

Waldorf Education and Gender

What Do Young People Need?

Waldorf Education in China and Japan

Waldorf Education: Transformation
Towards Wholeness

Volume 38, No.3

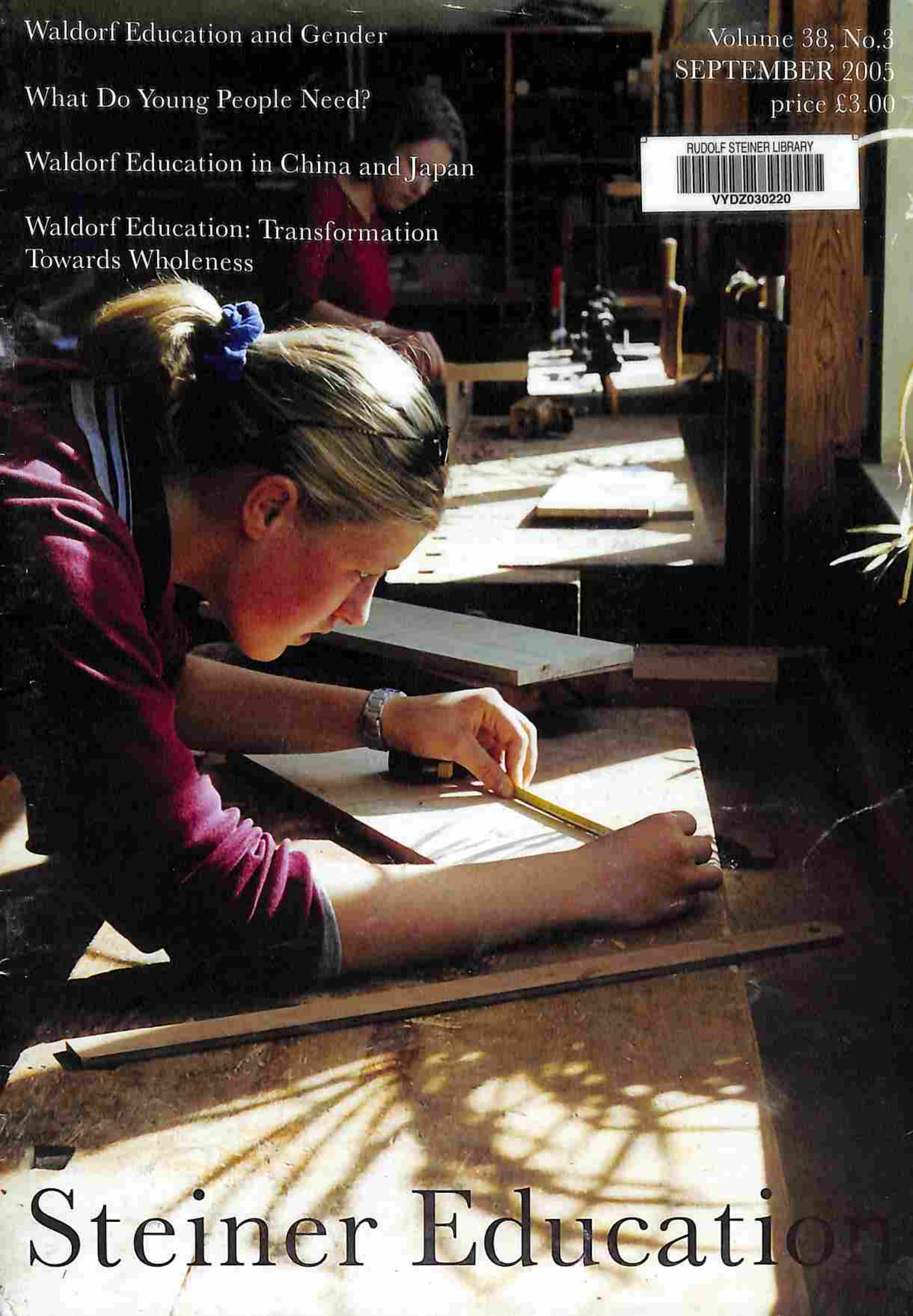
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Steiner Education

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Christoph Wiechert is Leader of the Pedagogical Section in Dornach and has wide experience of the international Waldorf schools movement. His insights here into the nature of puberty are both general but also personal. This very vivid account is full of care and respect for adolescents and offers helpful, inspiring advice to teachers and parents.

