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The Importance of Handwriting

Re-awakening the Word

Will-Developed Intelligence

Thinking and the Consciousness
of the Young Child

SE Interview with Nana Gobel

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A photograph of three children in a garden. Two children in blue raincoats and hats stand near a red wicker basket, while a third child in a red hat sits on the grass in the background. The garden is filled with green foliage and a young tree in the foreground.

Steiner Education

Foreword

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Editorial group
Martyn Rawson (editor)
Mary-Anne Lumley (assistant editor)
Ian Botting (art direction and layout)

Advertising
Jan Swann tel & fax 0117 9633418

Distribution, sales and subscriptions
Gerda Uelfer-Woods
Tel. 01342 825005

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The Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship, who are the proprietors of *Steiner Education* magazine, have decided that we should bring out three numbers a year, instead of the four seasonal numbers we had intended. However, we have increased the size of each number to accommodate the volume of articles we are sent. For subscribers who have paid for and expect four numbers a year, we hope this will be balanced out (4 X 32=128 pages or 3 X 44 = 132 pages...if you see what I mean).

Though we decided not to have themes for each number, we received four articles related to learning to read and write. We have chosen two that really address quite different topics, a third was sent to us by a class teacher in Hungary, who we are still trying to contact. We will bring this next time as he raises some very interesting points about Class 2. The article by Bernard Graves of the Hiram Trust sheds a very original light on the nature of the vital educational value of archetypal craft gestures. My question though, is how do we make the transition from traditional crafts to the challenges of contemporary design and technology? Perhaps this question may provoke some of our readers to put pen to paper (or even fingers to keyboards).

Josie Alwyn's article about Harry Potter in our June number (which appeared days before the new Harry Potter) generated considerable interest, including one special correspondent. We received a request from J. K. Rowling's agent for a copy of *Steiner Education*.

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Editorial

A Michaelmas Thought



The endless long hot summer seems to have finally come to an end and been replaced by one of the most beautiful autumns we've been blessed with for a long time. Though Britain seems to have mostly had the benefit of a lovely summer, other European countries have suffered a torrid time of drought, lost crops, forest fires and a drastic rise in the number of fatalities, mostly among elderly and sick people in oven-like temperatures in the cities. Whether this drama indicates long-term climate change – as glaciers melt, water tables drop, fruit ripens earlier and the migration patterns of birds change by months – remains to be seen.

It reminds us that we never really live in stable climatic conditions but are part of a huge breathing, pulsating climate rhythm, one which we can certainly influence through our industrial activities, but which is essentially, in its complexity and scale, beyond our normal consciousness. It almost seems as if there is a conspiracy to prevent us grasping the sheer scale of the living world around us. Such complexity reveals an intelligence that permeates the natural world from the level of bacteria (the concept of 'simple' organisms is a misnomer, there are no simple organisms!) to the solar system. Of course such complexity is well represented inside our own heads and nervous systems. It is a *nervous* system indeed! It is constantly active, ensuring that we don't get overloaded by the vastness of its own activity. That's why we need sleep. The energy our brains consume in being conscious renders us exhausted.

I find it hard to grasp that we live on a blue sphere spinning through space. Trying to visualise this makes me dizzy. The dramatic appearance of the planet Mars in our skies in August, swinging nearer to earth than for tens of thousands of years, reminds us too that we are part of cosmic processes of a rhythmical nature. I read that the elliptical path of Mars is accompanied by massive atmospheric changes as the planet swings closer to and further away from the sun. If Earth experienced such turbulence and extreme conditions, life would be impossible. The sun we see in the sky (the photosphere is apparently only a few hundred kilometres deep) is only part of what actually constitutes the sun. The greater part that makes up the solar wind reaches and embraces the Earth in a field of radiating forces. These are the origin of life forces on Earth.

In contrast to the forces of gravity which are centrifugal and have a concentrating effect, the life forces of the sun radiate outwards and have a fundamentally expansive, from our perspective, literally uplifting effect. The plant world gives most clear expression to this process striving upwards into the light, overcoming the forces of gravity, whereas in the mineral realm of geology everything tends to fall, to settle, to level out, to consolidate. Of course our planet is stirred by both processes, even at the geological level. Deep down beneath the mantle of floating continents, the Earth's core is stirred by sun-like forces that well upwards and break through in the form of volcanic activity. It is literally breathtaking to try to grasp the magnitude of such forces.

In Waldorf Schools around the world the festival celebrating Michael defeating the dragon will have taken place. This image has a special place in our schools and like most great archetypal images has many layers of meaning. Foremost, however, is the idea of Michael holding the middle, holding the balance between extremes, holding the conscious centre in which we find our equilibrium and thus our confidence to go forward into life. That is why Michael is associated with courage, light, strength, intelligence and above all the power of love.

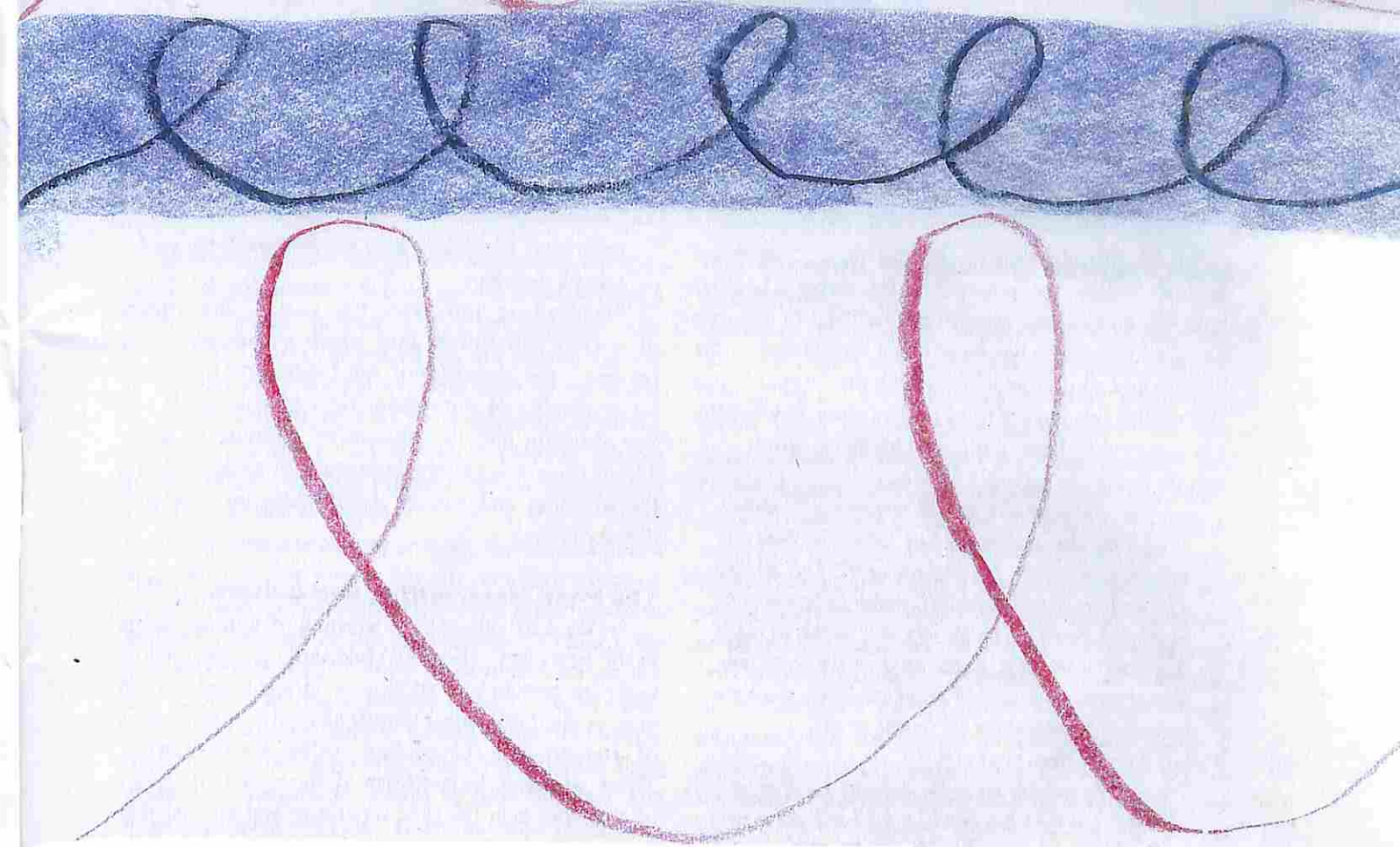
In a memorable and pessimistic epithet, Bob Dylan sang of 'gravity that pulls you down and destiny that breaks you apart'. The defiant mood of the song however contradicts this gesture and suggests that you should raise yourself up and take hold of your own destiny. Somehow I always remember this line at Michaelmas.





Prizewinning sunflower – the biggest in Northern Ireland – which won £1000 for Holywood Rudolf Steiner School

The Sustrans Safe Routes to School Conference – attended by some children and parents from Michael Hall who made the journey from Sussex to Leicester by bike and train.



The Importance of Handwriting

An endangered art

Michael Preston

Waldorf schools may be unique in giving great weight to good handwriting. From the first grade of Steiner school, the children learn to write by hand and to do so beautifully and in an artistic way. They learn to use a fountain pen and they record in their main lesson books – in cursive writing – what they learn about the subjects they are studying. But is this perpetuation of handwriting skill in Waldorf schools a quaint anachronism or are there deeper reasons for its continuance in an age of computer keyboards?

As with many of the aspects of Waldorf education, recent scientific research is corroborating the value of the use of the hands. Studies also show a correlation between handwriting and emotional and psychological condition. Among the findings: the learning of good penmanship can support the healthy development of the child; handwriting exercises can be a means to improve mood and behaviour, and analysis of handwriting can be a tool for understand-

ing a child's development. Handwriting is not only a medium of visual communication and an artistic and manual skill, but embodies and develops important aspects of mental, emotional and physical integration.

In Waldorf school, the skill of writing begins in those first deeply impressionable days in Class One, when the children consciously begin to form straight and curved lines and then to do many dynamic exercises both with their bodies and with their hands in rhythmic linear patterns. Many teachers have been greatly helped by Audrey McAllen's fine book on the important beginnings of writing in Waldorf school¹. This emphasis on handwriting, however, goes back to Rudolf Steiner, the founder of Waldorf Education. He gave exact instructions how it should be taught and provided form drawing exercises that help children develop and keep a legible and aesthetically appealing way of writing.

In the beginning Good Created

In his introduction to the teaching of writing² Rudolf Steiner recommends three steps. The first links the child to the past, to the heritage of the culture into which she has been born; the second to the present and to the capacities which the human hands give each child; and the third to the future, to what she can accomplish by acquiring the ability to write.

Steiner beings by saying:

The child must look up with reverence, with respect, to what the older generations have already achieved and what he is to achieve, too, through school. This looking with a certain respect to the surrounding culture must be inspired in the child from the very first, so that he really sees almost a kind of higher being in the people who have already grown older. Without awakening this sense in teaching and education one cannot get on...

Rudolf Steiner then suggests:

You [the teacher] can say to the children: 'Look at yourself now. You have two hands, a left hand and a right hand. You have these two hands to work with; you can do all kinds of things with these hands.'

The teacher should elaborate, creating a picture for the child of the many and wonderful things human beings can do and make with their hands. Working with one's hands leads to the future, but the work must be shaped by the right soul mood. *The teacher must raise to the level of the soul's consciousness the ideals that are to be realized.'*

Thirdly, Steiner suggests:

You [the teacher] can say to the child: 'Watch me do this'. (You draw a straight line) 'Now do it with your own hand'. Now you can let the children do the same, as slowly as possible, for it will naturally be a slow process if you are going to call the children out one by one and let them do it on the board and then go back to their places. The right assimilation of teaching in this case is of the greatest

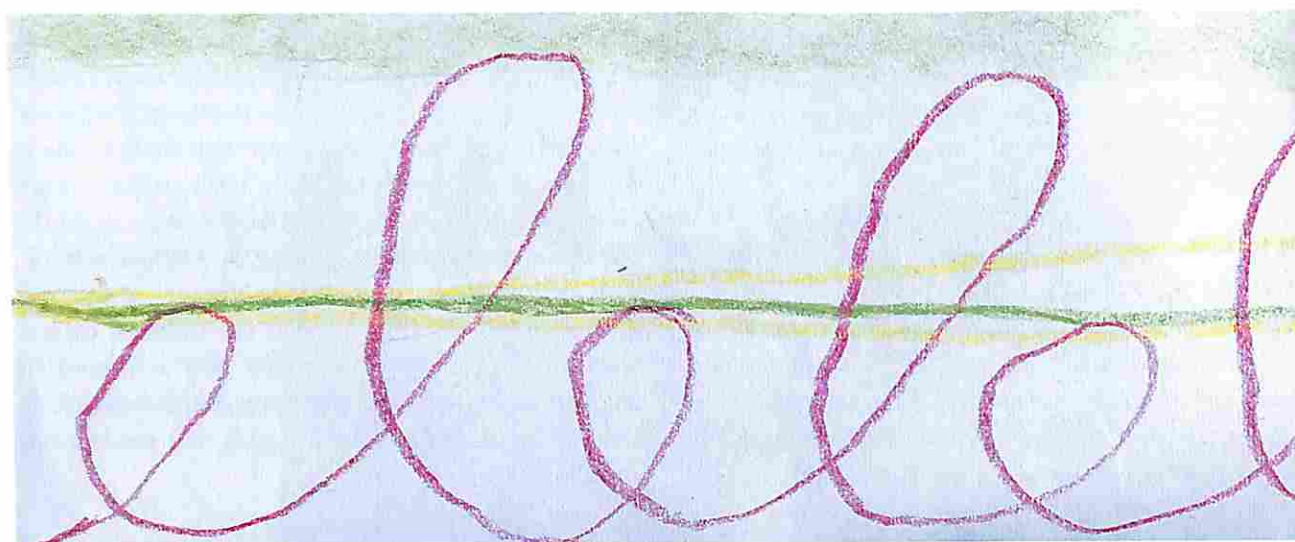
importance. The children must now launch into this work towards the future.

Steiner here integrates the past – the stream of society and culture into which we are born; the present – the capacities of our hands; and the future – our shaping of our destiny through our hands and our idealism, into the process of learning to write. These three aspects are important in understanding the meaning and role of handwriting in children's development.

The Past: Handwriting and Culture

In Waldorf schools, the learning of writing begins in the first class, when the children begin with whole body movement and then draw straight and curved lines in rhythmic linear patterns, involving sequences of straight and curved lines, called form drawing. These will have little stories to them, but the heart of the work is in the care, repetition and manual skill in accomplishing these forms on a consistent, daily basis. These are 'pre-writing' exercises and many teachers use them intensively for the first two to three weeks of the Class One.

Then, in an artistic and meaningful way, the children are introduced to the shapes of our western Roman alphabet. The teaching of each letter is accompanied by a story and by an artistic exercise connecting the letter with some living image. Steiner said that bringing the letters to the children in an imaginative, artistic way would help the children assimilate them more easily. Mastery of the alphabet leads on to the children reading their own writing and then eventually reading texts. This process continues through the early grades until reading and writing become established as habitual skills.



And Goodmade

Steiner noted that the phonetic alphabets are conventional and arbitrary. Unlike speech, number, and a sense of rhythm, the shapes of letters and their connection to a particular sound are not natural aspects of human physiological expression. A given alphabet is physiologically and psychologically arbitrary. Nevertheless, every writing system contains certain archetypal features and makes universal pedagogical and developmental demands.³

All alphabets consist of straight, curved and mixed lines, though they vary in the mix and dominance of straight or curved lines. Each writing system is both manifestation and carrier of a culture. A child born by destiny into a particular culture must learn to use that culture's writing system in order to express herself and to communicate in writing. Each child learns, more or less unconsciously and with relatively little effort to communicate orally. In time however, she must also learn the rules of writing that govern the form and layout on the paper. Co-ordination of the eye with the fine motor control of the hand must be worked at with great effort of will, concentration, and repetition, in order to achieve cultural standards of written expression and communication.

In time, the child internalises these conventions of self expression and becomes able to learn through reading, and to express thought and feeling through writing. Here the child's imitative capacity, manual skill and will-power connect her with her heritage, with the wisdom and cultural embodiment of her language in writing.

