to recover properly from illness. Violence, neglect and abuse are increasing. Domestic work may be replaced by appliances, and meals not taken together—often hurried affairs in the microwave.

In the Kindergarten, we work closely with parents and carers, inviting them for a morning and to our festivals, and having regular evenings as a group, sharing aspects of childhood: helping and supporting each other. We visit the children at home, not to pry but to strengthen trust and gain insight into the child's needs. Parents often need and ask for help.

Social life

We share a nutritious break mid-morning, prepared with the children, beginning with a grace and ending with thanks. They help of their own accord with the cooking or spreading, baking or chopping, serving, laying tables and washing up. It is a social occasion, as well as nourishing. One apple or apricot brought by a child for me is always shared between us all. What a wonder!

There are other domestic activities for them to do such as polishing, sweeping, mending (vital to counteract the throw-away mentality but also to give a picture of caring), crafts, washing, woodwork, sewing and gardening. They become deft and able, supporting later thinking capacity.

A new Israeli four year-old to mother (in Hebrew): "Why don't Jane and Sarah understand when I speak?"

"Sally doesn't either."

"Yes, she does, she understands everything." (—actually very little! but gestures speak louder than words!)

Communication has increased, yet racism, ethnic cleansing, violence and war thrive. What a paradox! Increasing loneliness brings new problems.

Children need to be shown love and compassion, for they will copy it. Christmas and Whitsun are particularly relevant times for giving a sense of inclusiveness, celebrating the diverse nature of humanity with songs in other languages; but it can happen on a daily basis as well. For example, I learn a song in the language of each one and there are black dolls as well as white.

"All right, you can come in our game," said a six-year-old, "but you *are* allowed not to play if you want"(1)

Children are egoistic but have a growing sense of sociability particularly when six years old; because they are under no schooling pressure they have space for it: how they love to help the little ones and organise each other! Their emotions are gently stimulated through love, music, colour and warmth. The images created through the repeated telling of a nature story or fairy tale support the moral and emotional life. Sometimes one needs to show beautiful illustrations alongside, to counteract the ugly, frightening images many children carry, absorbed from the media etc.

Modern life

Technology has brought us many wonderful things; yet alongside its advances we need human qualities. This is especially relevant for the child under seven. Our environment becomes less and less child-friendly. Children are adaptable and resilient but it can be at a cost and they become stressed. Their delicate nerve-sense systems may be flooded with impressions through harsh colours, news, image-covered clothing, traffic, background music, advertisements, story tapes, electronic sounds, poor and ugly (often too many) toys and books. Barbie, Aliens, Bugs, Woody etc. leave precious little room for fantasy. Are Disneyworld, Toy Story, etc. 'treats'? Processed foods, pollution, over-much immunisation and unnecessary use of antibiotics undermine their health. Computer games can give the child an experience of a series of violent images with neither context nor resolution, leading to confusion and fear. Children cannot cope, and lapse into lethargy, poor concentration or bad behaviour. Some are stimulated to early sexual awakenings. Bored children are actually simply so over-saturated that they can't absorb any more. Poor sleep may be caused by exhaustion from too many sensations and so finding no rest. Mystery and wonder are frequently distorted. One even intrudes into the life of the unborn child with as yet unknown consequences.

Much of the growth of these phenomena is new since my childhood. Not that there is anything wrong with electricity or machines! But where and when is the right or wrong place or time?

The child under seven's consciousness does not separate him from the world; he lives in complete sympathy with it, as the following demonstrate.



*The footsteps of 'the Creator' are to be found in sand and shell, silica and carbon, child and childhood.
First-hand experience will lead to heart-filled, head-crowned knowledge.*

A five-year-old, about a dream: "But you *know*, you were in it"

A four-year-old: "I'm a *real* rabbit."

Another four-year-old, watching a eurythmy performance: "Are they puppets?"

In catapulting children into workbooks, tests and computers, they are torn away from their real world and forced into a foreign one. This, together with a stressful environment can have harmful consequences. And the tragedy is, it is a tragedy. For the older a child is, the less can be put right. Worse still, so often this environment is seen as beneficial, and certainly normal. The goodies and baddies are often portrayed in equal measure by ugly characters. A website for 2-12-year-olds "protects them from unsuitable material on the Internet", but gives them access to a cold intellectual medium devoid of the wonder intrinsic to their being, and still provides questionable material. 'Action toys' turn children into passive players. They 'soak up' these characters and imitate their behaviour, speech and movement. The bright ideas of the commercial world to rake in money render the children pawns in their game. One disrespects children in a mistaken assumption that they need to be entertained. Many media images of 'beauty', 'strength' and 'desirability' can lead to anorexia, inadequacy or violence. The same can be said of many toys.

Rhythmic life

We have many damaged children today, for whom it is a relief to come to the Kindergarten. The rhythmic structuring of the day, week, month and season helps to stabilise uncertainties and lack of boundaries. Children's natural activity finds much harmonious, constructive and strengthening outlet. The teacher consciously creates a balance between play and rest, 'chaos' and calm, noise and quiet, group and individual activity, humour and seriousness, being inside and outside. How they love fun and laughter! Some arrive pale and go home rosy; some begin to sleep better. Rhythms also bring about good habits.

"Where are the toys?" children sometimes ask at interview.

Day 1: Story.

Day 2: "Oh, not *that* story again!"

Day 3: Story, child silent.

Day 4: "Can we have that story again?"
a recurring incidence with new children.

Children soon warm to unformed playthings of natural materials, just as to the daily repetition of a story. Especially today, the child's inner need for 'again!' must be satisfied. We have bricks and logs—which in the child's mind can be ships, mobile

phones, cheese, fences, or ...logs. Soft dolls with only an indication of a face are not confined to one emotion. Clothes' horses, planks and cloths may make dog kennels, castles, shops, kitchens, spaceships, houses. Shells, conkers, pine cones form patterns, money, food, plates...

Their creativity need know no bounds. We give them the space and time for unguided play. Goals are their own, not ours. Time flows on; the chimes are the rhythms: waxing and waning, ebbing and flowing. Tidy-up time begins when I take a cloth and fold it; nothing disturbs their concentrated activity: they gradually notice and follow suit.

Thinking and consciousness

Two six-year-olds in conversation: "Let's finish the house now."

"But it's time to tidy up."

"Then, why did you spend all that time *playing*? If you hadn't spent all that time playing, we could have built the house."

A five-year-old: "I don't *want* to play; I'm doing a puppet show."

What is play? What is not? In this active dreamworld they lay the foundations of clear philosophical thinking. They find solutions to problems and help each other. Arguments are sorted out amicably, often only through my walking nearby or watching from a distance, inwardly supporting but leaving them free. Alongside mathematics and language, physical and imaginative development are fostered. Warm and peaceful simplicity in which they can flourish surrounds them: plain coloured cloths and gifts of nature in ordered baskets, a few beautiful pictures. Patterns and rhythms hold them. They enjoy beeswax modelling, water colour painting, lyre playing, beeswax crayon drawing, song, poetry and dance.

How can we expect them to work with the 3R's and ICT, when they are still at the following stage of consciousness.

Five-year-old: "Did *you* build this school?"

Another, the same age: "Sally, who are you going to marry when you grow up?"

Every child will play with ready-made games, but the depth of learning is not equal to that of games



Ready for the play (Cinderella).

Structure in the Kindergarten day is an equally important partner to creative play.

created out of themselves, nor of self-motivated activities: "I can do it by myself on my own," asserted a 3½-year-old, sharing out spoons at break.

Learning in Waldorf Kindergartens is integrated, not compartmentalised. Each of our activities covers most, if not all Early Learning Goals.² Children grow at their own unpredefined pace. As their thinking and judgment are in seed form we take care not to overburden it, rather concentrating on their innate busy-ness. Forcing the intellect at this age is to the detriment of other faculties. Making choices and decisions throws them back on themselves prematurely. They can do it, but at a cost. We are gentle with awakening self-consciousness. "My voice sounds different from everyone else's!" mused a nearly six-year-old.