What do young people need? by Professor Albrecht Schäd

This article presents a challenging view of the current generation of young people and the riddles they present us as parents and teachers. They are in many ways not what we expect them to be. But that is how it should be. The author explores some of the ways in which young people create their own informal learning environment and offers some suggestions how we can support their quest.

Waldorf Education: transformation towards wholeness

by Vladislav Rozentuller and Steve Talbott
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Rudolf Steiner Library
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Editorial

Throughout the international Waldorf Schools movement an intensive period of creative reflection and renewal is going on. We see this at several levels. In many countries the curriculum is being re-thought, re-formulated and re-affirmed. The question of relevance is being honestly put alongside the question of interpreting the needs of developing children and young people in our times. Many innovations are being evaluated and placed in the context of the basic principles of Waldorf education. What kinds of issues are involved here? Let me just list a few: the basic concept of the Waldorf Kindergarten approach – originally developed for mixed age groups of children from 4 to 6 years old – is now being adapted for children from 2 to 7 years old in settings that sometimes take children for the whole day. The transition from Kindergarten to school is being re-thought and many variations of Waldorf transition classes are being developed (and in the case of Germany is being documented, monitored and evaluated – work I myself am currently involved in). The whole question of school readiness and whether and how it can be healthily nurtured is crucial to these discussions.

Indeed the whole question of what education can do to strengthen the health-creating forces in the developing human being is being closely studied both within Waldorf education and beyond. The need to strengthen the basic competences of children (balance, co-ordination, sensory development, sense of coherence and resilience, fine motor skills, language development, etc.) has led to many new forms of learning in the Lower School (e.g., moving classroom, outdoor classroom, team teaching). The integration of children with severe learning difficulties and handicapped children into main stream Waldorf classes has been going on for many years but is being actively encouraged in many schools now (often at the insistence of the state). The transition from the Middle School to the Upper School is being explored through many new forms, involving special Middle Schools within larger schools. The main innovation in Upper School education has been the widespread introduction of portfolio methods of pupil evaluation to replace traditional examination forms. A working group is actively trying to establish a European Waldorf Leaving Certificate based on portfolio methods as an entry to university – which some European countries already enjoy. A second innovation in the Upper School has been the expansion of informal learning through projects, work placements, social practicals and independent artistic projects.



Formal frontal teaching still has a role but only as one element alongside a much more self-directed learning focus.

Quality development procedures, practice-based and action research are widespread and teacher training is undergoing radical changes in the direction of continuous professional development, and practice-based training programmes.

Martyn Rawson

Renewing Steiner Education?

As many readers will be aware, this is the last edition of *Steiner Education* in its current form. On behalf of the executive and council of the Steiner Waldorf Schools' Fellowship, we wish to thank the editorial team for their hard work over the last four years. Martyn Rawson brought editorial energy and a much-needed fresh approach to this publication. He was ably supported by Jan Swann, Ian Botting and Mary-Anne Lumley. Thanks too must go to Anne McNicol, who, especially since Martyn moved to Germany, has, with characteristic modesty and professionalism, been the safe pair of hands as 'pre-publication backstop' and magazine producer. Similarly, Gerda Uelfa-Woods, SWSF publications manager, has coped magnificently with the many complications that a journal of this sort involves.

When we appointed Martyn as editor, *Steiner Education's* readership had been declining for a number of years. In spite of valiant efforts to revive flagging sales, costs have continued to rise and circulation to fall. This has led to the necessity to discontinue publication with this note of appreciation. Although, like many publishers of small magazines, we have had to recognise hard economic realities, we are exploring the feasibility of producing an annual journal and the potential for web-based publication. Meanwhile, with special thanks to you, the readers, we say, in the manner of *Under Milk Wood's* Rev. Eli Jenkins, "Goodbye, but just for now..."