A child meeting her culture through language and its expression in writing, is meeting a hugely significant part of life that sustains and enables her launch into her own possibilities and future destiny. It is for this reason, perhaps, that Steiner places such importance on drawing children's attention to the contribution of 'the older generations'. Today we easily forget the past generations through human history who have helped create our understanding and consciousness. It is important that the teacher possesses gratitude and reverence for the past, engendering in children a similar reverence and respect for the past and its extraordinary gift of writing.

The Present: relationship between hand and brain

Eighty years after Steiner's ground-breaking, integrated approach to education, modern research is mapping out the 'geography' of mind/body interaction. Frank Wilson's much talked about book, *The Hand – How its Use Shapes the Brain, Language and Human Culture* 1998⁴ and his article *The True Meaning of Hands – On Education*⁵ show an exciting shift towards a deeper understanding of the connection between brain and hand. He suggests that there is a powerful interplay between the neuromuscular possibilities of the hand and the brain's development. Not only is this theoretically supported in the evolution of our forebears' mental growth and cultural accomplishment, but also in the individual development of each child who primes her brain through an incredible array of manual experience long before she enters school. These findings were foreshadowed by the experimental work of Piaget and the earlier insights of both Rudolf Steiner and Maria Montessori.

There are two additional and fascinating aspects of the new research into hand-brain development.

Firstly, Wilson notes that people who have developed great skill in the use of their hands are also deeply emotionally invested in the skill. The acquisition of great skill in the hands is, in a fundamental way, self-defining; it is not only an accomplishment of fine motor development, but also a change in self and self – image.

Secondly, Jeanette Farmer, editor of the American Handwriting Analysis Foundation and long time researcher and practitioner in the developmental effects of handwriting for children, highlights the feedback effects of handwriting on left and right brain integration, and the emotional development of children.⁶

Left brain-right brain

Frank Wilson claims in his book on the hand that the use of fine motor movement in making tools is



now thought to have also played a central part in the development of language. Thus, for modern human beings, the left brain is the dominant hemisphere for language, sequential thought and reasoning. It also has to do with the fine-motor skills involved in handwriting.

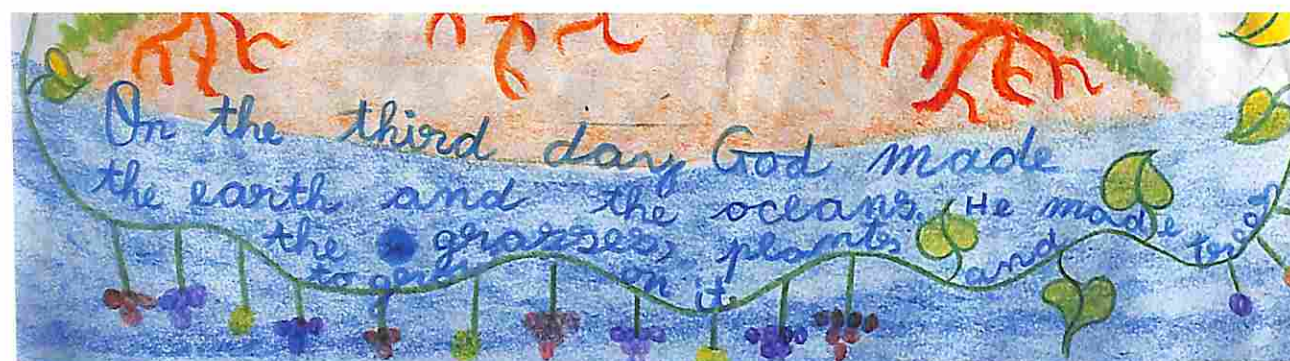
Drawing upon contemporary and historical research into handwriting and neuro-physiology, Farmer makes some fascinating observations about the relationship of left and right brain and the psychological feedback effects of handwriting. The right brain controls gross motor and sensory activity and is more ancient in our historical development. The left brain controls fine motor movement especially the fingers.

She cites research showing that the straight line requires greater impulse control and is more related to the left brain, while the curved line is freer and more natural to the right brain and is connected to gross motor movement.

When a child begins to work intensively with straight and curved lines, especially with the onset of writing, the right and left brains are brought into greater and more intensive relationship. With this cross fertilisation and newly enhanced connectedness, the brain is evolved and 'upgraded' into a more complex and developed state of readiness for learning, especially a readiness for reading. Not only is the brain's recognition readiness enhanced but also intellectual and emotional focus, necessary for the very complex task of letter recognition and reading, is energised. This research therefore begins to offer a fascinating neurological explanation and validation of Steiner's firm insistence on form-drawing and writing before reading.

Emotional feedback between hand and brain

However, the achievement of form or handwriting on paper is only part of the loop of hand-brain influence. As mentioned earlier, the role of emotion in the hand, particularly through handwriting, is a fascinating field of research that is very current in neurological research. It would not be surprising to find a book on the emotional intelligence of the hand appear in print before too long!



One recent researcher in psychology, Dr. James Pennebaker,⁷ has found that regular expression of feelings and thoughts through writing at the rate of twenty minutes a day for a week resulted in a significant boost to the immune system (This may not be exclusively handwriting, as opposed to typing, though it is probably more commonly the former, but it is still feeling mediated by the hands in linguistic form). Other neurological research has found that rhythmic movement in both gross and fine motor movement, produces a feeling of well-being. Repetitive movement also achieves a better balance between the thinking and feeling brain and promotes better left-right brain co-ordination.

Waldorf teachers are familiar with the application and value of Form Drawing. Steiner formulated it, among other reasons, as a hygienic necessity for the balance and strengthening of the children. The mixture of motor and visual (hand and eye) co-ordination seems particularly powerful. All of these forms are built up on the straight and curved line. In the practice of Eurythmy we are also aware of the effect of whole body activity utilising straight and curved movements. Both Eurythmy and Form Drawing are valued by Waldorf teachers as fundamental developmental tools and educative, hygienic elements.

Remedial and therapeutic handwriting

Jeanette Farmer's work is an interesting addition in that it particularly emphasises the hygienic and developmental value of handwriting. Using rhythmic music as a background, she has extensively experimented with children doing sequences of simple, straight and curved forms – very similar to ribbon form drawing or pre-writing, such as Joan Gladich (a former Waldorf teacher) and Paula Sassi suggested in their first book *The Write Approach*.⁸ Farmer's work has had remarkable results in bringing sustained calm and greater focus to children in early grades right up to High School, usually attained through daily 15 minute sessions over a minimal period of three weeks but preferably longer. A new 'running form' is introduced each day (previous ones can also be revisited later). A liner or some form of size guideline on plain paper helps the children to keep to the ideal of regularity and even rhythm. Her handbook has a music

CD included with music played at about 60 beats a minute. I have experimented with chime bars which can be tuned pentatonically for younger children, or otherwise for older. Played quietly and rhythmically during the exercise, they help to bring quiet and peaceful engagement. I worked with noticeable results using these exercises with my Fifth Grade in the first 15 minutes of each morning. The children were very calm and centered when we ended and this carried over into the Main Lesson. They greatly enjoyed the activity but wanted a break after about five weeks. Later in the year I did a similar pre-Main Lesson activity but this time with a book of cursive handwriting exercises. Again, I noticed a similarly quietening and focusing effect. I also brought this activity to a course on Handwriting at our last Teachers' Conference and to two Faculty meetings. Colleagues found it a calming and focusing experience. It would be most interesting to see how this use of fine-motor practice in our classrooms and at different grade levels could help restless and unfocused children.

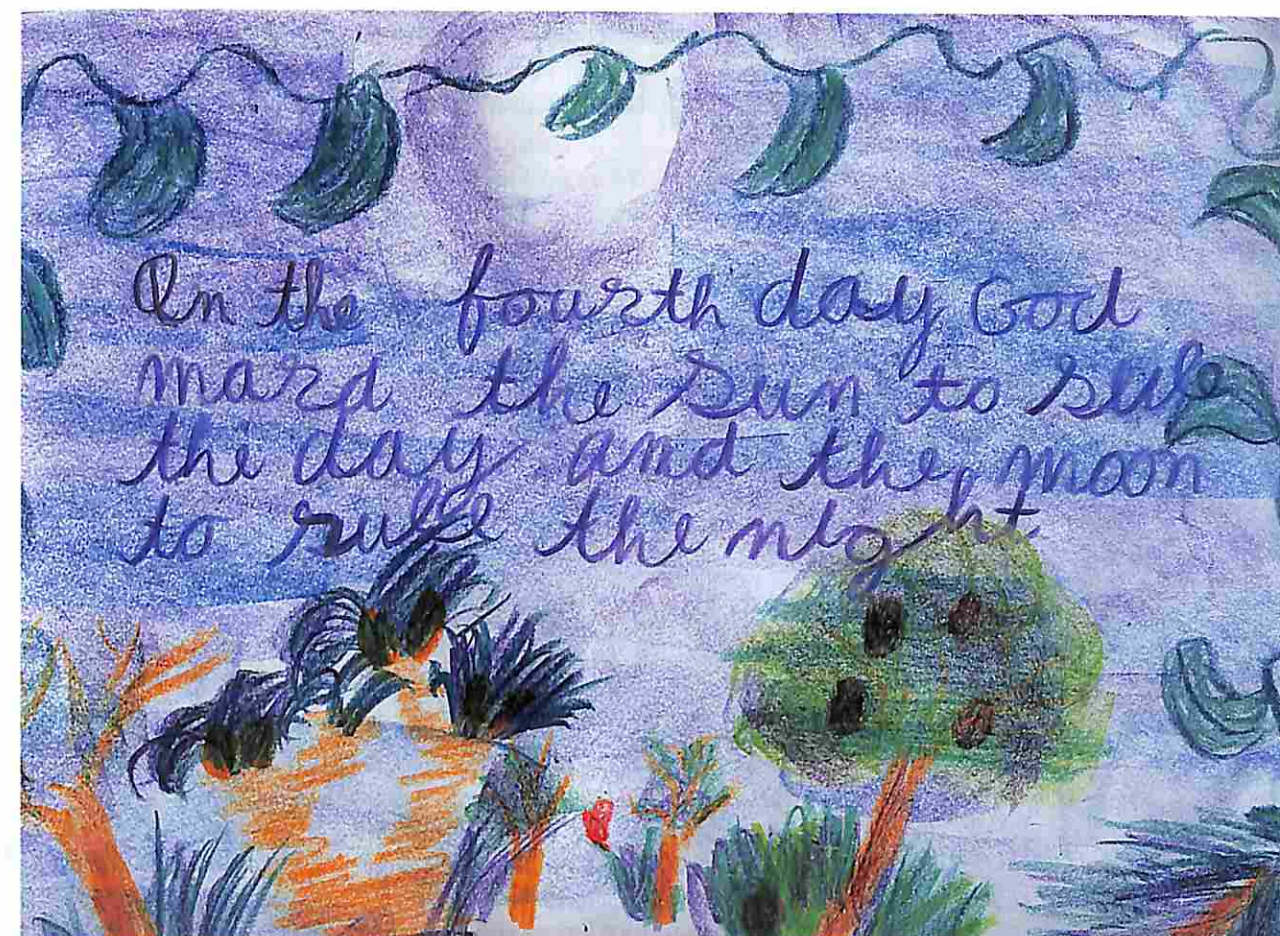
Jeanette Farmer claims solid success with troubled, unfocused or attention-deficit children, and also children in inner-city schools. I believe her fine research and field trials offer a promising addition to, or adaptation of, our work in Waldorf Education. Her research gives deeper meaning to developing handwriting skill, and also a possibly valuable therapeutic addition to our range of natural remedial options as class or specialist teachers.

The Future: handwriting as a pedagogical and therapeutic tool

As well as the therapeutic value of handwriting as a fine-motor skill and psychological integrator, the unfolding development of a child's and young person's writing can be an important aspect of the teacher's pedagogical observation and guidance.

As children get older their writing slowly deviates from the copy book script and develops into their own unique style. This reflects the child's physiology, motor and psychological dispositions. This usually unconscious individualising of handwriting is especially pronounced after puberty. Among the aspects of the writing that typically change are slant, size, looping, connections and regularity and size of margins, spacing between words. Some changes are intrinsic to the child's individuality, others the result of carelessness or bad habits. Over the last two centuries, in Europe and the United States, a great deal of research has been invested in deepening an understanding of the psychological dynamics and implications of expressive movement in handwriting.

Graphology or handwriting analysis is an old and well-established field of study. As well as practitioners and academic researchers, many great thinkers, including Goethe and Einstein, have been convinced that handwriting expresses character. The English painter Thomas Gainsborough is said to have placed a sample of his subject's writing next to his easel as



So Lucifer hurried

he observed and painted her, in order to deepen his understanding of her character.

Two major approaches to handwriting analysis are practised today. One correlates certain traits with certain strokes and is detail-oriented. The other school is holistic and concerns itself with gestalt features of writing such as layout and margins, slant, size of writing, pressure, speed, and line and word spacing.

Teachers can easily grasp many of the principles of the gestalt approach and use them as an additional means to observe children, in a phenomenological rather than diagnostic way. Just as a child's body language, and his relationship to form as expressed in drawing, painting, eurythmy and handwork are indicative of growth and health, so his handwriting reveals much of importance. Observation of handwriting can help us understand a child's development and challenges. As children mature their writing is a gestural picture of overall, developmental progress.

The blank page is like a stage onto which the actor – the person who writes – walks. Some walk in boldly, perhaps overconfidently or even carelessly. Others are aware of their surroundings, stepping carefully, paying attention to protocol and aesthetic niceties. Others are timid or lost in their own world. Their writing may even appear marooned on the page. Some have a lot to say and use every inch of space. Others allow for areas of quiet 'white space'. A graphologist will often turn a page upside down before reading anything, just to gain an impression of the gesture of the writing in the space of the page.

Other things to note include: size and steadiness of size; slant; size and evenness of the four surrounding margins; white space between the lines; size and evenness of spaces between words; consistency or rise and fall of the line of writing – particularly where there is no guideline/liner; degree and quality of connective strokes between letters; pressure or intensity of the writing.

According to graphology, the upper zone of a line of writing – comprising the upper extensions of letter – corresponds to thought and imagination. The midzone of non-extended lower case letters such as m, n, o reflects social emphasis and 'here-and-now'

feeling. The lower zone, of downward extensions, reflects practical/physical interests and willing. The three zones give a picture of the relative dominance and balance between these three areas.

The teacher can also use handwriting to promote healthy development. In other academic and artistic activities we do not accept just any work or behaviour. We guide the children according to certain patterns and models with inbuilt aesthetic and moral standards. This should also apply in the realm of penmanship. With an enhanced understanding of the role of the psychological and developmental significance of handwriting it is no longer sufficient to see it as 'merely' a visual medium of communication, a vessel for information whose execution and appearance is of little importance. Just as we regard the manner, clarity and warmth of speech as very important in the delivery of oral communication, so too must we value the 'manner of writing' as an aspect of psychological development.

Some of the individual deviations from 'copy-book' writing, which naturally and inevitably occur, are healthy developmental expressions of individuality. But there are ideal 'norms' that we can apply to individuals, just as walking upright with grace and balance applies as an ideal to every individual no matter how differently built or of what temperament.

A balance of white space and writing is like a balance of speaking and listening or giving out and taking in. Clear, even margins express a sense of boundaries, manners and respect as well as aesthetic awareness. Clear white spaces between lines of writing express and support mental clarity. Evenness of mid-zone letter size supports emotional steadiness and self-control. Balance of the three zones of writing is an ideal but a teacher can certainly try to nudge a student away from too much shrinkage of the upper (imagination) or lower (practical) extensions.

Since there is a mutual interrelationship of handwriting and character, continued instruction and training in penmanship may positively influence the developing character. In other words – ongoing guidance in clear, balanced, aesthetically pleasing handwriting may encourage a clarity, harmony, and

Burning ice, biting flame;
that is how life began.

balance of soul. It is interesting to study Abraham Lincoln's handwriting in this regard! His writing contains a great range of fine qualities: care, beauty, balance, clarity, evenness, steadiness, legibility, originality, strength, energy and focus are present and are examples of some of the desirable qualities to which all writers can aspire!

Thus handwriting can be used to create a positive classroom environment for learning. It can be used as a way to understand the children more deeply. Steady year-to-year guidance toward aesthetic and balanced

handwriting can promote psychological growth and health.