When I do plays with the children, I put out on stands several costumes for each character. Maybe one day we'll have four Snow Whites, and the next day, five. This not only precludes disappointment: it suits their stage of consciousness. While they are still one with the world till 6 or 7, we believe it is not appropriate to make them self aware or give feelings of pride, guilt or competition. For this reason also we don't display their work, which is quickly forgotten anyway. The importance of the 'result' begins only after Kindergarten.

All this provides a firm basis for enthusiasm and joy in learning.

Movement

Every Tuesday I take the children on an expedition. Well equipped, with a freshly prepared picnic of muesli and a thermos of herb tea, we set off: fields, woods, stream, mud, sun, frost, rain, 'ringtime', fallen branches, brambly tunnels, older children building huts, story, magic, joy and mystery await us. We go where the mood takes us. I would do it in a town park or grassy space too! This feeds their senses and understanding of the world around, while strengthening courage and stamina.

Many children's movement is too restricted today by over-use of 'convenient' baby slings, seats and buggies, (the head hanging sideways and the back crooked with limbs wedged in), little play outside, much car travel. Physical development under seven years is the basis for intellectual and emotional development, and we place great emphasis on free movement, self initiated and imitated, not directed. What about TV and the 'mouse'? What does it *really* signify when the child's report says he has "poor mouse control"? We prepare an endless stream of gestures in songs and poems for imitation in ringtime and eurythmy. Children need also to explore and take normal risks.

Future

The modern child needs to develop courage, self-discipline and powers of discrimination to meet the growing problems of the world. Increasing violence, ethical issues e.g. gene manipulation, declining health of the planet, a nightmarish number of options, increasing invasion of privacy, untruths in adverts.... And yet many are born now with particular qualities of sociability and initiative to care for each other and the earth. Children need to learn adaptability and compassion and develop intuition through being given a proper childhood with a secure foundation, enough time for truly creative play, and artistic work and humour. The real magic and wonder of childhood will help them to become inwardly free.

We hold the children close in our thoughts; this is part of our work. We must have the imagination and courage to be ourselves, and teach from the heart as well as the head. Education becomes alive and is true for the children when the teachers do what they believe in; they should not teach just what they are supposed to, or are stressed or bound by fear. They must be full of joy and initiative: the children will imitate it! One must find the balance between protection and freedom: create a 'meadow' in which children can freely exercise their boundless creativity. And some final food for thought:

A girl of six in my class to her parents: "Do you know why I'm gooder in the Kindergarten than at home? It's because there's magic there."

Sally Schweizer, mother of four between 23 and 29, taught in both state and independent schools in London and Switzerland before discovering Steiner education. Now remarried, (previously Lange) she was herself a single parent for 13 years. Of 19 years as a Steiner-Waldorf Kindergarten teacher, the last 15 have been at Michael Hall. Her present group consists of 25 children each day of 4 to 6½ years of whom (typically) 11 are partly or wholly not English.

1 The anecdotes quoted are from children in my Kindergarten. For some of these I am indebted to parents.

2 Governmental expectations for pre-school children.

3 Imitated movement to songs and poems.

Cleaning Up the Toxic Childhood

by JOAN ALMON

About 20 years ago, Waldorf teachers in North America began to wonder if it was their imagination or if children really were becoming less healthy. It seemed that Kindergarten children were thinner, more nervous and over-sensitive, as if they had grown thin-skinned, with nerves uncovered and exposed to a world intent on over-stimulation. Doctors and therapists were also seeing the same problems, which are now such a widespread phenomenon that major newspaper and magazine articles appear regularly calling childhood today a toxic experience. In the past two decades many books have appeared on this subject and have made a significant impact, such as *The Hurried Child*, *Endangered Minds*, and *Evolution's End*, and more recently, *The Shelter of Each Other*, *Failure to Connect*, and *Saving Childhood*.¹ These books describe a serious decline in children's overall health and make concrete suggestions for healthy changes to families, schools, and communities. The central message is presented clearly: childhood is endangered and children need our protection and healing.

What specifically are the problems which children manifest today? Some of the strongest reports come from Germany and the United States. The picture in both countries is similar. Children today show a much higher incidence than before of nervousness, stress and hyperactivity, of eating and sleeping disorders, of eczema, allergies and asthma. There is also concern about the growing incidence of learning disabilities, and a suspected increase in autism. In Germany there are reports that about 25% of children at age four have significant speech difficulties.² Similar statistics have not been found for North America, but for some years, Waldorf Kindergarten teachers have commented on the growing speech problems they are seeing in their children.

Looking in more detail at one example from this list of problems, hyperactivity was recently the topic of a two-day consensus meeting at the National Institute of Health (NIH) in Washington, D.C. Experts were gathered to discuss this nearly epidemic problem which is estimated to affect about two million children in the United States alone. The general consensus was that there are many factors which contribute to hyperactivity, and it takes different forms in different children. No-one is certain of the cause, and there is no simple test for

diagnosing hyperactivity as there is for diabetes, for example. There is research going on now, however, which will compare brain images of children who are considered hyperactive with those who are not. It is especially challenging for the researchers to find children who are considered hyperactive but have not been given Ritalin or related drugs which may themselves affect the brain images. Through such a study, researchers hope to pinpoint brain changes which are indicative of hyperactivity.³

The overall finding at the NIH meeting was that Ritalin was successful as a short-term aid for hyperactive children, but there is no evidence that it cures the problem. Even as a short-term help, it is more successful when combined with behavioural changes. Perhaps the greatest outcome of the meeting was that it focused attention on the problem and showed that the long-term answers were not simple or self-evident. Ritalin was not touted as a long-term solution, and this opens the door for alternatives, including healthier ways to raise and educate children, better understanding of the role of media and diet on hyperactivity, and new medical treatments for the problem, both mainstream and complementary. Prior to the NIH conference, first steps were already being taken within the Waldorf and anthroposophic medical communities to do a comprehensive study of hyperactivity to see what steps are most effective in helping children in our own schools and clinics. The NIH findings give further impetus to seek funding for such a study.

Compared to children 25 years ago, today's children exhibit new illnesses in alarming numbers, yet there is another side to the picture if one wants to understand the children and youth of today. Many show a remarkable degree of spiritual awareness and a highly sensitive social conscience. In an unusually quiet way, many young people take a deep interest in the problems of the earth and of the poor. Well over half of college students do volunteer work in these areas, and many young people have founded organisations which work locally or globally on a broad range of social concerns.

I recently had a chance to meet some of the more well known of these young people when I attended the State of the World Forum in San Francisco. One day I had lunch with Craig Kielburger, a clear-eyed, upright fifteen-year-old from Toronto. At age



The future is in their hands—tough nuts to crack 'an all. Photo: Sally Schweizer.

twelve, Craig had read about a ten-year-old Pakistani boy who had been chained to a rug loom since age four and forced to weave rugs all day long. I had read the same article and was appalled. Craig, in a way typical of today's children and youth, was not only appalled, but addressed the problem directly. He formed an international youth organisation against child labour.⁴ During the past three years he has travelled widely and raised much awareness about the dreadful plight of children forced into labour.

Some might argue that he is too young to take on such tasks, that he should have more time for youthful activities while he is still in High School. This may be true, and certainly one does not want him to burn out or become ill through his activities. Yet Craig seems calm, focused and unstressed. He is doing what his heart and mind dictate. Indeed, the message of the young people at the Forum was: do not tell us we need to wait until we are in our 30s and 40s to become leaders in our fields. We are active and already leading. This can sound brash and arrogant, but when you meet these young people and see what they are actually doing and the modesty and inner maturity with which they do it, you find yourself reassessing the conventional view of youth and making room for this new and unusual generation.