Steiner Education... is a magazine for parents, teachers and others interested in Steiner Waldorf education. Though based in the UK, it has an international perspective. The magazine is dependent on people sending in material and the editorial group welcomes contributions (sent as hard copy and – if possible – electronically as a word file)

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All correspondence for SE
Steiner Education
Kidbrooke Park, Forest Row
E. Sussex RH18 5JA
Tel. 01342 825005

Email correspondence to
gerda@steinerschoolbooks.com

Editorial group
Ian Botting (cover)
Mary-Anne Lumley (assistant editor)
Anne McNicol (layout)
Martyn Rawson (editor)

Advertising
Jan Swann tel & fax 0117 9633418
Email: jan.swann@care4free.net

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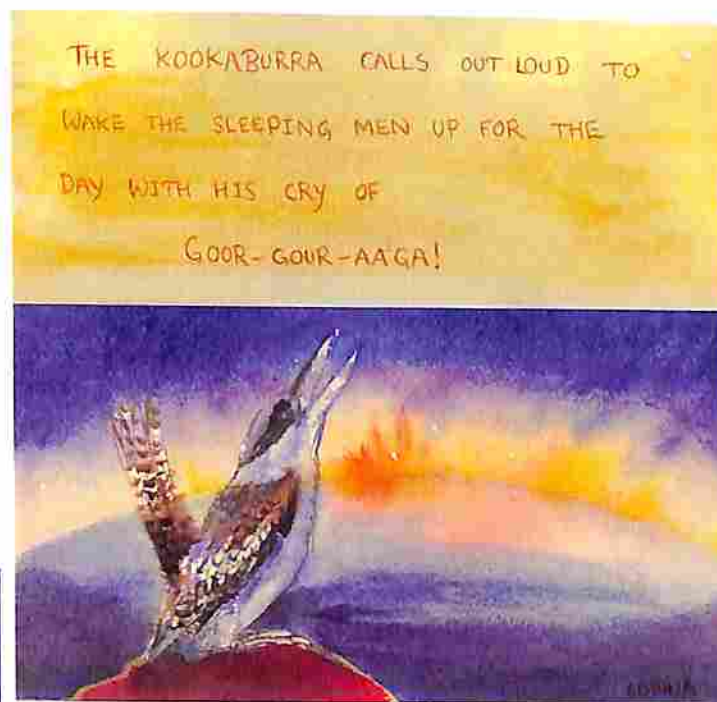


Each page is illustrated by evocative water colour paintings which capture the colours of light of Australia in ways no photographs could. The book is a tribute to Hannah, Renee, Sophia and Vija who are credited with the illustrations and presumably their teachers. The book would be suitable for a reader in the Lower School or indeed for the 7th Class when Australia is studied. And it is an inspiration.



Tales of Terra Australis can be ordered from SSF Publications, Forest Row, or direct from the Newcastle Waldorf School NSW.

Tales of Terra Australis is a first reader written and beautifully illustrated by pupils for pupils of the Newcastle Waldorf School in New South Wales Australia. It is written in neat, highly-readable capital letters, and a wonderful example of how a Main Lesson book could be. It tells a magical story: Ilya is a young boy who loves dancing. He meets an old man, Roland, himself a life-long dancer, and Ilya takes him to his home. There Roland tells Ilya and his mother how, as a boy, he walked into the middle of the country and was found and cared for by the Black Men. They took him to their home at the Rock and taught him their way of seeing the world and told him tales of its origins and the Dreamtime.



Waldorf Education and Gender: the educational challenge of puberty

By Christof Wiechert

Co-education

Firstly let me state that the first Waldorf School in 1919 made a valuable contribution to the practice of co-education. The significance of this fact is easily overlooked because today we take it for granted that boys and girls do gymnastics, go swimming, or practice fencing in the sports lessons. In the history of education the significance of this co-educational contribution of the Waldorf School was to establish an important standard.

Waldorf schools have set further standards in this respect in the opposite direction, in that boys learn to knit, sow a shirt and in the higher classes can be seen on stage, performing eurythmy alongside the young ladies, wearing silk costumes with veils. This second aspect of co-education has unfortunately not become a norm outside Waldorf schools. Other schools have taken on much that has been pioneered in Waldorf, such as Main Lesson block teaching, foreign languages from the first class onwards, the recognition of the importance of art work and the artistic approach, project work (including Class Eight and Class Twelve projects), work experience and social practicals, and so on. What hasn't so far been copied is taking subjects traditionally identified with girls to the boys. This step is harder to comprehend.