If we can consciously guide children in their handwriting with the same devotion we give to other areas of teaching, handwriting can take its rightful place alongside the arts and intellectual learning in the Waldorf curriculum. It will become a powerful and anchoring means of strengthening children on a consistent basis, developing their capacities, and helping them move confidently and courageously towards their future and their destiny.

1. Audrey McAllen, *Teaching Children to Write*. Rudolf Steiner Press, 1977.

2. Rudolf Steiner, *Practical Course for Teachers*. Rudolf Steiner Publishing Co., 1937.

Now available as *Practical Advice to Teachers*. Rudolf Steiner Press, 1976.

The pages of the three quotes as they appear in *Practical Course...* are: 52, 54, and 55 and in *Practical Advice...*: 54, 59, and 60.

3. Georges Jean, *Writing: The Story of Alphabets and Scripts*. Thames and Hudson, 1992.

4. Frank Wilson, *The Hand: How it Shapes the Brain, Language and Culture*. Pantheon Books, 1998.

5. Frank Wilson *The Real Meaning of Hands-On Education*. Waldorf Education Research Bulletin, January 2000.

6. Jeanette Farmer *Training the Brain to Pay Attention the Write Way*. Write Brain Press, 1999.

7. J.W. Pennebaker *Writing, Social processes, and Psychotherapy: from Past to Future*. American Psychological Association, 2002.

8. Joen Gladich and Paula Sassi *The Write Approach*. Handwriting Consultants International, 1988.

Michael Preston was educated in Kenya, New Zealand and England. He taught as a volunteer in Vanuatu, state schools in England, and has been a Waldorf Class teacher for 21 years. He trained at Emerson College and later gained his Ph.D. at London University, specialising in the phenomenology of perception. Recently he received California State accreditation in handwriting analysis. Michael and his wife teach in the Honolulu Waldorf School. Their three children have all happily graduated from Waldorf Schools.



And the
and the
were the

The gods weren't very pleased



Editorial comment. An example of practice-based research

Reading is a mystery. It is an enormously complex skill that is barely understood neurologically. It is easy when you can do it but not when you can't. One of the remarkable facts about the skill of reading is that there occurs a moment when an individual can translate the symbols on the page into a meaningful inner thought experience. This moment can take a long time to arrive and will require much perfecting, but it marks a highly significant stage of development. With the ability to read comes the beginning of the transition from orality to literacy, two fundamentally different ways of experiencing the world. Literacy forms the basis for more rational, logical, linear, sequential, categorising and abstract ways of thinking and remembering. Literate memory is more individual and internal, oral memory is more situational, collective – often ritual and less personal.

One of the key tasks of education is to ensure that literacy does not simply replace orality. Orality has to be transformed because it is the basis for intuitive, holistic thinking and imagination. Because of the

importance of this transformation Waldorf education allows time for an organic transformation to occur. The emphasis on story-telling and oral presentation throughout the school is critical because narrative is an essentially artistic way of ordering experience and complements the more systematic, abstract approaches that dominates much modern thinking and practical life.

Reading follows writing in the Waldorf curriculum, on the basis of 'first do then understand'. The process proceeds from pictorial representation of the letters, via capital letters, lower case and cursive script and ultimately printed text. Steiner recommended an integrated approach to reading in which the whole word recognition (also known as the analytic method), phonetics and spelling methods are used. Each aspect plays a role in enabling the child to grasp the various tasks involved in reading. Above all he pleaded for 'a certain pedagogical skill and artistry, which will avoid a too one-sided drill...'

He also went on to suggest that if children start at the age of seven,

'they will be able to read in due course – perhaps a few months after their ninth year. It does not really matter if they cannot read earlier, because they have learnt it in a natural and wholesome way.'

Today most parents probably would mind if their child was not reading by the age of nine. Interestingly however, Steiner's comment places the emphasis on the natural, holistic method. It doesn't matter as long as the child has learned in a natural way.

Many children do take longer to learn to read and require learning support. In the South Devon School a project has recently been started to research how best to support late readers. This project builds on work done over many years in the school in learning support. Their approach seems to me to follow Steiner's original suggestions in a very thoughtful way. More importantly, I feel, this project shows how practice-based research in schools with relatively little resources can lead to real quality development.

MR

1. Steiner, R. *The Child's Changing Consciousness and Waldorf Education*. Lecture of 18th April 1920.
2. *ibid*.



Re-awakening the Word: Learning to read in a Steiner Waldorf school

Jan Stebbing

The English word 'read' comes from the same word as 'riddle' (German Rätsel). It implies that something unknown has to be deciphered. Karl König On Reading and Writing

John, Michael and David have arrived for their weekly reading lesson. The learning support room is bright and sunny, a small treasure house of books and reading games, and here they are, prompt as always, flushed and bright-eyed from their break in the sunshine and ready now for their work together. They will also, later on in the week, have small group reading time in the context of the classroom, but this session is just for them.

They're eager to say how they got on with the books they took home last week and to show their homework drawings. There's a mild cacophony of sound which soon settles as we fall into the rhythm of the lesson. This usually consists of a short review of the homework tasks; making sure that all books are back and checking this off on their booklists; recalling the main elements of last week's new story; playing a 'story-specific' reading game with sentences and phrases taken from the story, and also, perhaps,

a recall activity. Looking through and then reading today's new story is done in a way that practices both reading together and individual reading aloud but also acknowledges the place of rest and silent reading and the need for pause and reflection from time to time in relation to content. Other activities include the choosing of one or two supplementary (and easier) books to read (a process which almost always results in spontaneous reading aloud). We also carefully write down the book titles and put the books into folders. Finally we clear the table for one last game or activity – something which varies from week-to-week according to the time remaining, the prevailing mood (mine as well as the children's), and the teaching decision made in the light of what has emerged in the lesson.

John, Michael and David are all in Class Three, and have been coming along for a small group reading practice since almost the beginning of the

school year, when we look at the children's reading as part of the Class Two assessment. This is done in an holistic way, using the Neale Analysis of Reading Ability. This gives a very clear diagnostic picture of which children will need support over the years and, indeed, of how best they might be supported. There will be some children who are relatively high and dry in reading terms, of course, by the beginning of Class Three, and a small few who will need close one-to-one special needs and extra lesson work throughout. In fact, David has both kinds of additional lesson as the basis of his learning support programme (quite enough for anyone, you'd think, but he was desperate not to miss out on the reading), but John and Michael, alongside several others in the class, are what could be described as 'in-between' children. We've learned over time that there are a number of children in each class each year who, if left alone, will not be able successfully to make the leap from recognition into independent reading and that this can be an unnecessary source of frustration and bewilderment for them.

Therefore, in order to help them in making a start as readers (and so that we ourselves have a very clear picture of their strengths and weaknesses in this regard) reading support is organised for them in a fairly well-structured and finely-tuned way as soon as we know what they need. By the end of Class Three we hope they are happy and confident with what they have achieved.

The practice of working together as readers in the recognition sense is something with which the children in this class are already familiar. They were the beneficiaries last year of the South Devon Class Two Project, which aimed to enhance literacy. In collaboration with the class teacher and under the auspices of the school and the learning support department and the mentorship of Trevor Mephram (of Plymouth University), several exploratory initiatives were taken.

These included the translation of known verses and familiar fables into large (class) and small (individual) handmade reading materials and careful observations were made of the children's responses to these. We also considered ways in which reading practice in Class Two could best be organised in accordance with Waldorf educational principles. Last but not least, we undertook a revision of the teaching of phonetics (including the short vowels and the simple consonant digraphs) in an integrated way alongside the introduction of the lower case script.

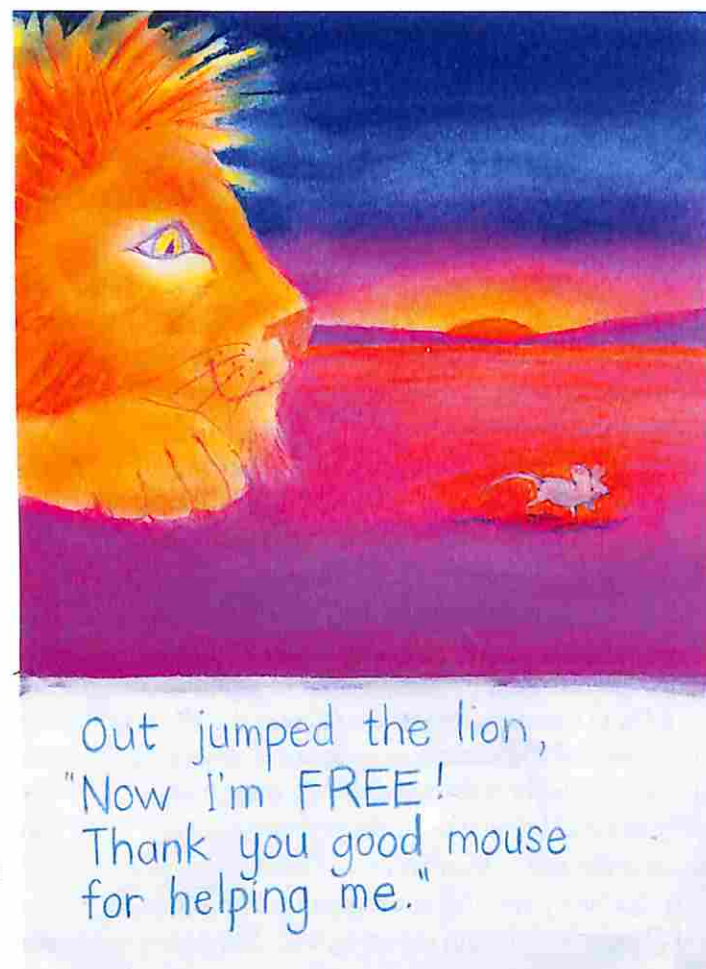
This last initiative meant that, whether or not individual children were ready to read in Class Two, they were equipped comfortably with a

knowledge of the code which would meanwhile be serving them as beginner writers.

The use of the handmade reading materials was carried over into the first half-term of Class Three for those who needed it and thus we moved gradually into more finely-tuned and individually-orientated small-group reading work, beginning with, amongst others, John, Michael and David who by the time of writing have had a full two terms of guided reading support.

All three children have made significant progress over time, gaining some 14 months in 'reading age' terms between September and May. Without exception they all feel stronger, confident and keen. At the beginning of Class Three it wasn't possible for us to know with certainty whether John and Michael (amongst others) were simply being 'sleepy' and biding their time, or whether they were children who might be in need of some specific learning support. Now that we have spent the best part of a year together in this way they are well-known to us as readers (as well as writers, storytellers, painters, tree-climbers and so on). Above all we can say that they have had a well-held opportunity to experience themselves as readers, and that, moreover, they appreciate having a small amount of independence in this regard.

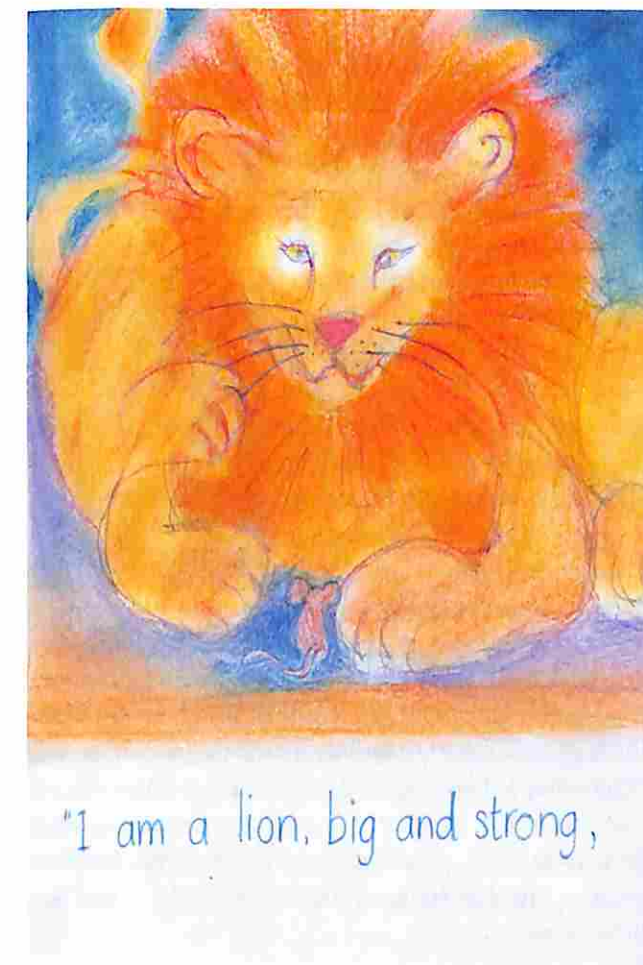
Really, all that happens over the year is that we make a beginning: we get into the flow of things, we engage in the 'riddle' of reading. First and foremost,



though, at this stage in their development as readers the children need to continue on with the Class Two pattern of 'doing it together'. With the exception of one or two children each year who may really need to work one-to-one, the children for the most part need and like to work together in small groups. Three is the ideal number and it usually works out that this many children will share a similar-enough 'reading age' to find working together mutually beneficial. This doesn't mean they'll all have identical learning approaches of course, but they will all benefit from experiencing this fact and from the support and inspiration they will inevitably offer each other over the course of time.

Secondly, we are going to work with stories and story-specific reading games. The more beautifully written and illustrated the book the better, but even dusty old Beacon Readers contain well-written tales and when we're reading together it can all be carried along and embraced with a passion, right to the very last word. There's an art to this of course, but it's always surprising to feel the energy and dynamic brought to the task by the children and it always comes alive in the reading. Quite apart from anything else they love the opportunity to practice their 'instrument' in this way and it has to be said that they always come to the task with a will.

The secret of this approach to the art and practice of hearing children read is fourfold: firstly we are reading narrative, secondly the books are artfully



chosen for readability and suitability, thirdly we're going to be playing games, and fourthly we're going to have our books at home for a while, a privilege which is very much appreciated by the children. In this way the experience of both the reading and the stories will be thorough and hopefully penetrating; nothing is going to be hurried and on the contrary we are going to be taking our time.

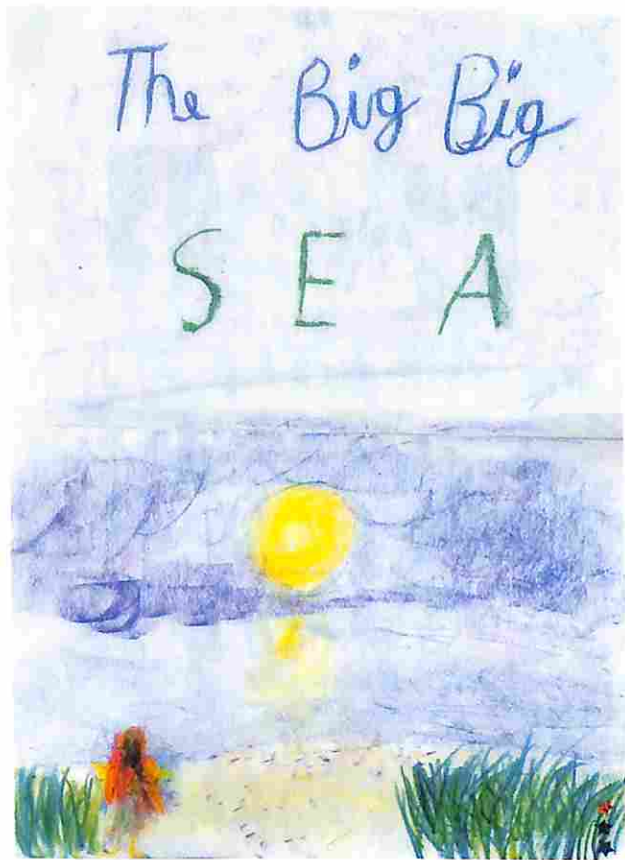
So that we are able to work sensitively with the children, the storybooks or stories-in-readers are colour-coded discreetly by readability in a way which cross-references with 'reading age', so that, for instance, books at 'stage 6' will be comfortably readable for children with a reading age of between 7 and 7 years 6 months; books at 'stage 7' will be suitable for children with reading ages of between 7 years 6 months and 8 years, and so on.