The current generation of youth is often called Generation X, presumably because they were a mysterious generation and not easily described. Now social commentators are saying that the X stands for excellent and extraordinary. This generation stretches downward into the children of today. It even seems that each new wave of the generation is more remarkable than the previous one in terms of openness to the world, both earthly and spiritual, and a willingness to be a full

participant in it. As a Kindergarten teacher I was often amazed during the 1980s by how many Kindergarten children became vegetarians of their own volition. Five-year-olds would tell me, "I don't want to eat animals anymore," and would stick to it despite family pressure to continue eating meat. I now hear of babies and toddlers who refuse to eat meat products; and realise that children becoming vegetarians is a widespread and probably growing phenomenon. It deserves study and documentation to understand it more fully. Given that this generation is so open, sensitive and committed to helping the earth and humanity, it is doubly tragic that they must also cope with so many society-induced illnesses. Humanity is in great need of the gifts and capacities which this young generation brings, but we create every possible obstacle to prevent them from bringing their gifts. There is an urgent need for social change so that today's children have the opportunity to grow up in safe and healthy ways. The Waldorf movement both worldwide and in North America is concerned about how to best help children in our own schools and at the same time reach out to help other children.

As the movement seeks to deepen its own work, an important step has been to bring together the insights and experiences of teachers, doctors and therapists. One concrete step was last summer's Kolisko Conference in Fair Oaks, California where 900 Waldorf teachers, doctors, therapists and remedial educators from 35 countries met to explore the problems of children today and the ways in which Waldorf education brings healing to children. Themes such as hyperactivity, learning difficulties, eating disorders, and children's growing tendency towards bullying and teasing were explored in some depth.

Within the Waldorf early childhood movement there have also been a number of conferences that have brought together teachers and doctors in a wish to better understand children from birth to age seven. At the same time, Kindergarten teachers have recognised a need to go beyond the boundaries of traditional half-day nursery Kindergartens in order to meet the needs of children and families today. They have been developing parent-child programs for children under three, full-time child care programs for young children of all ages, and new outreach programs for children in especially difficult social and economic circumstances, such as homeless shelters, inner city schools and a Native American reservation. Also, to meet the need for deeper medical insight, advanced courses and conferences are taking place to bring together

doctors, therapists and Kindergarten teachers.

Looking beyond the scope of our own schools, it has also become clear that for the sake of children's well-being and health, significant changes need to occur in the wider society. Children cannot remain healthy in the face of the growing onslaught of commercialism, media and technology, particularly when combined with inappropriate education, inadequate child care and a hectic home life. When children are faced with so many stressful factors in life, they cannot integrate them all and remain healthy. The total sum of stress facing most children is simply too great and results in a wide range of illnesses. These and related concerns gave the impetus for founding an Alliance for Childhood that will bring together parents, educators, doctors, therapists, researchers, and social activists.

It is clear that many others also recognise the need to work together to tackle a wide range of social and economic problems affecting children, and coalitions have been formed.⁵ It is important that Waldorf education support many of these existing coalitions, but there are a number of issues which are not yet being addressed by coalitions. We see them as underlying factors in the decline of children's health and want to address them as directly as possible. Central topics of concern for the Alliance for Childhood are:

Intelligence in motion. This leads in the Lower School to Emotional Intelligence; after which all knowledge is raked over at least once again by the pupil's awakening intellect.



1. the overexposure of children to media and technology rather than their growing up with sufficient opportunities for creative play and family activity;
2. the extensive commercialism directed at children which orients their attention too strongly towards material objects and away from the sacred and the socially meaningful;
3. the emphasis on early academics rather than creative play as a foundation for learning in early childhood;
4. the need for families to lessen their hurried life styles and become a shelter that nurtures the growth of the whole family, both children and adults;
5. the inadequacy of much of today's child care, which needs to be transformed into healthy ways to offer nurture and warmth to children;
6. the concern that antibiotics, Ritalin, Prozac and other medications are being over-prescribed for children, leading to serious side effects; and that more natural remedies need to be used when possible.

Waldorf education has insights and experiences in each of these areas. It also has an overview that puts such problems into a context. At the same time, there are many organisations which have entered each of these realms much more deeply than has Waldorf education. If there are to be changes that will benefit children and clean up their toxic childhood, we and others need to work together. Single-handedly we cannot affect much change.

Is the time ripe for such change? There are a number of indicators that the public is ready to hear about these issues and create social change. One sign is the growing number of articles in mainstream publications during the past two years highlighting the problems of children. Other indicators are the new and surprising directions being taken by a number of organisations, such as the Parents Television Council, which urges parents to pressure sponsors to clean up television. Another new organisation called Commercial Alert was created by Ralph Nader to tackle the problems of commercialism directed at children and youth.⁷

It is too soon to know if the following examples indicate a new trend, but it seems that even young children are getting concerned about the impact of television in their lives and are ready to take action. During our Thanksgiving gathering, my six-year-old nephew hid the remote control to his grandparents' television. He later explained that he did it because "television rots your brain". A few

weeks later, I visited a former neighbour who had recently had surgery and allowed her four-year-old twins to watch more television than usual. At one point she urged them to watch television so she could rest. "No," cried one of the boys, "let's have a TV Turn-Off Week."

His remark refers to a week in April organised by TV-Free America⁸ when millions of families turn off their television sets and replace passive viewing with family activities. There is a growing concern that families focus far more on television than they do on each other, and this focus is taking its toll on social relations within the family. In addition, many other activities such as civic duty and volunteerism are neglected because of the massive amounts of time spent in front of the television. In the United States it is estimated that viewing is now in excess of 350 billion hours per year.⁹ Imagine how much socialising and meaningful activity could take place in families and communities if that number were cut even in half.

Television impacts children on many levels—physically, emotionally, socially, and mentally. Kindergarten teachers have often noted that children who watch television or videos tend to have difficulty with creative play. Their imagination and fantasy seem weakened by regularly viewing other peoples' imagery. Considering how important creative play is for the development of language and social skills,¹⁰ as well as for creative thinking¹¹ the loss of play is a very significant factor in the life of a child. At the same time, teachers have seen amazing results within days of parents' turning off the television for their children. Children may need a few days or a week to get over the addiction of media, but they then begin to blossom and play again, and parents will often say after the initial week of adjustment, "I never knew what a wonderful child I had."

The Alliance for Childhood is based on the thought that all children are wonderful but they need a chance to develop in healthy ways. What are some of the first steps the Alliance will take? In February 1999, a small Alliance meeting was called under the dual sponsorship of the Centre for the Study of the Spiritual Foundations of Education of Columbia University's Teachers College and Sunbridge College, a Waldorf teacher training. The consultancy, as it is called, brought together about two dozen people, including Waldorf teachers from North America and Europe with University professors and social activists. During the two-day meeting we explored ways to bring social change in regard to some of the problems affecting children.

This meeting will be followed by a third day devoted to the concerns about the flood of computers entering American schools, to the detriment of children's healthy development. Reports of these meetings and planned activities arising from them will be widely distributed.

In addition, two large conferences for the Alliance are being planned. One will be in Brussels in October 2000 and the other in Washington, D.C. in 2001. We would also like to see more community-based Alliance endeavours begin, such as the Los Angeles Alliance for Childhood,¹² which uses as its starting point parent courses and conferences focusing on the health and nurture of young children. Other initiatives which will focus on helping parents develop a healthier culture for children are being developed. To bring about change for children, the involvement of parents will be crucial.

The Alliance for Childhood envisions itself as a loose confederation of individuals and initiatives, which gives space for each group to find its own starting point. Its unification will come through common concerns, communication and collaboration around key issues. At the moment it is being 'incubated' in the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America (WECAN). We hope it will soon emerge as a free-standing organisation in the world with a wide range of members, its own web site, and all the accoutrements of a modern organisation. For more information about the Alliance contact WECAN at 1359 Alderton Lane, Silver Spring, MD 20906. Tel.301-460-6287, Fax 301-460-6145 or email: jalmon@erols.com

Joan Almon is Co-chair, Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America, and Co-founder of the Alliance for Childhood. She travels world-wide lecturing and advising on Early Childhood.

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1. See suggested books below.
2. Reported in *Erziehungskunst* September 1998, p.1001), a magazine for Waldorf parents, in an article entitled 'Zeichen der Zeit' ('Signs of the Times'), in which the authors describe a German Waldorf initiative called *Recht auf Kindheit*, which is part of the international Alliance for Childhood.
3. *Washington Post*, Health Section, 8 December 1998, pp.12-17.
4. Craig Kielburger's organisation which is a network of children helping children is Free the Children, 16 Thornbank Rd., Thornhill, Ont. L1A 2M, Canada. Tel.905-881-0863; Fax 905-881-1849. Web site: and email: freechild@clo.com
5. One such broad-based alliance with 450 organisational members is the Coalition for America's Children, 1634 Eye Street, NW, 11th Floor, Washington, D.C. 20006. Tel.202-638-5770. Web site: <http://www.kidscampaign.org>
6. For information, contact the Parents Television Council, 600 Wiltshire Blvd., Suite 700, Los Angeles, CA 90017.