Co-ed means boys are allowed to do what girls do

Co-education in a Waldorf School does not only mean that the girls do everything that the boys do but rather the opposite: the boys do everything that the girls do. Does this fact point to something more fundamental? Could it be that this approach is saying in principle, "the genders are developing too far apart"? The differences are becoming too great. Is it not the case that rather than mutually complementing each other, the sexes are actually being polarised by differences that cannot be reconciled? Is that appropriate for human development? Let us look at the fact that eight out of ten crimes are committed by boys and men. This alone tells us that co-education has not been a complete success.



I would risk claiming that in spite of co-education the whole education system is unbalanced in a one-sided way towards masculine qualities. Pupils are confronted by all kinds of macho experiences that youngsters formulate in their own words: *fun, cool, fucking good, sexy* and so on. Education supplements this with: *attainments, targets, goals, tests, standards, grades, systems, deadlines, success, prizes and awards*. In brief, education is dominated by concepts that are rational, goal- and achievement-orientated towards efficiency and standardisation – all aspects of a predominantly masculine outlook. Those who can't cope with this will have difficulties and the proportion of psychological casualties among young people is rising dramatically.

The impossibility of reforming this education system is apparent in the rigidity which characterises the structures of the system. These structures are permeated with exactly the opposite qualities that would be needed to change things. Their response to reform is to retain what exists, increase central control and raise measurable standards instead of looking at what children's needs actually are.

Heat but no light

The colder the (educational) climate becomes through educational bureaucracy that does not respect human nature, the hotter the reaction is to counter-balance it. This can take many forms, such as violence. Far right extremism can also be understood as a reaction to an education system based on selection and elitism, which are themselves almost fascist tendencies. A third face of this reaction is the world of leisure activities. Here the quality of the balanced, healthy, middle has disappeared – the disco and party culture and the zombie-like LAN network culture being prime examples. These are predominantly masculine cultural forms (sex, display, ecstatic behaviour, risk-taking and autism). The link between the disco scene and the internet is alcohol. This whole complex is carefully nurtured by a whole industry who knows what youngsters like. One can be astonished that so many children and young people still appear normal. Or are they really normal? Perhaps we have lost sight of the criteria of what passes as normal?

Young people grow up in these inner and outer landscapes into sexual maturity – Rudolf Steiner spoke of ‘earthly maturing’, suggesting that this implied more than merely the ability to have babies. Steiner characterised earth maturing as the possibility of being authentic, in other words being able to act out of one’s innermost self, independent of external control of our behaviour. Earth maturing also means the ability to *love the world*. In Steiner’s view the ability to love physically – sex – is a small part of our capacity to love the world. In order that this ability to love could develop healthily, the task of education was to lead young people in puberty towards the world in such a way that their interest was focused primarily on the world and not on themselves. Too much self-focus in puberty was to be avoided; otherwise this would lead boys to an unhealthy eroticism or to aggression and expressions of power, and girls to cutting themselves off from the world and an unhealthy obsession with themselves.

Inner balance – outer interest

According to Steiner’s view during the 1920s, the main task of education during puberty was to establish a balance of concern between the inner and outer worlds, the establishment of the ability to take



a standpoint and stand up for one’s self in the world. The bridge between outer and inner world was to be enthusiasm fired by what was being learned at school. In the 1920s this was not experienced as that much of a problem. The lectures from Steiner that addressed this problem were called *Questions of Education in Puberty* and not *Problems of Puberty*. (Steiner referred to sexuality in many other places but these two lectures addressed this specific aspect.) Today achieving ‘earth maturity’ is more often than not accompanied by problems and school has an important role to play in supporting youngsters through this phase of their lives.