The basic principle here is that when the material is suitable, not only in the sense of being a story or narrative well-chosen for these particular children but also from the point of view of readability (provoking an 'error' rate of not more than between five and ten words in every hundred). The child will then be being met in just the right place and over the course of time will gain in both skills and fluency, much as the novice pianist gradually flourishes as a musician through the regular practice of 'easy pieces'.

So we meet each week for a lesson which feels relatively easy, and any shift in faculty is left to happen by itself: we work and play widely over time with materials at one level of readability, using resources both made and gathered in as we go along, and we wait and see how it goes. Sometimes the movement happens relatively suddenly, and we're all taken by surprise, and at other times the changes are more gradual, but whatever the case we wait until readiness has shown itself so that we are always responding sensitively to the children's learning requirements. One of the rewards of working with beginner readers in this way is to experience and witness these moments when they come.

Another of the rewards, it has to be said, is the enjoyment which game-playing brings to one and all. In the course of playing story-specific reading games such as (an adapted) 'Go Fish' (with phrases or sentences taken from the previous lesson's main story), 'Dice Game' (with phrases or words), or the pelmanism/memory game (with words or extremely short phrases), a good deal of helpful diagnostic information yields itself up in one way and another, but above all the experience for everyone concerned is an enlivening one.

I hope that it's appropriate to add at this point that enjoyment has also been the experience of those parents who have over time become committed reading helpers in the classroom-based Classes



Three and Four afternoon reading support sessions (although in this context books are not sent home with the children). The application of small group reading to the classroom arose initially as a result of the interest of the then Class Three teacher, Lise Platt, and of Beverley Powell, who is Learning Support Co-ordinator here, and who continues to support it and to carry it forward strongly for the school. It takes time and care at the beginning of things with each new group of helpers to establish working protocols, and lesson preparation has to be especially thorough and well thought-through, but ultimately it brings a strong sense of enjoyment and fulfilment to those whose involvement makes it possible for us to work (and play) in this way.

Meanwhile, in terms of the learning outcomes of game-playing in the context of reading practice times – the cultivation and exercise of the skills of recall, recognition and reading at the level of both sentence and word, for instance – the task itself does the work. For example, in preparing to request ‘cards’ from one another the children quite naturally rehearse their reading silently; in response to a request for a phrase or sentence, they are looking, listening and cross-checking for recognition; as they make a request themselves they are reading aloud, and so on.

Beyond this, it is my own experience that things emerge in the context of these reading times which invite contemplation on many levels, and which lead, in the end, to a real sense of knowing the children as readers in some depth. For instance, what kinds of narrative they respond to, and how they differ

as individuals in this respect; the way in which, for instance, the strength of John as an intuitive reader complements Michael’s more considered and observant approach; the quality of moral response which has been brought to us over time by David, and the contribution which his necessarily more phonic approach makes to the overall learning landscape of the group.

We also learn about each other as we play the games: when we play ‘Go Fish’, John has a keen eye and is always quick to remember where things are; Michael takes delight at his smallest successes but is younger than the others and so I need to be mindful always of where he is in his responses and awareness and of his need, still, to take things at his own pace; David plays generously and can be playful with the game dynamic from time to time in a way which keeps us all on our toes. Later, when we play pelmanism/memory, Michael and David can bring into play their word-level synthesising skills, whilst John learns how to slow down and work sequentially at the grapheme-phoneme level.

The point here is that through the process of working closely with those children who need supporting in a finely tuned way in their reading practice we give ourselves plenty of food for thought, understanding, and the development of expertise in relation to reading and the nature of the reading process in the English language. This really is in its own right the very richest of realms and as such is one to which we should not be closing our eyes.

*The children's names have been changed.
Special thanks to Sarah Brindley.*

Jan Stebbing has been a Learning Support teacher for several years at the Rudolf Steiner School of South Devon and has had a special interest in the transition into reading. She began her teaching career in 1975, has a background in mainstream literacy and special needs education across a wide age-range and has studied and researched into the acquisition of language and reading at postgraduate level at the University of Reading. She has also been the author of early reading materials for Ginn and Macmillan Education, and of *Reading for Meaning: an investigation into the effect of narrative in two reading texts for seven year-olds*, published by UKRA, 1982. She has been involved in Steiner education since 1991 and has three sons.



Will-Developed Intelligence

Craft and Movement Gesture in Education

Bernard Graves

How do you do?

More to the point, how do you learn to do and what do you learn by doing? These questions challenge us today to find and demonstrate pathways from doing to thinking. Doing implies either inner or outer movement. Thinking about doing necessitates some degree of awareness of movement gesture, a largely unconscious activity.

To move or not to move: hyperactivity and lethargy

It is clear that in a society becoming ever more sedentary and where the keyboard is replacing the traditional pen and in which we are increasingly transported around, the child’s need for primary engagement through the sense of movement and gesture is being curtailed and undermined. Play is often restricted or channelled into formalised recreational activities. Children are increasingly manifesting compulsive, uncontrolled, aimless movements. What appears as constant mobility is actually a kind of inner immobility. In addition the moving images children are flooded with mask this immobility and present a kind of barrier to direct engagement in purposeful activity. The overwhelming experience is of imbalance and a fight against the sapping or stunting of both life and soul forces.

Redressing imbalance

We tend to restore our life forces or vitality more consciously nowadays through consciously planned activities such as walking, gardening, holidays, health treatments, sport, fitness training and so on. There are plenty of suggestions in the weekend newspapers and other magazines as to what we can do. However, few of these activities really school the will forcers of the child. Indeed the soul forces of thinking, feeling and willing are not generally acknowledged as such, let alone nurtured so as to strengthen, refine and harmonise them.

What do we mean by will? Will is a soul force that can be active in different parts of the human being.

- Its most important expression of activity is in the physical energies that initiate movement in the body.
- Further, it can bring our life of feeling into movement and so create and kindle the imagination.
- It can stir and activate our mental picturing to the point that they are no longer mere reflections or copies of the outer world.

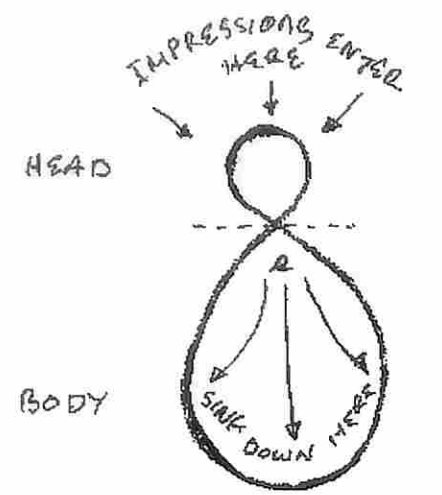
Working wilfully and creatively with our thinking can enable this activity to become alive and assume an individual character. In this way such great thinkers as Goethe could, for instance, move beyond the botanical point of view of the plant world and come to an experience of what he termed the Archetypal Plant. Rudolf Steiner mentioned on a number of occasions that he attributed his own creative thinking possibilities and his ability to come to a perception of the inner nature of things to the efforts of will needed in the use of his muscles during adolescence. In particular he recalled the beneficial efforts of work such as chopping and sawing wood, digging and harvesting potatoes.

The more we take into account that intellect develops from the movements of the limbs, from dexterity and skills, the better it will be.

Rudolf Steiner *Basle Education Course* 1920

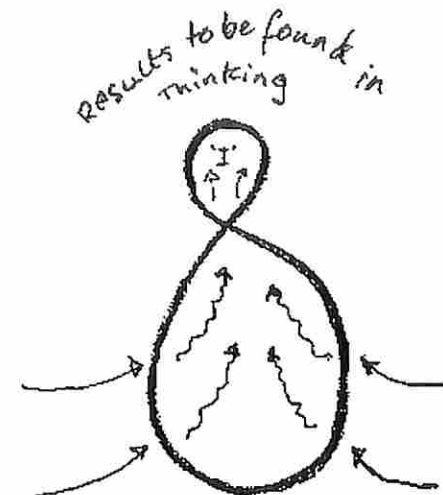
However, comments made by Rudolf Steiner in 1924 during the ‘Curative Education Course’ indicate that he already perceived back then the lack of practical ingenuity-skills. The teaching and educational practice of the day, he maintained, reflected the general state of consciousness. Out of 800 children at the Waldorf School only a handful could be said to have a practical aptitude for work. In referring to those children, Rudolf Steiner said:

Living in the time of the flowering of intellectualism, the soul/spirit of the children cannot penetrate the muscle system, it only connects to the bones. The result of this later in life is an even more dry intellectual dead thinking and a general life style of materialism. A healthy way to develop the intellect would be as far as possible, through the will. This we can do only by passing via the artistic to the developing of the intellect.¹



sedentary learning
Results found in
Metasolism.
(1)

Education via the head senses is a sedentary learning process.



Results to be found in
thinking
Movement orientated
learning
(2)

Through movement the teacher works at forming the 'I' via the will-activity in the limbs.

*'Knitting supports a healthy development of thinking as it emerges in the adolescent years.'*³

The intellect

Intellect, as one of our most noble faculties, can only incline towards this type of materialism in the absence of aesthetic sensibility and qualities of will. Will, on the other hand, inclines towards the spirit and requires anchoring and bringing into the world. Bridges have to be built between doing and thinking and from thinking to doing.

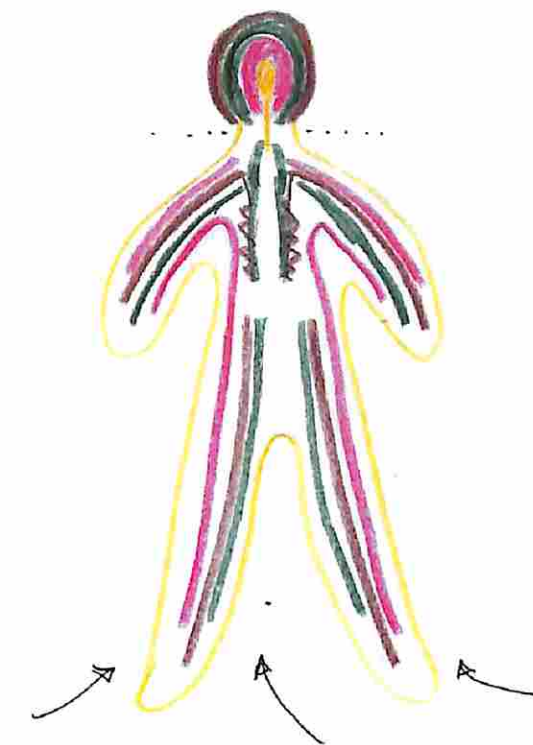
Waldorf education

One of Steiner's fundamental precepts is that when we engage the child in physical practical activity, such as handwork or craftwork, we are working on the soul spirit nature of that child. However, when we address this, for instance, in story-telling, the healthy results are to be found in the bodily organism. For the adult to form sound judgements, to have balanced thinking, depends far more on whether a child was taught to use her/his hands and fingers in a right practical way, than as the result of doing logical thinking exercises in later life.²

Today, some 80 years since Steiner gave the first education course to the teachers in the Waldorf School, neuropsychological research supports what Rudolf Steiner put forward about movement and the development of the human being. Such research has reached the general public in works such as Frank R. Wilson's *The Hand, how its use shapes the brain, language and human culture*.

This quote, by Professor Matti Bergstrom, was found in an Ikea catalogue a few years ago:

The brain discovers what the fingers explore. The density of nerve endings in our fingertips is enormous. Their discrimination is almost as good as that of our eyes. If we don't use our fingers, if in childhood and youth we become 'finger-blind', this rich network of nerves is impoverished – which represents a huge loss to the brain and thwarts the individual's all-around development. Such damage may be likened to blindness itself. Perhaps worse, while a blind person may simply not be able to find this or that object, the finger-blind cannot understand its inner meaning and value. If we neglect to develop and train our children's fingers and the creative form-building capacities of their hand muscles, then we neglect to develop their understanding of the unity of things; we thwart their aesthetic and creative powers. Those who shaped our age-old traditions always understood this. But today Western civilisation, an information-obsessed society that overvalues science and undervalues true worth, has forgotten it all. We are 'value-damaged'. The philosophy of our upbringing is science-centred and our schools are programmed toward that end... These schools have no time for the creative potential of the nimble fingers and hand and that arrests the all-round development of our children – and of the whole community.



1. The head is a formed structure. The 'I' within is small and undeveloped. The task of educator is to awaken the 'I' here.⁴
2. In the limbs the 'I' or human spirit is very large and spread over the surface of the body.

In movement-orientated teaching we are strengthening the 'I' through rhythm via the limbs. We call this the Craft Gesture. Movement (kinetic) education helps to structure the brain and form a focus for the individual soul-spirit (the 'I').

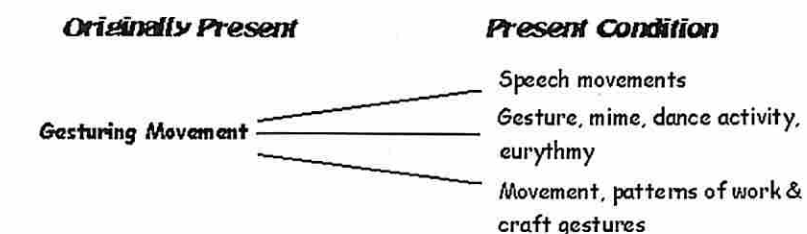
Thinking about doing; the origins of movement

Today, anthropologists see a close link between brain development, the origins of language and the early use of tools⁵. Rudolf Steiner, when speaking about the origins of movement and speech, explained that the human being was originally not a speaking creature, but rather expressed him/her self through movement.⁶ Gesture became transformed into speech movement and other movements.⁷

The human being shares the ability to move with animals but, whereas animals learn the movements they require more or less at birth, the human being needs several years' practice to develop all the movements required to enable him/her to walk in an upright position.

The newborn infant expresses a multitude of movements, of which he/she is not yet master. Control comes from above to below – from the eyes to the legs and feet. Movement at first takes hold of the child, from the outside as it were, and limb movements are only gradually mastered. The primary reflexes are developed by imitation and transform into an individualised mastery of movement patterns. Attaining uprightness and making those first tentative steps are, however, only the beginning. The expression of movement in the child leads on to other faculties in the realm of the soul. Crawling, walking and all manner of bodily movements lay the foundation for the acquisition of many finer skills such as speech and ultimately thinking processes which arise out of internalisation of outer movement.

The origin of speech, gesture and the craft gesture



Long-term benefits of acquired movement skills: the archetypal work gesture

The movements entered into in precision sequences, such as those related to handwork and craft activities, are more than training in motor skills. In the practise of work movements, which would be better described collectively as work gestures, the will of the pupil adapts to the gesture of the craft. It is in the very nature of this process that the character of the gesture works inwards to foster the unfolding and harmonious development of cognition, aesthetic sensibility and practical know-how.

The vehicle for this two-way process is what I call the work gesture and is particularly evident in the movements of a well-practised craftsperson. When acquired, these movements play upon the soul of the human being, giving a beat in the sphere of will, rhythm in the sphere of heart and feelings, and a melody in the thinking human being. This is the effect of the being of movement and its resonance within the soul of the human being.

Each craft has its own symphony of working gestures, but as important to the acquisition of the actual skills, such as hammering metal or planing wood, is the realisation of the point of rest and of the complementary gesture. The arm hammers, whereas the body moves freely, it is free of this movement. This degree of separation cannot be achieved by an animal. The whole body of the woodpecker pecks, it follows the pecking limb, its entire body can but peck.

In the human being this is supposed to be different, in that humans have the potential for free movement. The point around which any set of working and complementary gestures move is the centre, the space of the human Ego or 'I'. 'I' hammer, not 'it' hammers.

How, then, are work gestures acquired? Is it fundamentally a process of enhanced imitation?

Apprenticeship, for example, whether traditional or modern, entails the schooling of the will. This can still be considered the first step in the process of gaining the work gesture, and is chiefly directed to the will. Playing a musical instrument also follows this schooling process. At first the student has to learn the movement until it becomes habit, unconsciously absorbed by the life body. The sense of freedom of movement comes at the point where the archetypal movement form has literally in-formed his/her own habit.

Rhythm is another key element in all craft movement and musical practice. What is the right rhythm? Is this more than enhanced imitation? Listen to the beating of the blacksmith, there are secondary taps.

An established sense of rhythm merges the archetype with the individual interpretation.