7. More information can be obtained from Gary Ruskin at Commercial Alert, 1611 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 3A, Washington, D.C. 20009. Tel. 202-296-2787; Fax 202-833-2406 and email: Web site: <http://www.essential.org/alert>
8. For information, contact Mimi Noorani at TV-Free America, 1611 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 3A, Washington, D.C. 20009. Tel.202-887-0436; Fax 202-518-5560 and email: mnoorani@essential.org
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12. For information, contact Wiep deVries at the Los Angeles Alliance for Childhood, 647 Devirian Place, Altadena, CA 91001. Tel. 626-798-1592, Fax 626-797-1709.

Suggested Reading

- Elkind, David, *The Hurried Child: Growing Up Too Fast Too Soon* Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1981;
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Jobbing and joy dove-tailed together bode well for the future, not to mention the promising load for the laundry basket!
Photo: Sally Schweizer.

Out of the Box

by MARTIN LARGE

Do you suffer from information fatigue syndrome? Consider your daily bombardment by television, email, news, faxes and advertising. On average we are exposed to 2500 advertising messages each day, a deluge of information. At the same time there is the rise of such TV and computer related phenomena as RSI, stress, eye strain, couch potatoes, childhood obesity, attention deficit disorder and other learning disabilities. Even Ted Turner of CNN said at the launch of his new Customs News service, that the information smog had gone too far, saying, "It's killing people."

And there is more to come as technology becomes ever more sophisticated, prices fall and access widens. Over 70% children in Britain have TVs and videos in their bedrooms. Consider the widespread use of hand held video games, CD-Roms and internetted computers, the arrival of potentially 200 digital TV channels and hand held mobile telephone/computers!

One conclusion from all this is that the information technologies are no longer part of our environment: they *are* the environment for many people. An event does not really happen unless it is on TV. And there are huge battles going on for commercial dominance of TV and the internet, as companies realise the power of these electronic media 'to deliver people's minds'. The dizzy rise of the share prices of loss-making internet companies shows the stakes are high.

Yet, there is also a gathering backlash against the electronic media and their cultural domination. Whilst useful and enjoyable on occasion, computers and TV can be so boring, a medium for muggles rather than wizards as Harry Potter might say! Children *love* good stories—*Harry Potter* has sold over 27 million! And let's own up, we all love stories, and perhaps this explains some of the mesmeric effect of television. As Thomas Moore writes, "We are a people in desperate need of stories, so needy that we don't care much about the value of the story, as long as it absorbs our attention and stirs our emotions."

So, storytelling is making a big comeback all over the Western world, together with puppetry, the visual and the performing arts. One reason for this is that parents and teachers are saying it's not good enough to talk about the impact of the electronic,

commercial media on our children, to sit around TV bashing! So, for example, some Pine Hill Waldorf School parents have created an annual Fathers Day festival on the third Sunday in June for families, called the Joseph Campbell Festival of Myth, Folklore and Story. This festival celebrates myth, fairy tales, good stories, poems, dance and song, and is so enjoyable that families come to it from miles around.

Such events encourage people to become more creative in their everyday lives: to try storytelling with their children, go to movement classes, nurture their creative spark. And as children learn from their parents, spark is important. Remember Roald Dahl's Danny who said that, "My father, without the slightest doubt was the most marvellous and exciting father any boy ever had." Danny suggests to the children reading the book that, "When you grow up and have children of your own, do please remember something important: a stodgy parent is no fun at all. What a child wants and deserves is a parent who is *sparky*."

Teachers and schools also need to be sparky! Schools are challenged by students who increasingly do not respond well to traditional teaching methods. Visionary teachers want to provide learning pathways for students that engage the will, activate creativity and which offer *experiential learning* rather than sedentary classroom forms of learning.

For example, in Stroud, Gloucestershire, the pioneering Ruskin Mill Further Education Course has been so successful in engaging maladjusted 16/17-year-olds in a practical, arts, crafts and environmentally based curriculum that parents are asking for this active approach to education for their 'normal' teenagers! So a Waldorf College* is to be established in Autumn 2000 using the whole community as a learning environment, with students negotiating their own curriculum with a foundation of core learning activities.

So how does TV and the VDU/cathode ray screen media affect children?

Some helpful information on how the electronic media affect young children's senses will be

* The title is still under discussion.

presented. These media are here to stay, and both parents and school need to make their own free decisions on media use.

Firstly, every child is affected by TV in different ways, depending on their personality, their temperament, constitution and age. The younger the child, the more susceptible and less able to make choices about switching off. Some active children just walk away from the TV! Others are caught at once.

Here I will concentrate on the effect of TV watching, regardless of content on the development of the senses and nervous systems of young children.

William Wordsworth wrote of his experience when as a boy:

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

On growing older, the poet observed: "The things which I have seen I now can see no more;" The youth who perceives "the vision splendid... [of nature]... at length, [as a] man, perceives it die away, And fade into the light of common day."

When we consider the openness of babies and infants to all that happens, to their powers of absorption and selfless imitation, we can appreciate the vital part played by their senses. Just as food nourishes the physical organism, so the experiences of touch, warmth, movement, sight, sound, taste, smell and well-being bring the world to the attention of the child. The exercise of the senses also nourishes the central nervous system and the brain, which enables the developing child to wake up into the world around her.

When children are brought up in an environment where their senses cannot develop in a healthy way, they do not thrive, as for example in orphans. Children who are cuddled, played with, conversed with and who experience a stimulating home life are more likely to thrive.

Our sensory experiences support our ideas, feeling and actions even our sense of identity. This was shown dramatically in experiments with volunteers undergoing 'sensory deprivation' conditions, as a preparation for manned space flights in the United States. People floated motionless in water at blood heat, in total silence, wearing goggles that totally excluded light, and gloves which reduced the sense of touch. Initially, many volunteers fell asleep. On waking, some

experienced hallucinations, fantasies, dreams, and distorted impressions of their bodies, as for example their arms or legs growing and floating away. Such experiments demonstrated how vital normal sensory experience is to maintain a balanced state of mind.

Given the importance of healthy sense experience for our normal functioning, and the far more vivid nature of children's sense experience, what effects does television-watching have on sensory development?

When watching television, a young child may be in a darkened room – the light of day is screened out. He is motionless, which is an uncharacteristic state for a child whose natural condition is one of continual play activity and movement. (An athlete reputed to have imitated all the actions of a two-year-old was exhausted in a short time—the child, however, was still as fresh as a daisy.) Whilst watching television the child is sitting down, the eyes are fixed, hardly move and are slightly defocused.

The senses used to watch television are sight and hearing. The other senses are largely unnecessary. Children who are playing and active will have more opportunities to develop their senses than children spending the same time watching television. 'Television' children may find it harder to 'come to their senses' having been deprived of a rich sensory diet.

A common reaction of someone discovering that my own children rarely watched television was, "What *do* you do instead? What do you *watch*? Aren't you depriving them of so many experiences?"

They did not understand that television is a *second-hand* experience. I believe that for children an ounce of real experience is worth a ton of second-hand experience! This point was well made in a cartoon showing a child watching a sunset on television, whilst exactly the same sunset could be seen through the window. Or a mother switching off the computer, inviting her child to go and join the great interactive game of life.

To nourish the development of young children's senses is simple. They need to touch and feel the textures around them. Infants go through a stage of 'playing with their food'. By imitating the activities of adults, such as sweeping, baking, gardening and tidying, infants discover the everyday world. All the varied activities in home and garden, at the seaside, of building things, of playing games such as 'mums and dads', 'hospitals' or 'trains'—all call on the senses.