Lastly, although our limbs execute the movements through which will-activity acts to transform raw material; the form that emerges comes from somewhere else. The realm of the idea holds that form. Yet the realisation of the idea lies in the rhythmic patterns fashioned by the limbs and whole body.

However, in his lecture of 1922, now published as *The Human Heart*, Rudolf Steiner describes the movement gesture from a very different perspective, one which could almost be called the karma of movement.

Our deeds, indeed all our actions and outer movements, are inscribed, he says, in traces into the soul (or soul body). As well as these movements, what I have accomplished and my internationality are also inscribed there. This individually inscribed soul body streams towards what Steiner described as the etheric heart⁸ and is received by it shortly after puberty. Our cosmic treasure trove, the etheric heart, now receives our own individually fashioned treasure, a moment of immense significance for all adolescents. All these movement gestures, transformed and held by the etheric heart are then given over to the cosmos at death, sown as seeds for our further karma. Capacities of will work into the future; whilst thinking stems from the past.

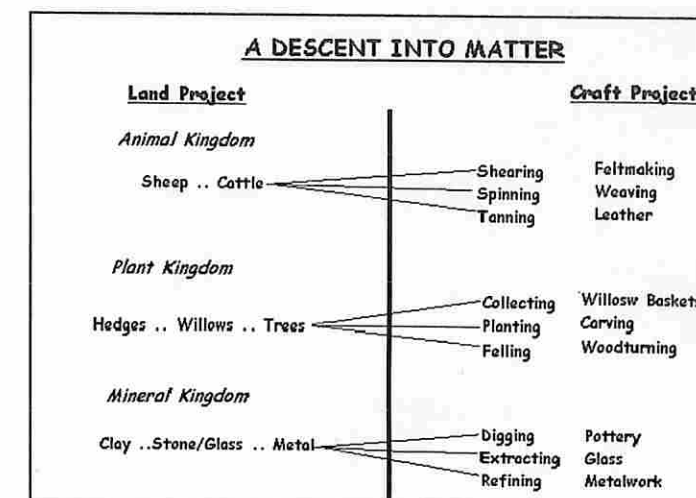
The descent into matter – an introduction to work

Where, today, can young people find the opportunity to learn the work gesture? In our overly-sanitised society children need to be led and introduced to very basic materials and processes. Adolescents need a challenge that helps equip them ultimately with essential skills to manage the practical affairs of life and to develop a moral sense of responsibility for their environment, both natural and human. Using whole body movement and finer motor skills in particular provides a route to grounding oneself. What was for the younger child learning through play must now become transformed into learning whilst working.

In an educational context, craftwork still has much to offer in developing skill, work gesture and a knowledge of materials. Aonghus Gordon, a founder of the Hiram Trust, has developed an integrated craft curriculum based on sourcing materials in the local environment from the three kingdoms of nature – animal, plant and mineral and using the traditional craft gestures.

This curriculum is also a descent into matter. It matches the nature of the raw materials to the child's

Living and Learning with nature



stage of development as the child herself solidifies into an adult form. Thus the soft tactile experience of the wool in the earliest years is followed by green woody materials in the middle school years, culminating in the shaping of more resistant substances such as seasoned wood and metal in the senior years. The objective in developing such an integrated environmental and craft programme is ultimately to foster a sense for place and of one's place in the locality.⁹

Through such a programme young people have the opportunity to discover real values along with many practical and social skills, values that have a bearing on the response to others' needs and the sustainable use of materials. Working with the hands in a creative and responsible manner is essentially a human capacity and therefore capable of reflecting humanity in essence.

1 Rudolf Steiner, *The Foundations of Human Experience*. Anthroposophic Press, 1996.

2 Rudolf Steiner, *Education for Adolescents*, chapter 4, SSF Publications.

3 Rudolf Steiner, *Man as Hieroglyph of the Universe*. Rudolf Steiner Press.

4 Editor's note: the word 'I', sometimes written as the Ego, refers to the spiritual core of each individual in Steiner's anthropology.

5 see Ingold, T. *The Perception of the Environment, Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*. 2001. and Rawson, M. *The Spirit in Human Evolution*. 2003.

6 Rudolf Steiner, *Riddles of Humanity*, lecture on the 2nd Sept 1916.

7 see also Lutzke, P. *The Sense for Language*, in *Language and Learning*, edited by M. Rawson and P. Lutzke, 2002

8 Editor's note: the 'etheric heart' could be described as the focal point of the system of individualised movement, habit, behavioural and attitudinal patterns that each person establishes by puberty. Here archetypal/cosmic patterns find individual form.

9 Wendy Titman, director of Learning Through Landscape – a national organisation that works in the mainstream sector, cites schools that have actively transformed their traditional tarmac surfaces into imaginative recreational and educational landscapes and noticed a marked improvement in both the emotional well-being of the children and in their educational achievements.

Bernard Graves has spent 25 years in Camphill. His wide-ranging experience includes: helping pioneer two new communities, ten years class teaching in curative education, upper school science teaching. He has set up craft workshops, including a traditional willow basket workshop, and related Further Education programme. Since the mid 80s Bernard has worked on integrating domains in the Waldorf curriculum inspired by the work of Eugene Kolisko, looking towards a synthesis of agriculture, medicine and Waldorf pedagogy. In 1997 he became Director of the Hiram Trust. Subsequently he has been responsible for developing the Hiram Trust Practical Skills Teacher Development Course.



More information on the Hiram Trust can be found at www.anth.org.uk/hiramtrust



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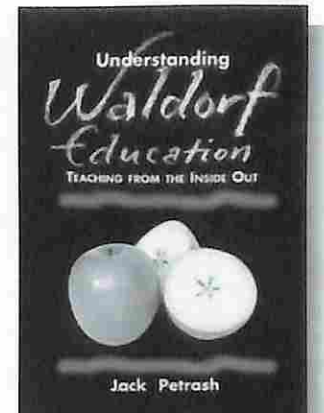
Understanding Waldorf Education

Teaching from the Inside Out

JACK PETRASH

'I've been a Waldorf parent for 4 years but I haven't been able to describe to people who ask about the Waldorf school what makes it so different and so special. I've found Steiner's work to be impenetrable. This book by Jack Petrash, however, I loved. It's written so 21st century mortals can understand it and relate to it.' — Waldorf parent, California

'*Understanding Waldorf Education* is a look into the creative methods employed for generations at the Waldorf School in Washington. Youth workers and educators, as well as parents, will find some insight into communicating important lessons to children who might balk at the standard delivery of information.' — *Youth Today*



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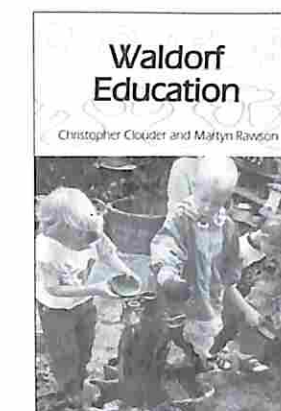
Ideal for Waldorf parents and teachers, this book gives a common sense understanding of this uncommon education.

- Jack Petrash has been a Waldorf teacher for over 30 years, much of that time at the Washington Waldorf School in the USA, where he has taken three classes of children from Class 1 to Class 8.

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Thinking and the Consciousness of the Young Child

Part 2: Between Three and Seven

Renate Long-Breipohl

In the first part of this essay (Steiner Education, May 2003) we reflected on the thinking of the child in the first three years. We will now approach the time between ages three and seven. Firstly let me summarise what we have already covered:

- Even though the thinking of young children is directed towards the world around them, the process involves more than simply learning to understand and to use concepts related to every day life. There is a spiritual dimension which we can recognise in the child's ability to imitate, to be totally attentive and to create from within.
- The activities of thinking and exploring cannot be separated: the child thinks in doing.
- Up to the third year of life, the thinking of the child is not personal or self-conscious.
- Thinking appears in various forms; in non-verbal solitary play, in verbal expression and in social interaction. The development of thinking is partly independent of the development of speech, yet speech serves as a vehicle for the emergence of thought.
- The thinking of the young child should be allowed to develop free from attempts by adults to accelerate learning and to influence the child through instruction.

The three - five - year - old child

Turning three means entering a new phase of life, a time of change. Change is bewildering, especially when there is little experience to help putting things into place and creating meaning.

At this time children begin to speak of themselves as an 'I'. They become conscious of themselves. Poets have described this moment of self-recognition as a blissful experience and yet it also brings the pain. The child can now turn a critical eye on herself. It is a time of exploring the growing ability to interact with other children in a playgroup, to let go of mother or father, but also a time when children may become more demanding in making

others attend to their wishes.

I have already been mentioned in Part 1 that the ability of the child to remember increases in the third year in conjunction with the awakening of consciousness of self and the freeing of etheric forces from the head. Steiner points out that this childhood memory is based on habits and is not yet a free inner activity. It needs to be triggered by outer events or objects. He describes early childhood memory as very vivid and not in need of educational intervention until the change of teeth has occurred.

Observing children at the beginning of the fourth year, one witnesses that these new faculties can cause emotional imbalance in the child. The new consciousness of self shows first in a more basic form that has a tendency towards egotism or egocentrism, which can throw the child and the family into turmoil. It is the chaos out of which a new step of development arises – provided the adults in the environment are able to accompany the process with guidance, love and appropriate boundaries. The child's 'I' has to learn through experience and at that age learns best through imitation and example, through witnessing the presence of the higher faculties of the 'I', such as empathy and altruism in the adults around them. These impressions will leave their traces within the child, although the three year-olds cannot yet be expected to be social and considerate of others, though on some occasions they might show these qualities to the surprise of the observer.

At the beginning of the fourth year children often display great mood swings, which may lead over into a more stable period within a couple of months. It is interesting that the new 'I'-consciousness presents itself most strongly in the realm of feeling. Emotions are now experienced by the child as belonging to her inner life, yet the 'I' is not strong enough to master them and is unable to keep an inner balance. As sometimes occurs in development, things can be better controlled if one takes a step

back from a situation that is overwhelming, and let the child participate in something that is familiar. The child is looking for and needs the guidance of an adult who knows the path and makes the environment safe and life steady and predictable.

It is a blessing for the young child to be able to turn away from the focus on "I want" or "I don't want", and to experience being part of a group of children with all its various activities and daily routines. The experience of consciousness of 'I' around age three should not be seen as the platform for the big leap forward but rather as the herald for something that will gradually mature in the years ahead.

This is frequently not understood in education today. Too much emphasis is placed on the child's consciousness of self and in consequence children are often irritated or troubled by their own ever-changing wishes and desires pulling them in several directions at once, or being asked to make too many choices or decisions. Too much self-awareness in relation to achievement can lead to a lack of confidence.

The task of the fourth and fifth year is described by Steiner as the strengthening of the child's rhythmical system through play and the free expression of the forces of imagination. There is no doubt that four-year-old children are able to reflect and have vivid memories, yet in order to avoid an early 'drying up', these faculties are meant to remain connected to the source of creativity in the human being. These forces arise, says Steiner, from the depth of the body rather than from the brain. Steiner points out that, even for the seventh year of life and the time after the change of teeth the free formative forces do not become active in the head straight away, but 'move down' to become active first in the rhythmical system and feeling realm – hence his recommendation to teach seven-year-olds pictorially rather than abstractly through concepts.

The situation between three and four years of age is somewhat similar. The formative forces of the head have been freed, the child is able to use memory and thinking in a new way, but the main thrust of development occurs in the rhythmical system and in the unfolding of childhood imagination. Now the child enters into the most creative time in life. It is a time of great richness of play, and it is worthwhile observing how thinking is interwoven with this self-engendered will activity of the child. Thinking would become hardened and less alive later on if it did not connect with the forces of imagination in play.

Steiner speaks of the unity of plastic and musical forces in the child up to the change of teeth.² It is a challenge to understand these two different kinds of forces and of their interplay. The plastic forces work more from the head region downwards into

the body, indicating the main thrust of the formative forces in early childhood. Steiner mentions the musical forces less often and mostly in connection with the change of teeth and the education after seven. In the young child they belong to the realm of the forces around the bodily organs and have a connection with the soul-spiritual forces, which are still totally engaged in the bodily functions.³ They represent the unformed and potentially overwhelming creative aspect of the human being. Steiner describes these musical forces as living in music, speech and drawing, and later in writing in a transformed way. He links them to the childhood forces of imagination, which, left alone, provide the right balance to the formative forces. But Steiner warns not to draw on these forces too much before the change of teeth. Music especially needs to be given only in small amounts for the young child only, otherwise it can be overpowering. However, these forces act as a necessary counterforce to the formative forces around the change of teeth and they prevent thinking from becoming fixed and hardened by too much form.

The change of teeth

At the age of three the first dentition is usually finally completed. At this time all second teeth are already present in the jaws in rudimentary form, waiting to grow and break through. One could say with some justification that the change of teeth is spread out over several years, from the fourth to the seventh year. And even then the second dentition continues in a sense until the appearance of the wisdom teeth. Steiner uses the term 'change of teeth' in relation to the inner changes of the child in the seventh year. At this time the hardening of the tooth enamel occurs and the incisors appear. Steiner describes this as a dramatic event, an outer sign for a huge change that is happening within. Spiritually, it is the final liberation of those formative forces, which have worked in the body to complete the formation of organs and specifically the formation of the teeth.

Up to the change of teeth the formative (etheric) forces are entirely working in the processes of the child's organic growth, after that time ... they partly withdraw from these activities. These released formative forces now begin to work in the soul realm of mental picturing and memory... The change of teeth is a unique event. The forces needed to push out the second teeth existed prior to this event, but they are no longer needed afterwards. Once the second teeth have appeared, this particular activity of the etheric body becomes redundant. The final activity of pushing out the second teeth is an outward manifestation of the kind of working that is going on in the child's organism.⁴

Steiner also indicated that during this process the plastic and the musical forces separate and that the musical forces recede from the head downwards and remain in the body for a period of time. The formative forces in the head do not push downward into the jaws any more and a free space is created into which the teeth, the densest part of our body, grow.

Then whatever radiates upwards from the body is thrust back, whereas the forces that shoot downwards from the head are restrained. Thus, during

the time the teeth are changing, the severest battle is fought between the forces striving downwards from above and those shooting upwards from below. The change of teeth is the physical expression of this conflict between the two kinds of forces, those that later appear in the child as his powers of reasoning and intellect, and those that need to be used particularly in drawing, painting, and writing.⁵

For the first time in the development of the child the situation arises that the human being finds



herself in the struggle between two opposing forces and has to find a balance. This motif of a polarity of forces will repeat itself in puberty on a different level. In a sense this battle of spiritual forces during the sixth and seventh year could be called the 'first puberty'. What happens to the child in the seventh year is no less dramatic than puberty, even though the outer signs of change are less obvious.

"Mum, I'm bored!"

Many features of the child in the sixth and seventh year can be understood much more clearly if one takes into account that a battle is raging. The new abilities of conceptualising and memorising do not emerge harmoniously. The child goes through phases of emotional imbalance, motivational passivity and vigorous, often uncontrolled, activity of the limbs. The childhood forces of imagination are not as accessible any more and the inner process of transition makes itself known as the experience of boredom. The ability to play usually suffers or comes to a standstill. What up till now would have



been action is now expressed as thoughts or spoken. Doing and thinking operate separately from each other, often causing friction rather than harmony. As this crisis often coincides with the child's last months in the kindergarten, it has given rise to considerations as to how to meet the special situation of these older children. It is beneficial for children at this time to become part of purposeful work processes of the adults around them or be given tasks to be completed, at first under the guidance of the adult, then with increasing independence. Freya Jaffke has described working with engaging the will of the six-year-olds in her book on *Work and Play in Early Childhood*.

The challenge of balancing the polarity of thinking and will, of the plastic and musical forces, continues into the primary school years. Engaging the child's soul life plays a decisive role in finding the right balance. What works from below and what works from above is brought into the right relationship if the life of feeling is strengthened through nurturing the child's imagination and interest in the world. This is the task of the education of the child between 7 and 12 years. The foundation for this process is laid in the appropriate way if the child is given the opportunity to unfold the 'musical' forces of imagination and play between the fourth and fifth year.

Coming to terms with the connection of the change of teeth and the thinking of the child

Steiner discovered and frequently spoke about the link between the change of teeth and the development of thinking. According to Steiner, the teeth and thinking are related to each other at various different levels. He pointed out that within the same etheric forces are active in both. The emergence of the second teeth represents, on the physical level, what thinking is in the soul or mind. In between lies the mystery of the transformation of growth forces into forces of thinking. In the teeth, which as we know cannot regenerate when damaged or worn, physical development achieves a kind of culmination. We use our teeth to begin the process of digestion; we bite portions off which can then be broken down. We are meeting here the 'earth' or material quality of thinking, and this is what the child encounters at the end of early childhood. The equivalent in thinking is the ability to break down experience, analyse it and form concepts. However the important difference is that concepts can (and should) remain living and flexible. Understanding such inner transformations is a challenge to the modern mind, but one that is necessary if we are to grasp the complexity of spiritual processes within the human being.

The change of teeth and thinking are not only

related to the processes of the etheric body, but also related to the evolving of the human 'I'. Dentists with an interest in alternative medicine are only now beginning to understand the second teeth as an expression of the each person's unique individuality. In relation to the change of teeth, Steiner describes the 'I' as working in the depth of the body together with the forces pushing out the teeth. The 'I' pushes the hard substance of the teeth into the empty space created by the plastic and musical forces. In this process, the 'I' is also making its influence felt on qualities of thinking such as wakefulness, the potential for independent judgement and consciousness of self. These abilities however, will only come to maturity gradually and finally after the age of 21.

If the child's ability to think is called upon too early, that is, before the seventh year, then the hardening forces will overwhelm the child's creative potential and the childhood forces will weaken prematurely. There is a secret about doing things at the right time.

We must take the very greatest care that this intellectual thinking does not appear too early. For a human being can only come to an experience of freedom, if his intellectuality awakens within him of itself, not if it has been poured into him by his teachers. But it must not awaken in poverty of soul.⁶

If the intellectual quality of thinking is called upon too early, then thinking will not be able to unite with the creative potential within the human being and will be hindered in evolving beyond its 'biting' intellectual quality into a creative spiritual capacity.

If he (the child) has nothing within him that he has acquired through imitation and imagery, which can rise up into his thinking out of the depths of his soul, then, when his thinking should develop at puberty he will find nothing within himself to further his own growth, and his thinking can only reach into emptiness. He will find no anchorage in life, and just at the time when he ought really to have found a certain security in himself he will be running after trivialities; in these awkward years he will be imitating all kinds of things which please him ... And he imitates these things now because he has not been allowed to imitate rightly as a young child in a living way.⁷

Conclusion

The development of thinking and consciousness in the young child can teach us about a sequence of events full of wisdom. Observing this sequence, one can witness that it repeats the pattern of 'gestation' and 'birth' several times. In relation to thinking one can identify the same pattern at the critical ages of 3, 7 and 14 years. There are three 'gestation' periods of thinking, each leading to a kind of 'birth' at these

points in life. At age three it is the appearance of a consciousness of "I" after a period of unconscious 'I' activity in the entire physical body of the child. At the age of seven the potential of thinking as free etheric activity emerges after the development of thinking within the 'womb' of the forces of imagination. In this essay I have tried to show that there is a similar gesture for the emergence of thinking in the child at age three and at age seven. One can observe a push forward in the nerve-sense realm causing a crisis, then a step back into the 'warm cradle' of the rhythmical and feeling realm, in order to develop the faculty of imagination after the age of three and the faculty of imagination after age seven. Thinking and consciousness of 'I' are held back twice in order to allow thinking to be placed within the human being fully integrated with feeling and willing. Thus thinking is prepared for its final birth as a soul force at around the age of 14 and for its mission as the highest of the human soul qualities, endowed with the special task of being the key to the future evolution of the human being.

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- 1 Editor's note: the etheric forces are the formative processes that govern growth and development, the establishment of memory, behaviour patterns and life rhythms generally.
- 2 Rudolf Steiner, *Roots of Education*. p. 85
- 3 D. Kloeck, *Knowledge, Teaching and the Death of the Mysterious*. Chapter 3
- 4 Rudolf Steiner, 'The Child before the Seventh Year' in *Soul Economy and Waldorf Education* p. 111
- 5 Rudolf Steiner, *Balance in Teaching*. Lecture 2, p. 17
- 6 Rudolf Steiner, *Roots of Education*, p.85
- 7 ibid

Kirgistan

The Nadjeshda Children's Centre brings hope

Most people ask, 'where is Kirgistan' when they first hear about the Nadjeshda Children's Centre. Some may have heard of Tschingis Aitmatov, the best-known author from that land, in which case they can probably imagine the snow capped 'Mountains of Heaven', of the Tien Shan Range, with its 7,000 metre high peak, Pamir, that Aitmatov has so memorably described.

Kirgistan lies in Central Asia and is both a beautiful, mountainous land, as well as being a poor third world country. The inhabitants still listen with awe to the national epic, *Manas*. In the deep valleys of this land one can still find the ruins of ancient cultures as well as prehistoric rock carvings. This land has seen Christianity since 300 AD. It is also a multicultural community with some 85 different peoples and several major religions.

All children grow up with the profound contents of the traditional myths and images. They learn wise sayings from the epics to guide them through life. An example is:

*If your enemy puts stones on your path
put bread on his path.*

Karl-Maria Schälike came as a foreigner to this land, the home of her husband Igor. Soon after she had a child in the hospital, she experienced another birth. The other mother cried as the doctors insisted that the child be taken immediately to a home because it was severely handicapped.

When Mrs. Schälike's own child subsequently died, she decided to

do something for handicapped children. When one of the first children she began to work with also died in the home, she began to understand that one must first awaken hope in the children's hearts. She founded the Nadjeshda ('hope') Children's Centre in 1989. Here adults would help the children learn to be happy and hopeful through song, painting and play.

In 1991 Aitmatov became the Honorary President of the Children's Centre. With the

collapse of the Soviet Union, the Centre lost its state funding and premises because the children were deemed unsuited to be educated. Over the next three years the Centre changed premises frequently. In 1995 Nadjeshda was donated a small building on the outskirts of Bishkek by the Foundation Danielle Mitterand. Mr. Bender of the Friends of the Art of Education, personally made donations and raised funds to purchase a small workshop and Mrs. Fiedler-Stolte donated a small house in the village of Kök Scar at the

foot of the Tien Shan mountains.

In 1997 the Friends supported a project in which the co-workers at Nadjeshda were able to participate in a two-year training in curative and Waldorf education and a small school building was built. At the inauguration the children performed scenes from the folk-epic *The Birth of Manas* to an enthusiastic audience including many prominent guests.

Gradually the initiative came to the attention of UNESCO, who funded an extension to the curative education



Vietnam

On 4th September 2002 a Waldorf kindergarten was opened in the vast Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon) in the grounds of a Buddhist temple. The children come from a temple orphanage and from the poorest families in the area.



November 2002, 35°C with 95% humidity. Quang Âm, the female Buddha who gives blessings and happiness, stands upright in the garden of the Dieu Giac Temple. The right hands offers blessing, the left symbolically lets the water of life pour from a bottle onto the earth. The Dieu Giac Temple is in the 2nd district of this gigantic city with 8 million official – and probably another 2–3 unofficial – inhabitants. It houses an orphanage and recently the first Waldorf kindergarten in Vietnamese history.



The front part of the temple houses prayer and living spaces. In the centre stands a large altar. At the back there is a bookcase and dining table at which shaven, yet beautiful, nuns take their meals. The atmosphere is relaxed, peaceful, unexpectedly cheerful and open-minded.

Nun Nhu Tri, the leader of the orphanage and the kindergarten sits in a kind of open office to one side of the temple building and explains to me with relaxed dignity the tasks of the temple community, whilst at the same time keeping a close eye on the children playing in the yard.

There are currently 120 children in the orphanage up to the age of 17, the youngest being only 17 and 28 days old respectively (two boys who were left at night on the temple steps).

There are no state funds for this work since the Vietnamese state is itself too poor. The money for food, clothing and schooling comes mostly in the form of donations from Vietnamese living abroad, but this is not enough. The children sleep in simple bunks and there is a large yard to play in, with a few bird cages, a pond and self-grown palms. These children are



seminar. National television reported regularly on progress at Nadjeshda and this generated enormous interest (including money and volunteers).

In 2001 the Kirgistan education Minister visited Nadjeshda and she promised support. It appears possible at last that a licence will be issued to give official recognition to the project. The influence of Nadjeshda has been significant. The 'Seminar for Defectology' at the Kirgistan university has now been renamed the 'Institute for Curative Education' following the graduation of the first ten students from the Nadjeshda Seminar.

At present there are places for 60 children at Nadjeshda and the waiting list is long. An integrated Waldorf kindergarten and living places for eight children has been made possible by the German Embassy. The Janus-Korczak-Centre, which is an integrated workshop with 15 young people with multiple handicaps, was also made possible through the good offices of the German Embassy. Outside the city, near the mountains a small therapeutic community has been established in Kök Schar.

Karl-Maria Schälike has received a commendation award from the President for her work. The next project will be the opening of a school for healthy children and founding of a Waldorf teacher training centre.

Despite their success the pioneers at Nadjeshda still urgently need financial help to maintain their programme.

lucky, most in the city have no such place to play in. The older children and some volunteers from the neighbourhood look after the younger children.

The kindergarten room has been painted red and blue, with wooden stands with dyed cloths and Waldorf dolls, paint brushes and wooden tables, all neatly laid out. There is large wash room and two children's toilets – probably never seen before in Vietnam! The place is friendly and welcoming. Adjacent to this room, in an open area with a shady roof is an outdoor playground, one of the few in the whole country. Of the 30 children in the kindergarten, about half come from the surrounding neighbourhood. Most of the local people are extremely poor, most working some 12 to 14 hours a day. During this time they have to send their children out onto the streets. Such children are called 'dust children' for obvious reasons and have to fend for themselves, since the parents cannot afford the state kindergarten.

The kindergarten was funded by an initiative among Vietnamese living in Australia, begun by Thanh Cherry, herself Vietnamese. Thanh and her husband Ben both have a background in Waldorf education and have worked in several Asian countries in recent years on behalf of Waldorf education, especially in the kindergarten training supported by the Friends of the Art of Education. They have been involved in other Waldorf initiatives in Vietnam.

My experience in Vietnam provokes a couple of questions:

- Why are the Waldorf communities in Europe—where there are enough financial burdens and struggles for existence—being asked to fundraise for a country in which one is actually starving?
- Why do all Waldorf kindergartens around the world look as if they come from the same mould? Aren't they just copies of a European pedagogical concept, whose 'export' we are being asked to support?

I cannot really answer such profound questions in such a short article but I will try. Firstly, initial impressions from such a country can be deceptive. This country has enormous problems.

Vietnam has only just begun to physically and emotionally re-build itself from the ruins of the Vietnam War. With vast resources the country is striving to raise the levels of literacy in the nation in order to be economically competitive. The will is there but the resources are insufficient for the scale of the task. The people aren't literally starving but the majority scrape by on the edge of malnutrition, despite their unbelievable capacity for work – a quality for which these people are rightly famous, as the Americans found to their cost. This country has vast potential to benefit from 'help towards self-help'.

Out of the remnants of a living religious sensibility, this culture has the growing wisdom to develop socio-politically in a healthy way.

One can sense the status of Waldorf education when one realises that all children from the age of three are obliged to go to school (though not all can afford to). Each Waldorf initiative sends a profound signal in a socialist society, one that indicates what 'education' can actually mean, even within such a system.

As for the Waldorf kindergarten and school house-style, I have the following initial thoughts. The human being is above all human, and not a European or Asian. The healthy development of a human being occurs in an equally valid way in every culture, according to principles that Waldorf education respects. For that reason the basic educational provision, such as the importance of rhythm in the structure of the day and the need to play with appropriate natural materials is the same everywhere. Young children benefit from the same colours in their environment all over the world.

Nevertheless, in each setting, whether in England or Vietnam, each kindergarten or school teacher has to find their own relationship to what is universally human and adapt this personal insight to the situation they and their children find themselves in, rather than simply imitate forms developed elsewhere. Only then can Waldorf education live, either in Europe or Asia.

E. Mollenhauer-Klüber



Namibia

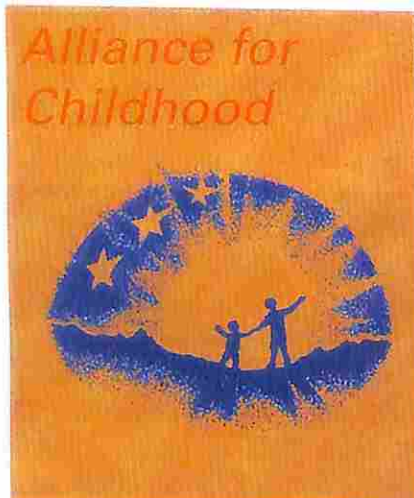
Three years ago the Sôutere Kindergarten opened in a poor district of Namibia's capital Windhoek. The parents now have reason to celebrate.

It is summer in Namibia – glorious blue skies and the air shimmering in the heat. The sun glares, reflected from the tin roofs of the huts. In the oppressive heat the parents of the Sôutere (translated from the Damara language meaning 'protect me') Kindergarten gather for a summer festival in the township of Katatura, one of Windhoek's poorest districts. The children gaze with wonder and expectation from under their colourful crowns which make a rainbow effect amid the arid dust of the township. African dances are danced and songs sung, there is laughter and joy – a welcome moment to raise souls from the daily struggle for subsistence and survival in lives threatened by alcohol and AIDS.

The speeches reflect on the achievements of the past three years and highlight the need for continued expansion. Babies and toddlers need to be taken in so that all the children in the family can be cared for. Two Damara women are currently being trained for this task and a large piece of land has been found to realise their many plans. The good co-operation and evidence of what has already been achieved gives us the courage to believe we can achieve our vision. We have gratefully received much help already and we hope for more support in order that we can help more of these children to get out of their awful conditions of life.

Slowly, the shadows grow longer and a gentle atmosphere settles on the land and a sense of fulfilment shines from the eyes of the children. Three sheep roasted over an open fire have provided a welcome feast for the 200 guests who have gathered and now return with happy hearts to their homes. Corinna Schauenberg (founder of the Sôutere Kindergarten)
Katatura/Windhoek





Stop Press: Public Funding Success

After many years of perseverance and frustration we have at last got a positive response from the DfES regarding the funding of Steiner education in England. In a warmly encouraging letter David Miliband, Minister of State for School Standards, has informed us that the Department is willing to directly fund one Steiner school within the new Academies legislation. We have obtained total autonomy of curriculum and method, derogation of Key Stage 1, 90% of capital costs, revenue equal to that of local maintained schools, direct funding from the department itself and a funded research project around the school to assess how maintained schools can adopt the Steiner curriculum and methodology. We have also been guaranteed freedoms around the management structures so that the integrity of our provision is legally protected and the character of the education is not compromised. We are naturally delighted at this prospect and in the next edition of *Steiner Education* will write at length about how we got into this favourable position, its rationale and what we intend to make of it.

Christopher Clouder

Children's Rights

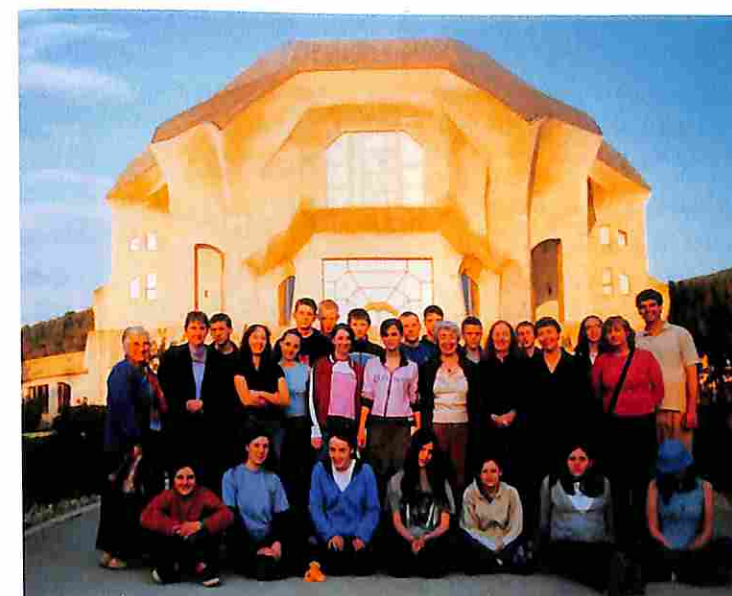
In the European Union the question of children's rights has not come foremost in either policy or the legal framework. In fact in perusing the documents emanating from Brussels it is noticeable that although there are references to and dedicated papers about 'young people' there are few references to 'children' and their needs. Hopefully things are about to change and some organisations, for instance Children in Scotland, The National Children's Bureau and Children in Wales, are co-operating to raise the profile of children's issues. Of late there has been a marked shift to recognise them as citizens too. The new draft constitution of the European Convention Article 1-3, which states the objectives of the Union, runs '(The Union) shall combat social exclusion and shall promote social justice and protection, equality between men and women, solidarity between generations and protection of children's rights.'