As the winter sun streams in, busy fingers and creative minds move and expand into the fun-filled, free-ranging, learning-packed space. Photo: Ligita Gaile.

Children deprived of rich sensory experiences need to have play therapy in the nursery school. Teachers may have to put such children through a crash 'course' of such activities as water play, sand play, feeling things and mixing dough. This phenomenon of the 'play-deprived child' has been observed by many nursery teachers. They say that play-deprivation is not primarily connected with a child's socio-economic background, but rather with the amount of television-watching in the family.

Whilst many people may concede that excessive television-watching can deprive children of more healthy sense experiences, they may not readily agree that television-watching is sensory deprivation. However, this was demonstrated dramatically by psychologists Fred and Merrilyn Emery, who compared brainwave patterns of television viewers to those undergoing lengthy sensory deprivation. The brainwave patterns on the electroencephalograph showed that a person watching television for a few minutes was as seriously affected as someone subjected to a period of ninety-six hours sensory deprivation.

The twelve senses

Traditionally, there were five senses attributed to the human being, plus a 'sixth' sense added by hearsay. Physiologists have included a few more, such as the senses of balance and of movement, whilst several 'social senses' such as the 'sense of identity', or a

'sense of language and meaning' have been suggested. Each sense provides us with a window on the world, and we experience reality through a 'circle' of such windows as we pay more attention to one sense and then another.

The more bodily senses give us an immediate experience of our organism. Balance enables us to experience our bodies in space; touch sketches the boundary of our skin; the sense of life tells us how we are feeling—whether we are well or out of sorts, and the sense of movement brings the perception of the motions of the body's muscles, limbs or joints. Balance, touch, movement and well-being involve us deeply in our own bodily experiences — we trust what these senses tell us.

The senses of taste and smell enable us to find out about substances outside our bodies—in very personal ways since each person develops her own 'sense of taste'. With sight we perceive colours, light and shade in our surroundings. For many people, 'seeing is believing', although more doubting people, like St. Thomas, may rely on their sense of touch for conclusive information. Another sense, the sense of warmth, tells us about relationships between warmer and colder things in the environment — about whether we ourselves are gaining or losing warmth from the surroundings.

Whilst sight and warmth take us into the environment, the sense of hearing enables us to penetrate into the heart of things. The tone of a bell

informs us about the quality of such materials from which it is made. The eyes may be deceived in trying to discover the material of which an object is made, but if it produces a sound, any deception is uncovered and we recognise if it is made of plastic, metal or wood.

Since the sense of hearing enables us to communicate with other people, it is above all a social sense. It is complemented by other 'social senses' which, whilst difficult to pin down physiologically, yet are essential if a person is to participate in social life. There is the sense of word, which enables us to perceive the gestures, movements and patterns which are shaped by a speaker into a stream of sounds. This sense gives us a 'feeling for language', and even if we do not understand what is being said we recognise that it 'makes sense' and is not gibberish.

Lastly, there is a subtle sense of 'feel' for the other as a person, as an identity, which can be experienced when 'making contact' with someone. These latter three senses of hearing, of word and of the sense of the 'I' of another person are very dependent on social life for their development and conversely without these there is no social life to develop them.

In the course of growing up through school, the different senses need to be nurtured more strongly according to the children's stages of development. Many activities in play groups and Kindergartens are usually practical—such as household tasks, cooking, constructing things, simple arts and crafts. Materials, substances, playthings and an environment of a sound kind have a positive influence, since it is through the senses that the world around is taken up into the child's experience—hence the importance of first-hand experiences with honest materials. Such an early environment creates security of trust in the world, for life. If children experience materials or objects which are a kind of lie—removed from real first-hand experience—then this produces an insecurity in the child, especially in trusting what the senses bring to him.

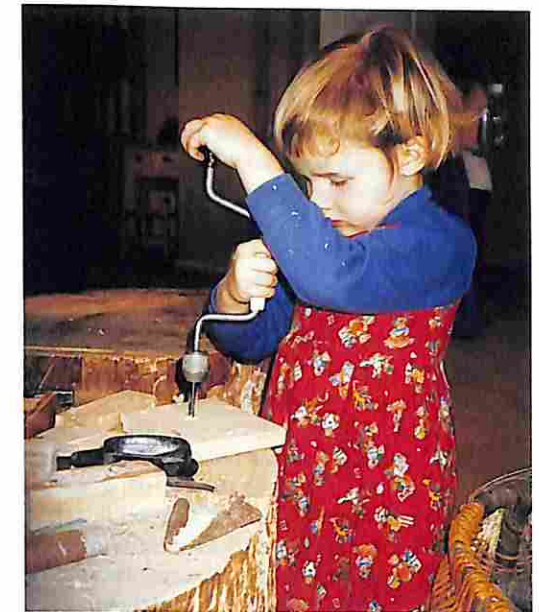
In the primary and middle schools, children need to be exercised artistically if their senses are to be fully developed. Through painting, which is of crucial importance to children, the world of colour, movement and warmth becomes a central experience for them. Music, language, art and poetry exercise the finer senses, whilst modelling or crafts enliven particularly the 'will' senses of movement, touch and balance. For it is artistic activities which awaken and develop the senses in a healthy way. Children need to experience the beauty of the world.

At secondary level, when teenagers become much more able to perceive in a detached way, science may help the capacity for accurate, objective observation to develop. The arts—especially if used in a social way as in modern drama teaching—may be of real help in exploring relationships and in awakening the social senses. Above all, teenagers need the experience that 'the world is true'.

Television's effects on the senses

Young children, in the process of discovering the world, are faced with the problem of 'sensing' if television pictures are 'real' or not, if there is in fact a man in the box or if the screen is a window on a different world. Reports of certain primitive people's responses to cinema films—of being very concerned about where the actor has gone once he leaves the screen—demonstrate the initial confusion technology has on unsophisticated adults. From this we can envisage how puzzling television must be to children who are just becoming aware of the differences and variety of sensory experience. My three-year-old son asked, "Is there really an orchestra in the box?" or "Is that man really dead?"

Television is a deceptive medium to place in reach of children as they are learning to find their way in the everyday world and are developing a general 'sense' of its reality. Think of the contrast between



Though skills are by no means cosmetic, attitudes towards life and work are still more fundamental—a vital principle in Waldorf praxis. Photo: Ligita Gaile.

live puppets and a show produced on the TV screen. The live performance holds children spellbound, they can see the puppets and can enter the 'make-believe' world of the story in a complete and uncontradictory way. But television puts over a vast number of images, people, and happenings that are second-hand reproductions of things taking place at a distance. Furthermore many events happening on the screen—the technical tricks, the cartoon antics, all the artificial unusualness used to attract the viewer—cannot take place in real life.

So young children are faced with a 'real world' which they need to get used to through the normal development of the senses, and a television world where events happen which are unknown and often impossible in everyday life.

A mother described an incident with her five-year-old stepdaughter who is a tele-addict:

About six months ago she ran into the road and was hit by a car, and fortunately escaped with one bruise and shock. A few hours after the accident she asked me what had happened and I explained, telling her that she was a very lucky girl. I asked, "What would have happened if you had fallen under the wheels?" and she answered, "I'd jump up again like the Pink Panther!"

One father, on taking his young son to the zoo was so disturbed by such comments as "I've already seen all this on television!" that he got rid of television altogether. Reality, he concluded, cannot compete with a box which shows close-ups of tigers, lions and rhinos, scenes which one never meets in ordinary life in such rapid succession. He also felt that television was dulling his child's sense of wonder.

Television and sight

Television affects our sense of sight. Its organ, the eye, responds to colour, light and darkness on the one hand and movement on the other. In fact, movement and balance—two other distinct senses—are intimately connected with the eye. One's eye is in continual movement, busy gauging distance, height and depth which are the essential elements of perspective. The eyes are perpetually fixing objects in their vision, accommodating and shifting their focus. It takes time to learn how to perceive objects, for example, a two-year-old will recognise again a triangle that has been rotated 120 degrees, only after rotating his head also—visual exploration is therefore a prerequisite of seeing.