This state of affairs has been up to now attributable to the limitations of the EU's competences in the field of education. When the community was founded it was assumed that education was so deeply rooted in national identity that any supranational interference was undesirable. Being concerned with economic policy however led to some competences in the field of vocational training. This led to initiatives in the areas of mobility by harmonising course contents so that diplomas could be mutually recognised. In the 1980's this was extended by a ruling of the European Court of Justice that stated the definition of vocational training also encompassed university education. As time went on, and in the face of the growing economic and technological strengths of Japan and the USA, it became an accepted fact that education was a legitimate area of European intervention to improve the economic and technological future of Europe. The Lisbon summit of 2000 was explicit in agreeing a strategy for Europe to become

'capable of sustainable growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion'. This in turn required the 'modernisation of social welfare and education systems'. The creation of a 'knowledge society' was now part of European-wide educational policy but within the utilitarian terms of economic growth and prosperity. And where then are the children?

This is an issue that should be close to our hearts. As education systems come in for great criticism and exposure of their shortcomings we have to ensure that the child remains at the centre. The European Commission's 2001 report *A New Impetus for European Youth* acknowledges that 'Education and training systems were strongly criticised by both young people and experts... The shortcomings of today's schools are not primarily seen as the fault of the teachers or of the schools as such, but of the educational system as a whole.' The pressure for change increases but it could easily result in resorting to the anachronistic practices of the past. The French Education Minister Luc Ferry recently stated that putting the child at the centre of education was just demagoguery, and this sort of argument has to be countered with clarity and thoughtfulness. Many educationalists are uneasy about contemporary trends and this gives another dimension to our Alliance work in that what is known as 'early academics' is fast becoming an area of contention. The Alliance has decided to dedicate the next few years to raising questions in this debate and to work as an advocate for the improvement of children's lives and the right to be a child, without facing harsh competitive educational pressures dictated by economic anxieties that can be unhealthy and detrimental to personal growth and fulfilment. This debate is now an international one and it is on that stage that we intend our voice, albeit modest, to be heard.

Christopher Clouder



Eurythmy Conference

Some impressions after the conference, by participants from England – including Mary Watson from Michael House, Derbyshire

When, after attending the Easter Eurythmy conference in 2001, I mused on the children from Michael House showing their work, I did not dare to dream that such a possibility should come about. It was, therefore, with tremendous joy that I accepted the invitation to participate in the 2003 'Eurythmy in the Midst of Life' conference, and I was overwhelmed by the response and commitment of the Classes Eight to Ten children from our school.

A particularly poignant presentation was the Australian Aboriginal Myth of Creation, given by children of all ages. Pupils from Switzerland, Spain, France, America, England and Germany had practised sections of this story at home in their own languages, and then forged it into a memorable performance. This was a true reflection of the spirit of the conference, 'a fine example – in Eurythmy – of encompassing collaboration'.

As well as participating in the major international production, the students from Michael House performed

Eurythmy to Wordsworth *Intimations of Immortality*, Gerard Manley Hopkins and a humorous take on *Seven Ages of Man*, with an original score by accompanist, Mary Alton. Although students were given choreographic indications, they refined the works themselves and developed them to a performance standard. It was very ambitious, and we lived, ate and slept these pieces for months beforehand. It was wonderful to witness how the pupils developed their abilities and gave of their best...

We met on Monday, panicked on Tuesday, worked like Trojans performed on Wednesday!

Initially shy and daunted by the task of performing on a large stage with 125 students, aged between 7 and 18, whom they had never met before, speaking 4 or 5 different languages, the students needed some persuading.

However the result was breathtaking. Given so many possibilities for disasters the final performance ran seamlessly. Just imagine the potential for missed cues, messing around, or

drifting off, with 145 unattended children in the wings and 1 adult only in there with them – the rest of us were in front reciting our various sections! To add to the complications there was a small orchestra of pupils who also had parts in the myth – with concomitant to-ing and fro-ing between orchestra pit and stage!... (I sympathised with one such pupil who went on as the curtains opened into her orchestra place, and immediately ran off again – she had forgotten her flute!).

The character of different languages, normally expressed through sounds only, became visible to our eyes... This was a truly international 'movement', as hands and feet often had to communicate what spoken language could not.

The children and parents of Michael House school, Derbyshire, have derived courage, enthusiasm and inspiration from the event that will last long into the future. It only remains for us to thank all those who made it possible.



Reviews

Celebrating Irish Festivals by Ruth Marshall

Hawthorn Press

reviewed by Gabriel Knight

Some of my earliest and most enduring memories are baking in the kitchen with my Grandmother, pastry for bilberry pies gathered on Fraughan Sunday which would later stain our teeth and tongues purple blue, stirring, and wishing on the Christmas pudding in dark November or setting out dainties on May eve for the fairies. Opening and reading *Celebrating Irish Festivals* brought back all these times, reminding me of how all these traditions had once been an intrinsic part of our daily lives.

The author, Ruth Marshall, a parent, poet and teacher, has been involved with Raheen Wood Steiner School, County Clare, for 16 years. She is editor of *Network Ireland*, a Holistic magazine. Ruth has been celebrating Celtic Festivals for 30 years.

It is not so long ago that celebrations marked out the passage of the year. Christmas and Easter stand out foremost among them. These are the most enduring. Others have faded as our lives have become more and more caught up in time dictated by economic demands rather than that of the cosmos. The Festivals were born out of a time when people were more connected with the natural rhythms of the seasons, the weeks, the days, our very breathing; on reawakening the connection we open up opportunities for a healthier, more wholesome life.

The aim of the book is not to hark back to times past but to:

Offer a healthy mixture of old and new, tradition and innovation, through which we can create meaningful celebrations for ourselves within the context of our lives and conditions today.

The book succeeds in doing this in a practical, warm and enlivened fashion.

The book is divided into eight chapters. The main body of it is given over to the movement from one season into another. It begins with 'A Little Myth and History.' This is laid out clearly beginning with the arrival

of the People of Cessair and tracing right through to the present day. It helps put in context the nature of the celebrations described, often a peculiar brew of ancient and modern, pagan and Christian.

The following chapter describes how many of the Celtic festivals are rooted in pivotal points of the year, the solstices, the equinoxes and the marking of the seasons. Samhain, (winter) Imbolc, (spring) Beltaine (summer) and Lughnasadh (autumn).

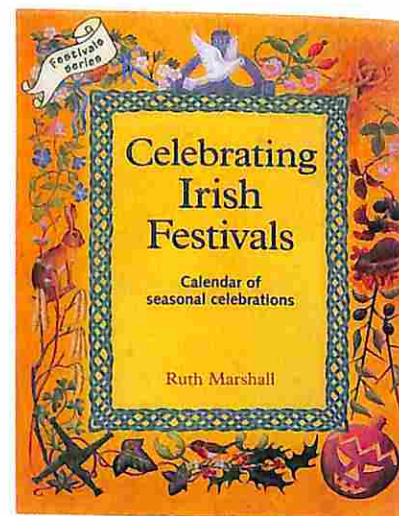
Each chapter is prefaced by a Celtic-inspired motif illustrated by Judith Evans. The scene is then set with a historical perspective on the festival through a combination of stories, mythological and local, (look out for the life affirming story 'The Green Lady'), as well as poems, ditties, riddles and songs. The words of the songs are given in Gaelic, accompanied by a phonetic pronunciation guide and an English translation.

There is also a host of games and activities, each succinctly described. The patterns for crafts activities are clear and the materials used are easily accessible.

The recipes, sweet, savoury and "magical" are often accompanied by a vegetarian alternative.

The appendix at the back provides a useful guide for age-related activities.

The book is a rich companion, a book that will prove to be invaluable to parent, teacher and community.



The Islamic Year: Surahs, Stories and Celebrations by Noorah Al-gailani and Chris Smith. Hawthorn Press reviewed by Nadia Bahrani

As a born Muslim involved in Steiner Education I looked forward with great excitement to the appearance of this book. A wonderful and necessary addition to a wealth of educational materials available, this book is a new and refreshing approach to a subject often inaccessible to non-Muslims, teachers and students alike. The introduction is excellent and quite successfully addresses the diverse views and customs of different Muslim cultures. The problem of imagery is generally well handled, because the depiction of people, the prophets, angels and so on is not acceptable in Islam. It is stated in the introduction, however, that since images have been used in the past, in Ottoman and Abbasid art for example, images are or can be acceptable, but that is history and, to my knowledge, not valid today.

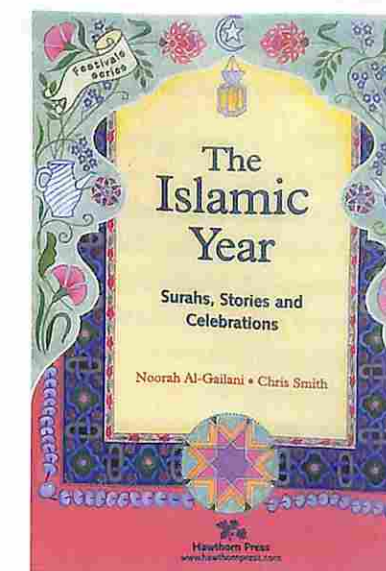
The craft activities work well as an attempt to make Islam more accessible. The fact remains, however, that children in most Islamic cultures learn adult life-crafts and skills within the extended family; for example, sewing one's own clothes or the beating of copper to produce domestic wares. There is no 'children's crafts' type of tradition, and within this context I had never heard of an Eid Pop-up card: a western influence? Moreover, such trivialisation is visible in the book insofar as some of the activities appear as contrived and banal, possibly a consequence of putting them together in an artificial setting. I liked the cooking activities though. The recipes are clear and delicious, and closer to what a Muslim child might actually do within the home.

The structure of the book, built around the prophet Mohammed's life and incorporating a Surah from the holy Qur'an at the beginning of each chapter, is excellent too and puts the whole religion in a useful context for teachers. The principles of Islam are well explained, and I liked the traditional stories and the way a moral

thread is woven through them to illustrate aspects of Islam. The tales of Juha produced a wave of nostalgia for me, but I did notice a distinct lack of North African stories.

A few mistakes in the text strike me immediately. A woman on the way to seeing her "boyfriend" is a very unusual concept (p.109) and Ali being defined as a friend of the prophet rather than his cousin (p.114), especially as this particular kin relationship is of great importance in Muslim culture. Babylon being located in Egypt on the map (p.32) is intriguing too. In some places, the stories are somewhat anglicised, making them sound culturally less authentic. Consistency can also be a problem; for example, pennies and pounds appear in one story (p.158) only to change into Dinars later in the same story. Furthermore, although Ashura is referred to in appendix 1, and the reasons for omitting it from the main chapters are explained in the introduction, it could have made up a chapter entitled 'After Mohammed'. This would have balanced a previous chapter entitled 'Before Mohammed'. It has to be admitted that it is a difficult one to tackle as it touches upon the issue of martyrdom in Shi'ism, which is argued to be beyond the scope of the book, but is nevertheless vital to understanding the role of the concept in contemporary Islamic thought. It is like attempting to understand the life and teachings of Christ without the Crucifixion.

All in all this is an excellent and informative book, which offers an easy and accessible way into Islam and hopefully a way of opening students' and teachers' minds to this very challenging religion. Bridges need to be built in this day and age, and it is important to recognise that we are not so very different after all.



Escape from Loch Leven and The Lothian Run by Mollie Hunter. Floris Books reviewed by Wilma Rawson

Where Next? Some Post Harry Potter Reflections...

Floris Books of Edinburgh is to be congratulated on the timing of the re-issue of two titles in their 'Kelpies' series by award-winning Scottish author Mollie Hunter. *Escape from Loch Leven* and *The Lothian Run* are historical novels for readers in the 10-13 age range. Both books are set in Scotland, and have 16-year-old boys as their main characters. Both deal with plots to restore the Jacobites to the throne but are told from opposing viewpoints over 150 years apart.

Why should books like this be important at this particular time?

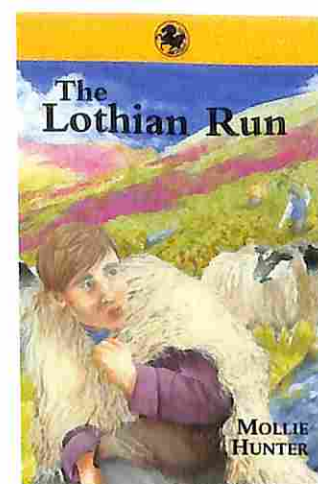
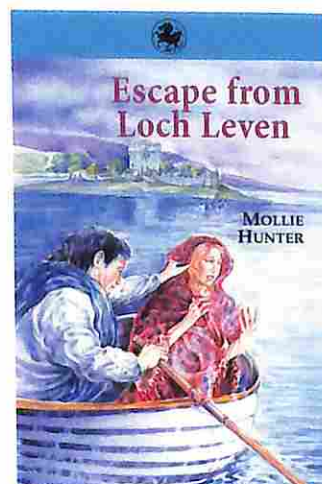
Everyone who read Josie Alwyn's article, *Harry Potter and the Plot of Gold* in June 2003 edition of *Steiner Education*, aptly twinned with an interview with a Steiner school pupil who is a keen Harry Potter fan, must have felt very concerned as to what can be done by teachers, parents, or even grandparents to counteract the influence of books of this type. Media emphasis, together with peer pressure, ensures that literally millions of children world wide are hooked.

The misgivings I have had when reading the very occasional Harry Potter chapter to our almost 10-year-old grandson were more than confirmed as I read Alwyn's analysis of how the Harry Potter books developed from engaging adventure stories into a series where 'the reader accompanies Harry ever deeper into darkness and fear.' Her primary concern about 'the uneasy shadow effect of Harry Potter books on younger children is the insidious nature of this darkness at the core of each book' which threatens to endanger especially the vulnerable youngest readers whom she compares with Hansel and Gretel lured by the wicked witch's house of sweets. More worrying still is the charge that 'J. K. Rowling has so far offered no adequate counter balance to the evil released by her books'.

Even 10-year-olds without television are aware of the man-made evils children of their age may be facing somewhere in the world – starvation, bombing, or, in their own experience, family break-up, teasing, disappointments – all the large and small problems of living. What is more, they already realise these are neither caused by nor

cured by magic. Hopefully, like Harry Potter, they will have friends and, unlike him, families to help them, but no magic. Even Hansel and Gretel used their own ingenuity to escape the wicked witch.

This is the secret at the heart of the *Escape from Loch Leven* and *The Lothian Run*, books more suited to the 12- and 13-year old than the younger reader. Their main characters are not wizards like Harry but real flawed human beings with strengths and weaknesses who are caught up, not in fantasy, but in well documented historical situations where they have to rely on their own talents and resourcefulness to carry out missions entrusted to them by young men whom they admire. The books also offer a bonus that the books of the Harry



Potter type lack. Both have the historical authenticity and local knowledge which only painstaking research on the part of the author can give. The bare bones of real history are fleshed out, readers introduced, not just to major, but minor characters and their lifestyles. Less usually, although the books are set over 150 years apart, they complement each other by being written from opposing political viewpoints and are probably best read in chronological sequence.

Escape from Loch Leven, although unusually starting with news that Mary Queen of Scots has been beheaded, is set mainly many years before in 1567 when Mary Queen of Scots was deposed from the throne and imprisoned in the island castle of Loch

Leven. Will Douglas, a page boy, is a loyal supporter of the young Queen, although his 'natural' father is Keeper of the Castle. Will, something of a gambler, with a love of play acting, is in charge of the boats on the island and because of this is recruited by his much admired elder brother – first in an attempt to smuggle out the Queen, disguised as a washerwoman, which fails, and later, more successfully, in an elaborate plot where Will's acting as the 'Lord of Misrule' helps the Queen to escape.