In adults, perception is dependent on all kinds of exploratory eye movements, from consciously

directed ones to involuntary small ones which shift the image over the fovea when the eye seems fixated on a motionless object. Interestingly, in the context of television's effects on the eye, when such scanning motions are artificially suppressed, the image breaks up into fragments. We need to 'finger over the visual field with our gaze' as one physiologist observed.

Constant eye movement is required for a healthy eye. Lack of eye movement may be a symptom of ageing, and eye specialists can give exercises to help older people keep their eyes 'young'.

For focusing we need conscious attention, vigilance and concentration; in short, we have to exert ourselves to co-operate with the faculties this sense provides for us.

Attention is needed for good observation and focalisation. William James wrote that "everyone knows what attention is... Focalisation, concentration of consciousness are of its essence. It is a condition which has a real opposite in the confused, dazed, 'scatterbrained state' which in French is called distraction". Such attention requires effort and cannot be "sustained for more than a few seconds at a time".

Television-watching is a visually passive activity. One's head is stationary, the eyes are practically motionless and do not continually move to get 'fixes' on objects as for normal sight, and they are slightly 'defocused' to take in the whole screen. The accent is on peripheral vision rather than on central vision which is active in the state of attention described above. Another effect is that, whilst watching television one's eye muscles are not being exercised and one's vigilance is decreased through the necessary defocusing of the eyes. There is little need for accommodating eye movement—or rather, this is kept at a constant level to make up for the nature of television which is a slightly blurred, low definition medium (compared with the clearer image of cinema films, for example). Some ophthalmologists recommend TV viewing for post-operative eye patients, just to keep the eyes stilled.

Apart from affecting the eye's mechanic in such a drastic fashion, television affects people's attention. The Emerys maintain that television both "destroys the capacity of the viewer to attend" and also "by taking over a complex of direct and indirect neural pathways, decreases vigilance". They say that the television-watching state of mind is a form of distraction, as opposed to concentration and focalisation.

Furthermore, the Emerys write that in spite of the high volume of content coming from the television,

the mechanics of eye and brain receive this input as if it were a simple visual stimulus. Television is therefore an impoverished sensory environment.

The foregoing arguments may lead to the conclusion that television affects children's vigilance, attention and concentration adversely.

So far we have been discussing effects applying specifically to the mature senses of adults. But how does television affect babies' and toddlers' developing sense of sight?

The perceptual world is not a finished product which is the same for everyone, but it is shaped according to a person's age. Children's experiences happen in a vivid world in which things are attractive and repulsive before they focus into abstract qualities like squareness or blackness. Piaget showed how optical illusions decrease with age, and how children's perception of space develops. For the first few months objects do not 'exist' if they are not moving or doing something. Holding or manipulating an object gives it reality, and when it disappears, it is gone for good. Space, like 'mouth space' or 'grasping space', is separate and related to activity.

At the eighth to tenth month, the object is seen to be more independent. Piaget offered a watch to a nine-month-old who played with it. When it was hidden under a pillow, the baby fetched it. Even though the baby saw the watch being hidden in a different place the second time he still looked in the first hiding place.

At about sixteen months, the toddler perceives the object as having permanence independent of himself. Space becomes a field in which things happen, as opposed to being bound up with activity. Perhaps the game of 'peek-a-boo' is a way for babies and toddlers to get used to seeing loved ones come and go, yet still feeling they are 'there'.

The sense of sight continues to develop, and it is only at around the age of eleven to twelve that the sense for perspective emerges. From the standpoint of perceptual development, therefore, television may seriously harm the acquiring of such concepts as space by infants. Furthermore, the two-dimensional screen inhibits the development of a sense of depth and perspective.

Listening and observing

Kindergarten teachers are saying they have to teach children to listen. Although most children love stories, their attention span seems shorter and a minority find it hard to listen at all. But as soon as such children begin to make their own inner gesture-like 'pictures' of the story, they are able to listen;

however, teachers comment on how much *better* story-tellers they need to be nowadays to hold children's attention.

Presumably, the background sound of radio, cassette or television at home is so prevalent that the sense of hearing is dulled. Since television is more visual than aural, and unless adults converse with children and tell them stories, children's sense of hearing is not being fully exercised. One piece of research showed that 25 years ago the average person could distinguish between 300,000 sounds; now it is only 180,000, reflecting an ongoing decrease in the brain's sensitivity.

Observational skills may also not be developed by viewing—hence the need to help children *see* flowers, animals, and birds. Many infant, Kindergarten and junior teachers I know have observed a 'withdrawal' from the senses in moderate and heavy-viewing children. They therefore need to teach therapeutically to cultivate the ability to 'see a world in a grain of sand'.

Movement and balance

Some older teachers can still distinguish the 'viewers' from 'non-viewers' in a class, by their posture, limb⁴ control and how they sit. Audrey McAllen, a special education advisor, wrote on movement and television:

After many years of working with children who have learning difficulties one sees clearly how unconnected the present-day child is with the interaction of hands and limbs. They do not bother to lift their legs high enough to throw a ball under them, the hand collides with the thigh. Also the left leg seems heavier than the right and harder for them to lift. When classes have been screened for learning problems, this symptom of limb heaviness is now general among children.

And you can experience this 'limb heaviness' for yourself after watching TV. Perhaps this is why there are currently so many popular types of movement class for adults such as Tai Chi or yoga: to counteract the effects of computer work and our sedentary lifestyle, for example,

The movement sense gives us the feeling of having a reason to be here, a sense of purpose developed from wanting to go from one place to another. This sense enables us, through our muscles to perceive if we are still or moving, and where our body is in space. Young children subtly imitate the movements in their environment, resonating, for example, to electronic movements. Learning to



The grandeur of the huge forest oaks and the vista of distant hills are dwarfed by the joy of discovery at this iron spring.

Photo: Gisela Pauli Caldas.

walk, to develop dexterity and co-ordination all relate to the movement sense.

So cramping movement through TV and computers can have disruptive affects: consider hyperactivity, attention deficit disorder, and forms of dyslexia when letters move up and down in the visual field. Dr Harry Levinson treats certain forms of dyslexia and hyperactivity with travel sickness pills. These children, he thinks, suffer from a kind of 'motion sickness'. Certain children's ability to read increases remarkably after taking these pills, because the disturbed sense of movement is calmed down.

Alan Hall, a physicist investigating electromagnetic fields noticed the effects of rapidly oscillating, low level electromagnetic fields coming from computers and TVs: "When one comes within two feet or 18 inches, one can feel the muscles tighten up slightly, and over time a feeling of 'electrostress'." So think how such subtle oscillations can effect balance and movement in young children, going from your own direct experience, he suggests.

Balance is also affected by TV watching. And how many times do adults say they want to find balance in their lives! Balance is centred in the inner ear, sensing the pull of the earth, it gives us a sense of uprightness. It gives us a bodily, grounded reference point, a feeling of inner calm and security in space. So think of the modern dizzy pace of life and how this can knock us off balance!

Achieving balance is a major achievement for infants, as well as that of standing upright, free to start moving as an independent being in the world. Cheryl Sanders stresses that balance disorders, resulting from things like viewing, can have

devastating effects on children: "The disruption of balance causes a certain sinking feeling in the stomach, a dizziness that might be 'familiar to spinning about ten or twelve times, then trying to walk straight. Imagine if this feeling were present every time you wanted to read, or write. What if the feeling were more subtle, so that you could not figure out what it was, but you knew you were feeling awful when at school, especially in some classes, but not in others like art or music... and what if lack of co-ordination was extended to any attempt to participate in games, or even just trying to run across the playground without being laughed at?"

Television closes down the human nervous system

The Emerys propose that "television as a simple, constant, repetitive and ambiguous visual stimulus gradually closes down the nervous system of man". In an adult's brain the left and right hemispheres have distinct, specialised functions. Each hemisphere governs the activities of the opposite side of the body. The right hemisphere, for instance, controls the movements of your left hand.

The 'critical' left brain can process one stimulus at a time. This leads to orderly thought sequences, linear thinking, analysis, distinguishing parts. The verbal and logical functions are important. The right brain can process whole clusters of stimuli at once, leading to a grasp of complex wholes—such as a face. The processes of thinking in images and pictures are important. As mentioned previously, viewing tunes out the left brain. According to the Emerys, in adults subjected to electroencephalographs, whilst watching television, the left hemisphere is

hardly active at all, registering a minimal holding pattern. They suggest that "viewing is at the conscious level of somnambulism". The right hemisphere does register the television images, although since the cross-referencing of our subconscious intelligence between left and right has been 'knocked out', these cannot easily be brought to consciousness. Hence the difficulty most people have in recalling much information from a programme.

Other researchers into brainwave patterns whilst watching television confirm the Emerys' findings. Dr Eric Pepper is a Professor of Interdisciplinary Sciences at San Francisco State University. He claims "...that the alpha wave patterns which rapidly become dominant whilst watching are a sign of being in a totally passive condition and being unaware of the world outside of the pictures which one is seeing." The right phrase for alpha patterns is really "spaced-out". Not orienting. "When someone pays attention to something external, such alpha patterns disappear."

Babies have unspecialized brains. Indeed, it is only at about twelve that the left and right sides are fully specialised. Babies seem to have some sort of 'non-verbal thought': for example, they recognise human faces.

In the second year, toddlers learn to speak, and language comes to the fore. At this time each brain hemisphere is apparently equally mature; lesions on the left side are no more harmful to language development than on the right side, and vice versa. Similar lesions in the left hemispheres of adults might cause significant linguistic problems.

As language develops, the brain specialises into the two hemispheres of verbal and or non-verbal thinking. Learning increasingly comes from verbal activities.

However, television in the early years when the brain is so malleable and sensitive, prolongs the dominance of the non-verbal 'right hemisphere' functions. The trance-like state of many child viewers, especially if induced for 20-30 hours per week, may seriously inhibit the development of the verbal-logical 'left hemisphere' activities.

Furthermore, children exposed to television—a medium which prolongs the dominance of non-verbal 'right' hemisphere activities—may not take full advantage of the special 'language sensitive' period of influence. Just as there are 'tides in the affairs of men' so there are tides of 'readiness' in the child's development, for example, language readiness. If a child does not learn to speak during this period of readiness, it may be hard for her to

make up for this deficiency later on.

Health visitors and speech therapists are concerned about the increasing numbers of young children who can hardly speak. What appear to be speech impairments, are in fact children who have had little family conversation, no nursery rhymes, and whose parents prefer dummies (pacifiers) and television.

When neurologists such as Dr Eric Pepper assert that "television trains people only for being zombies"—it may be time to ask: "Do we want this state of consciousness to be induced in our children?"

To conclude, viewing at an early age may hinder the development of the senses, such as light, hearing, balance, movement—and, indeed, offers us a poor sensory diet. Over-stimulated, children may "withdraw from their senses", and need therapeutic exercises. The patterning the brain needs for language development is hindered by viewing.

However, given the extensive research on the effects of viewing on young children, it is up to parents and school to make up their own minds. And at a time when there are so many creative alternatives, families are voting with their feet! However, schools are challenged as well to put more spark into learning. I remember a Waldorf colleague answering a parent asking him about whether she should be concerned about her child's viewing: "Over the next few months, your daughter will grow out of most of her viewing, as she gets involved in all the creative work we do!" In other words, a lively family and school life is enough to get children 'out of the box'.

Martin Large lectured in management and behavioural science for many years in higher education. He works as a facilitator in participative planning, community building, and learning. He is the author of Who's Bringing Them Up?

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BOOK REVIEWS

The Archetypal Feminine in the Mystery Stream of Humanity: Towards a New Culture of the Family by Manfred Schmidt-Brabant and Virginia Sease, Temple Lodge sb 101pp £8.95.

Here is an inspiring and accessible resource book for anyone working with anthroposophy in the cultural sphere: it places the issue of gender at the heart of human evolution and shows how "The eternal feminine / Draws us upwards and on" (Goethe in 'Faust').

Six lectures given by the writers at 'Homemaker' conferences held in the Social Science Section of the School of Spiritual Science at the Goetheanum, Switzerland, form the basis of the book; which the writers hope will further a new understanding of the feminine principle and how it works in human experience.

The lectures weave an esoteric picture of evolution from what lies concealed in myth and legend. Each lecture, or chapter, shines a different light on the developing picture, and offers practical application of the insights and ideas. The main themes are summarised below.

Manfred Schmidt-Brabant first interprets the Temple Legend to reveal a picture of Earth and the human being as feminine at the earliest stages of evolution. 'Eve' in this context does not mean anything remotely like women: instead 'Eve' represents the homogenous condition out of which physical humanity developed. This first chapter describes the different kingdoms of nature separating out from the 'Eve' condition and how the human sexes separated; which, through the awakening of desire and love, made the development of human individuality possible. The shadow picture is also described and we are shown, through the legend of Lilith, how individuality can succumb to sheer sexuality and be lost, today, just as at the beginning of Earth. Against all that the power of Lilith represents, the writers set their study of the feminine trinity: Virgin, Mother, Queen.

Virginity is introduced both as a physiological state, in which the virgin is uniquely sensitive to supersensible perception, and as a soul condition, which can be transformed into a soul power through education. So that, for example, the mother may achieve the soul power of the virgin. Virginia Sease then investigates the mystery of the Virgin Mary. Following an explication of the Apocrypha and Rudolf Steiner's lecture cycle *The Fifth Gospel*, she traces the cultural-historical process whereby Mary became, on the one hand a being of wisdom who holds sway in the starry realms (Queen of Heaven and co-ruler with Christ) and, on the other hand, a being orientated to the earth and embodying earthly wisdom (the Black Madonna). The writer distinguishes the evil of Lilith's black colour from that of the Black Madonna, she raises the issue of our stereotypical associations of black with impurity and she suggests that the black

Madonna today may be calling on us to develop purity of soul within the darkness of our physical life on earth.

The writer goes on to describe the influence of the feminine principle on the evolution of art and culture through history. This influence is traced from Lemurian times, particularly in the realm of poetry, music, singing, drama and dance and we are reminded of the femininity of the spirits who guide creativity: the nine Muses of the Greeks, the seven Liberal Arts of the Middle Ages, and in the myth of Orpheus a picture of creative genius, his soul filled with love for the eternal feminine. The troubadour tradition is discussed in this context, as are some notable women troubadours and mystics. The counter-picture here is the degeneration of feminine Moon cults into orgiastic rites and wild dances; and it shows how the squandering of female creative forces began.

There was a long gap after the creative freedom of the medieval women troubadours and mystics until women in the nineteenth century once more emancipated themselves enough to be freely creative and spiritually influential. In this context the lives of Helena Blavatsky, Mabel Collins and Marie Steiner-von Sivers are discussed and practical steps are suggested for developing creative spirituality today.

Manfred Schmidt-Brabant leads us into the realm of the Mother through examining the feminine in the hierarchies. First the 'all-Mother' was an Archai being from whom the goddess Natura developed in connection with the 'Eve' condition of humanity. In later evolution earthly mothers as priestesses fashioned the sacred vessel to nurture the human ego's development. This surrounding, protecting, nurturing quality of the womb is also a quality of the vessel of the family, in spiritual terms of the Holy Spirit and the Grail chalice; and in counter-image the witches' cauldron. The writer suggests ways the modern family can avoid the 'witches cauldron' and instead fashion a vessel for nurturing each other's individuality.

The trinity of Virgin (open to the spirit) and Mother (creatively fashioning the earthly vessel) is completed in the final chapter by the introduction of the Queen. In the second Temple Legend we are told that the figure alongside Eve is the Queen of Sheba. Her act of choosing Hiram over Solomon represents star wisdom uniting with the earthly ego; and the writer shows us how the force of evolution works to close the gap between men and women, until one type of human will appear once more and we will have taken the final step to truly free individuality.

In this way the writers weave us a vision of the archetypal feminine working within evolution, from the earliest stages of creation to the far future epochs of humanity.