Escape from Loch Leven would make an excellent class or library book, interesting to both boys and girls. Author Mollie Hunter's careful research provides a wealth of detail about the life Mary and her entourage led, their pastimes and interests. Will's reaction to his lowly position as 'natural' son, his relationships with his father, brother and seamstress mother, all merit discussion. Most important, however, is the high quality writing. The opening and closing chapters are particularly moving. There are no happy endings. No magic saves Queen Mary or Will and yet our lives are a little richer from knowing them.

The Lothian Run has a fast moving and detailed plot. Young Sandy Maxwell is so bored with his life as articled clerk to Edinburgh lawyer Wishart that he has asked to break his contract and return to his father's

farm. The arrival of Deryck Gilmour, handsome young Special Investigator in Customs and Excise, who recruits Sandy to help him because of his knowledge of the local area catapults, Sandy into more adventure than he had ever hoped for. The action moves at breakneck speed around the south east of Scotland and Edinburgh where Sandy's ingenuity and fortitude are sorely taxed – but not found wanting. Again Mollie Hunter surprises with a wealth of local knowledge, revealing that middle class Edinburgh of 1736 was, because of French influence, a much more civilised milieu than London, although conditions in prisons like the Tolbooth, and when the Edinburgh mob threaten, could be grim indeed. Deryck Gilmour finds Wishart's daughter more feisty than London ladies and a good deal more intelligent. After more than proving his worth as a man of action Sandy decides to stay on with Lawyer Wishart. Despite an occasionally over-complex plot the reader is kept involved, enjoys the action and, less painfully than Sandy, learns that sticking with the boring parts of life and learning can pay off in the end.

Children do a lot of growing between 10 and 13, much of it vicariously through the books they read. Some of it, hopefully, from books such as these.

Goodness, Beauty & Truth – a video by Alik Sapountzi reviewed by Kevin Avison

Goodness, Beauty & Truth is a labour of love, no question about it. The camera follows the development of a particular group of children at the Rudolf Steiner School, Edinburgh, like an enthusiastic parent, which is clearly what Alik was when she filmed the material. The result is a warm-hearted tribute to the education the children receive. From the opening harp music played by a ten-year-old pupil of the class, to the sequences from class plays and trips to the farm, the narrative of a Waldorf class is tenderly revealed in a language that will surely communicate to anyone who remains awake to the magic of childhood.

Starting with the school's birthday celebrations, during which yellow balloons are released, the film enfolds the signature gestures of the three ages of childhood, goodness, beauty and truth, within the story of one particular class. There is a glimpse of kindergarten and, at the end of the video,

the education of the adolescent is touched upon, but the substantial heart of the film is the progress of the class from Classes One to Eight. In particular, the phases from Classes Three to Eight are made substantial through footage of class activities. The relatively small attention given to the first two classes may have had something to do with the change of teacher in Class Three when Astrid MacLean took over the class. Throughout there is a clever use of cutting between exposition from John Burnett, Philip Shinton, Karla Kiniger as well as Astrid herself and images that gently coax the viewer to feel the reality of what is being explained. Even when, during an early contribution from Philip, still photographs are used, the images are presented in such a way that the whole remains in movement. How this is done embodies what seems to this reviewer to be the strength of this presentation of Waldorf education, the way the

transformative processes of the years 7 to 14 are presented in a mere 40 minutes – no small task!

If narrative is the strength of the video, some of the explanation feels a little uneasy. As I have indicated, the film weaves these moments into the action very capably, but few, if any, teachers really know how to 'talk to camera' (study the art of TV historians like Simon Sharma to see how it can be done) and the tendency of the speaker to fix the lens with the eye and compel attention with large gestures, both physical and verbal, looks at times as embarrassing as watching one of the older stage actors performing in the narrow prison of a television screen. Interestingly, the class teacher largely avoids seeming to 'make a performance of it', perhaps largely because one always has the feeling that the children are not far away. Dramatic gestures are also there in the way the opening sequence (bal-

loons released to fly over the school building) is echoed by the image of geese flying into the distance as the commentary speaks of the future of the children. This seemed to this reviewer as a little too deliberate, even contrived, but not for a moment did that diminish the evident sincerity of the film or its contributors.

Inevitably, some of the footage in the video has something of the quality of the proud parent's record of the school play; but this works mostly to add charm and commitment to the whole. At times one feels that there is a much longer film waiting to burst through the constraints of the format. Deft editing and an eye for the telling detail help to avoid this, while sustaining the viewer's attention throughout. This reviewer would have liked to see a little more emphasis on the work in the classroom in order to show how the wonderful outdoor sequences – milking, ploughing, forging,

the Olympic Games, the lime kiln – flow into and vitalise academic study. But this would be a tall order for a short film of this kind. The sequences mentioned in particular would make a positive impression on most viewers. Though it is not explicitly stated, the video does provide a glimpse into the deeper aspects of what Waldorf schools are about and by doing so raises questions of parenting and the wider learning community of a Steiner school.

This leads to the question: 'who is this video for?' Video is not a medium that lends itself readily to analysis and 'Goodness, Beauty & Truth' has little analytical about it, which would limit its usefulness for academic audiences or teachers wanting to find out about Waldorf education (though it might serve to whet the appetite in some of the latter). On the other hand, parents whose children are setting out on the Waldorf education journey might

gain much from the film; they would no doubt recognise something of their own children in those filmed here. I can imagine someone faced with the question, 'why do you send your children to Steiner?' (not an uncommon question!), finding this a useful way to share their reasons with friends of family. Goodness, beauty and truth are grand ideals and at times the film and its creator seem swept up by the sheer power of the confluence. Some viewers might favour a humbler title or one that gives a more comprehensive overview (the Steiner Waldorf School Fellowship sponsored video, *A Time to Learn* continues to be the most comprehensive available, though it lacks the personal touch that informs *Goodness, Beauty & Truth* and is somewhat outdated). What shines from this video is the loving attention that has been put into 'witnessing, capturing and producing' it and that is its value.

SE asks Nana Göbel...

SE: In your experience what is it about Waldorf education that makes it relevant in so many different cultural contexts?

Over the years I have got to know many Waldorf Schools that are quite remote from the Middle European origins of the education and have a quite different cultural and religious background. On the other hand we live in an age of globalisation that is especially characterised by industrial goods that are the same everywhere. The most obvious example is men's clothing. At least in cities, men wear the same suits all over the world! We see that there is both a local and a global culture and that reflects the nature of the human being who is both a member of a community whilst at the same time belongs to humanity as a whole. In the countries I have visited Waldorf education is fruitful because it begins with what is universal in the child whilst taking hold of what belongs to the local culture through the curriculum. The more it is possible to integrate the culture and history of a community into the curriculum – and here there is much research that needs doing – the more Waldorf education will succeed.

SE: These new projects obviously have much to learn from established Waldorf communities. What can we learn from them, however?

In the Sloka School in Hyderabad in India children from six different religions are taught together and naturally the school celebrates the main festivals of each religion. We can learn from this example how to teach in multi-cultural schools, especially those in big cities. We can also integrate stories and culture from non-European peoples into our curriculum and thus hope to create more understanding for the breadth of human experience. We could also learn how possible it is to work in schools with very limited resources – certainly a lesson worth learning for some European schools.

SE: Are there cultures, to your knowledge, in which Waldorf education cannot find a footing?

I don't know of such cultures, though we shall have to see how Waldorf schools develop that will be founded in the Arab world, where there has recently been great interest.

SE: The Friends of the Art of Education receive most of their donations from the German-speaking world. How can the English-speaking world help?

When we founded the Friends of the Art of Education it was our dream that each European country would establish a support and fundraising foundation to help anthroposophical education. This has happened in Holland and in Switzerland. We would of course be happy to receive donations from the UK but it would be much more useful if the donors could donate to a British charity from the tax point of view. If there were individuals there who wished to take this initiative we would be very willing to offer our help and co-operation.

SE: Nana, we thank you for this interview.

Born in 1955, and having attended a Waldorf School, Nana Göbel originally studied Archaeology, Classics and Egyptology but then trained as a banker and worked for the GLS Bank in Bochum in Germany from 1987 to 1996. Since 1976 she has helped set up the Friends of the Art of Education (Freunde der Erziehungskunst Rudolf Steiners) for whom she has worked ever since. Over the years she has tirelessly travelled the world visiting initiatives. Nana is not only an experienced field worker but is also a highly effective fund-raiser for the Friends and other children's charities. In 2003 she was appointed General Secretary of the Anthroposophical Society in Germany.



From a School Doctor

Warmth – for body, soul and spirit

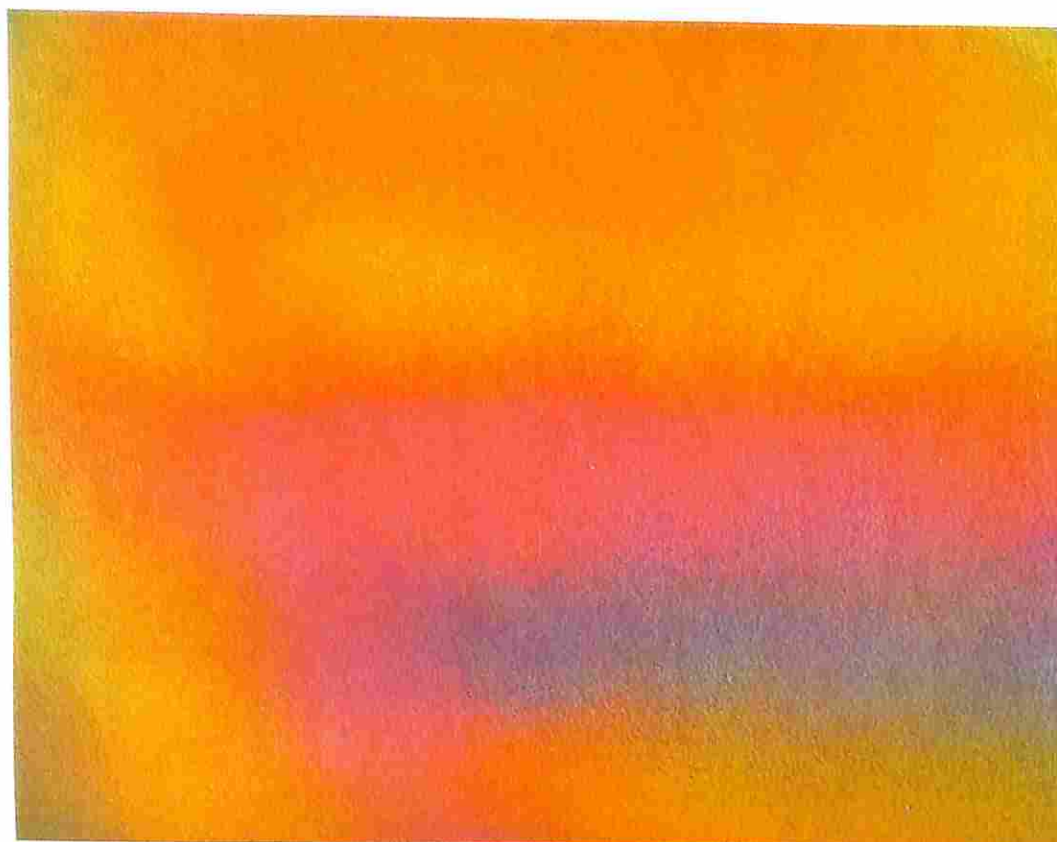
Dr. Bettina Lohn

Many of us will associate warmth with this year's summer! You may remember how differently people coped with the heat. Some felt comfortable and at home with it, others were in need of shade or air conditioning. Warmth is one of the four elements and like earth, water and air it is an essential ingredient of the human body and our environment. Our body's functioning depends on a very specific and tightly controlled temperature range. Warmth is unique: it is invisible, but nevertheless measurable. In addition, it does not only play a part in the physical world, but is also associated with our emotional life. Most of us know and value the experience of 'human warmth'. We can also 'warm to' somebody or something or get 'fired up'. We can call an atmosphere 'warm', but can equally have a 'frosty' meeting,

even in an overheated room. Warmth, like rhythm, is an essential feature of human life.

Evolution

Warmth appears to be an ingredient of life right from the very beginning. It was probably present even before any earthly matter. The evolution of minerals, plants and animals goes hand in hand with an increasing autonomy from their environment. This also applies to their warmth. Plants, for instance, have little warmth of their own and are integrated in the temperature of their environment. Depending on the species, they need a particular, either warmer or cooler, climate. This is similar for primitive animals. However, the more developed an animal is, the greater its independence from the



environment and the more autonomous its warmth organisation. The emancipation of an animal's warmth organisation appears to go hand in hand with the emergence of a sentient life. And although the human being has taken a further step in the course of evolution, he/she shares such features with the developed animals.

The Human Body

We are all familiar with the term 'having a temperature', which usually means a raised temperature, often associated with feeling unwell. Of course our body always has a temperature! The normal range is between 36°C (96.8°F) and 37.5°C (99.5°F), but varies individually, depending on environmental circumstances, clothing, time of day, menstrual cycle, emotional situation etc. A temperature between 37.5°C (99.5°F) and 37.9°C (100.2°F) is 'raised' and 38°C (100.4°F) and above is a 'fever'. Temperatures above 40°C (104°F) can be dangerous. The severity and significance of a raised temperature/fever, however, depends on several factors, including age, illness symptoms etc. All these together determine the need for action. In newborn and young babies, for instance, raised temperatures have to be taken especially seriously and, if in doubt, a doctor should

be consulted. I hope to discuss fever in a later issue.

The distribution of warmth within the body is also interesting. It is not evenly spread, but the temperature is generally speaking a little higher in the trunk and head compared to arms and legs. Also, the temperature inside the body (core temperature) is higher than on the surface (peripheral temperature). This varies during day and night and shows a typical pattern over the course of 24 hours. The overall daily variation lies between 0.5°C and 1.0°C. During the night, generally speaking, our core temperature is lower, our peripheral temperature higher. During the day this is the other way around. But on closer look it appears to be even more differentiated, our temperature also gradually rises during the day and then falls again in the night. Of course these changes in temperature are, in addition, influenced by factors like environmental temperature, physical activity, menstrual cycle etc., but the underlying rhythmical pattern remains present in healthy people. Changed temperature patterns can be an indication of ill health, which is an area of extensive research.

Significance for Daily Life?

We need warmth to feel comfortable and function well. But is there maybe more to it? Is it not



remarkable that our body temperature shows a similar pattern to our waking and sleeping rhythm? Both have a 24-hour rhythm. So, when we are asleep, i.e. not conscious, our core temperature falls and rises again during the day when we are awake, i.e. conscious, and relate to the external world. This raises the question about a possible link between our soul-spiritual being and our body warmth. It suggests that our warmth is the physical carrier of our soul-spiritual being, facilitating the integration of our (self) consciousness with our physical existence. The consequences of such a relationship could be considerable. We could feel called to observe our individual experiences with and reactions to warmth and coldness, thereby getting to know our own warmth organisation much more closely. It is amazing how often people are unaware of their warmth, like for instance their cold feet. Do we know how our individual warmth is fluctuating during the day? Can we find a relationship to how we feel in ourselves? This is more than just a question of feeling comfortable. It could be seen as an active contribution to health in the widest sense. The appropriate warmth in our homes (and school buildings!) would

gain new significance, as would how we dress and look after our body warmth. Today's fashion of midriff-exposure (high-ending tops and low-starting trousers) could from this point of view raise questions – it exposes the most central part of warmth of the body. We could also consider the material we dress in, how differently natural materials (e.g. cotton, wool) respond to our body's temperature compared with synthetic materials. We also know that getting a 'cold' can be related to neglected warmth (something that children often loathe their mothers commenting on!). These are just indications to encourage a different appreciation of our own warmth and its needs.

Warmth is especially important for children. The newborn and young are particularly vulnerable, as they cannot as yet hold and regulate their temperature very well. Warmth is essential for a child's thriving – physically, emotionally and spiritually. It provides support for the child's development and enhances a feeling of identity. Assuming a relationship between our soul-spiritual being and our warmth organisation, taking care of a child's warmth is like extending an invitation to the child to enter and connect with this world.