The book is clearly written. It is a pleasure to 'hear' the different, but equally clear, voices of the two writers as one reads and it seems to me a remarkable example of 'the will to collaborate and co-operate' which they recommend us to practise. Notes and references are also clearly made and the presentation is pleasing: a slim, elegant book with appealing colours and forms for the cover. It is a book which could make

an attractive gift. However, I want to introduce a note of caution here, for I would hesitate before giving this book to friends interested in gender and cultural studies but complete newcomers to anthroposophy. It is not an introduction and assumes a certain level of acclimatisation to anthroposophical ideas. It is a book which may need occasional mediation to do its best work in the world. I highly recommend it to be read, digested and enjoyed as a rich resource for discussion and debate. It raises a wealth of interesting, timely and challenging questions, and I can imagine many situations where it may enable one to pose the right question at just the right moment!

Josie Alwyn

Nut-Hat written and illustrated by Gertrude Teutsch, Mercury Press, sb 47pp.

This is a children's book with a rather sophisticated and thought-provoking theme. The story introduces us to Olms, nature sprites coloured green who tend the plants and are ruled by a wise king. One day their leader calls and all Olms begin to wend their way to the meeting place between the Rosebush and the Elder bush by the hill. The story follows the journey of four particular Olms as they meet each other along the way. Each has an over-emphasised characteristic which individually proves to be a handicap, but is helpful to the others as they meet and become friends. For example, Nose has a long nose always in danger of getting in the way and being an object of derision, but is used to help Chin (a strong Olm with a large chin) pull himself out of a boggy hole. There is Spoons who has overlarge ears but can hear the quietest of sounds and the thoughts of others.

As they make their way to the meeting place they run into a group of Olms, covered with orange spots, and led by one who is completely orange in colour. These Olms have no thought for the little plants, insects and birds. They delight in rampaging through the forest. Their leader wishes to become the next king and has deliberately glued a nutshell to the head of the Olm chosen by the king to take his place. This means that



poor Nut-Hat's head is squeezed and no thoughts can be released, and the king has called all Olms to help him. The solution that redeems the situation is an inspiring and mysterious one, and leaves the reader (as an adult) with the question of individual change and transformation.

This is a book that deals in a sensitive way with issues that children are often forced to face even at an early age—bullying, power, environment, loss of trust, evil. Yet the theme could prove to be too sophisticated for many children, and is hampered by an awkwardness in the plot and sentence structure. However, it is never patronising or self-righteous. It may prove to be a useful pedagogical story for Class One, or a way of indirectly reassuring children who find themselves on the periphery of their social circle.

The story is illustrated in rich and lively fashion with four full-size water colours (A4) and a wealth of beautiful vignettes in hachure.

Rachel Mager

Pico the Gnome A tale illustrated by Martina Müller, Floris books hb £8.99.

The end of Martina Müller's tale is one where gnomes and giant live in harmony side by side, though it is a harmonious conclusion arrived at via fairly fierce discord.

The gnome, all unawares, drifts rather naively into a precarious position, but as the giant's huge club comes crashing down, little Pico is rudely awoken to the need for instant agility. First he makes off as nimbly as his limbs can carry him. But what ground can possibly be made against the giant's colossal strides, destroying bushes and trees that lie in his path and "frightening all the birds and animals"? What really saves the gnome, however, is his nimbleness of mind: just as all would seem lost, his bright idea dawns.

Even if there were no text—and what there is amounts to no more than a few words on each page—Müller's tale would be 'readable' through the wonderful language of water colour that flows from her brush. She catches the overall mood of each stage of the story with just the right nuance of predominant colour: apple green at the Eden-like opening of the story, wrathful vermilion as the giant lifts himself threateningly to his full height, rich shades of lilac, mauve and purple as pact unfolds and peace descends.

What is possibly even more child-like than the story or colour mood, however, is the enchanting way in which the artist has filled page after page with birds, beasts, flowers, ferns, conifers and other plants, in a treasury of form, gesture and colour. Whether the child is blessed by living in a rural situation and thus finds old friends at the turn of each page (robin, squirrel, toadstool, foxglove...); or whether the child is a town-dweller for whom the Book of Nature is a comparatively unopened one, such a delicate and colour-enriched portrayal of wild life will surely resonate with the inner delight of nature's marvels that it is every child's birthright to enjoy.

B.M.

World List of Rudolf Steiner Waldorf School Associations

The full list of schools, Kindergartens and training courses is available from each Association, containing addresses and other information for communication, such as phone, fax and e-mail where available. *Steiner Education* would be grateful to know of any changes to the addresses appearing below so that such changes can be incorporated into future issues, in which case, please inform the Secretary. We would also be grateful to know of the founding of new Associations. The Secretary's address is on the Inside Front Cover. Currently, there are more than 770 schools and 1200 Kindergartens worldwide.

Information in countries not listed below may be obtained direct from the Pedagogical Section of the School of Spiritual Science, Goetheanum, CH-4143 Dornach, Switzerland. Countries at present listed as having Waldorf schools but no Association are: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Hungary, Israel, Japan, Kenya, Liechtenstein, Mexico, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Uruguay.

AUSTRALIA Association of Rudolf Steiner Schools in Australia, 213 Wonga Road, Waranwood, Victoria, Australia, 3134.

AUSTRIA Österreichische Vereinigung freier Bildungsstätten auf anthroposophischer Grundlage, Endresstrasse 100, A-1230 Wien.

BELGIUM Federatie van Rudolf Steinerscholen in Vlaanderen, Kasteellaan 54, B-9000 Gent.

CANADA Association of Waldorf Schools of North America, c/o David Alsop, 3911 Bannister Road, Fair Oaks, CA 95628, USA.

ONTARIO Waldorf School Association of Ontario, 9100 Bathurst Street, Thornhill, Ontario L4J 8CF, Canada.

DENMARK Sammenslutningen af Rudolf Steiner Skoler i Danmark, Strandvejen 102, DK-8000 Århus.

ESTONIA Eesti Waldorfskoolide Ühendus, 14 Koidula Tänav, EE2100, Rakvere, Estonia.

FINLAND Steinerpedagogiikan seura ry-Föreningen för Steinerpedagogik rf, c/o Lea Blafeld, Jyväskylän Rudolf Steiner-koulu, Honkaharjuntie 6, FIN 40600 Jyväskylä.

FRANCE Fédération des Écoles Rudolf Steiner en France, 11 rue de Villaines, F-91370 Verrieres-le-Buisson.

GERMANY Bund der Freien Waldorfschulen e.V., D-70184 Stuttgart, Heidehofstraße 32.

IRELAND Irish Steiner Waldorf Education Association, Raheen Rd., Tuamgraney, Co. Clare.

ITALY Associazione Amici Scuola, via Clerici 12, I-22030 Camnago Volta (COMO).

LATVIA Lettische Assoziation für Waldorfpädagogik, Pirma iela 26a, Rigarajons, LV 2164.

LUXEMBOURG Veräin fir Waldorfpädagogik Lëtzebuerg, 45 Rue de l'Avenir, L 1147 Luxembourg.

NETHERLANDS Bond van Vrije Scholen, Hoofdstraat 14B, NL-3972 LA Driebergen.

NEW ZEALAND Federation of Rudolf Steiner School, PO Box 888, Hastings, Hawke's Bay.

NORWAY Steinerskolene i Norge, Prof. Dahlsgt. 30, N-0260 Oslo.

ROMANIA Federatia Waldorf din Romania, Bd. Marasti nr.59, sector 1, RO-71331 Bucuresti.

SLOVENIA Društvo prijateljev, waldorfike sole, Rodiceva 2, 61000 Ljubljana, Slovenia.

SOUTH AFRICA Southern African Federation of Waldorf Schools, PO Box 67587, Bryanston, Transvaal, 2021 Johannesburg.

SWEDEN Waldorfskolefederationen, Fridhemsgata 17, S-12240 Stockholm, Sweden.

SWITZERLAND Koordinationsstelle der Rudolf Steiner Schulen in der Schweiz, Robert Thomas, Carmenstrasse 49, CH-8032 Zürich.

UNITED KINGDOM Steiner Schools Fellowship, Kidbrooke Park, Forest Row, East Sussex RH18 5JA, GB.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA Association of Waldorf Schools of North America, Chairman, 3911 Bannister Road, Fair Oaks, CA 95628.

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