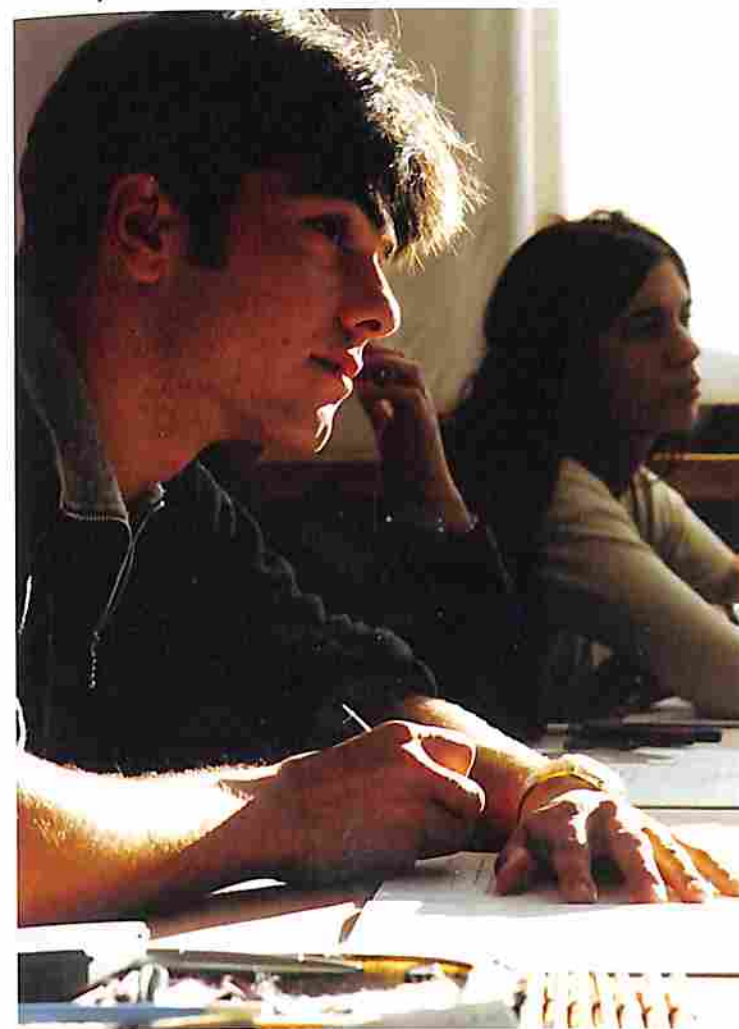
We need to examine whether Steiner’s approach is still relevant or whether we need to supplement it with a more practical and direct approach.

What is the significance of inside and outside in puberty? What does it mean, to love the world? The perceptions of the children begin to change. A twelve-year-old looks with a general, almost objective, interest which awakens curiosity but remains relatively free from personal feelings in his or her soul. One can see that in children’s hobbies. The collector of stamps is immersed in his special interest. He has considerable knowledge of detail and can form complex judgements about value and rarity of stamps. Something in his soul led him to this hobby, though generally he doesn’t know what it is. He only knows what he wants, what will fulfil him, inasmuch as he knows anything about himself. If you watch him while he is busy with his stamps you can see that he is not fully inside the activity, he remains somewhat detached. It appears more like a preparatory stage for the activity – not yet real philately. The soul seeks certain objects and unites itself in a still innocent way

in a certain specific space, although with considerable specialist knowledge.

With girls this level of dedication to certain aspects of the world often shows itself in their interest in horses and riding. They live in a kind of provisional way in a certain life-style, in a certain self-contained realm of life that can be overseen, though they do so with considerable intensity. And still they don’t stand fully within this world and the intensity lessens after a few years, in most cases with little regret. They can smile a little at their memories of those times.

The situation with a young person in puberty is quite different. The distance towards the object of interest not only disappears – now nothing is dealt with or experienced that isn’t passionately wanted. Homework is either done because the teacher is *cool* or not done because the teacher *sucks*. This principle applies to friendships and the experience of their own sexuality. Eroticism and shame gain a new critical significance. The radius of what can be experienced expands enormously. The soul goes through frightening depths and sometimes dizzying heights. Many youngsters rush from one experience to the next, behaving offensively, and at the same time are vulnerable. Those around them have to experience this equally intensively, depending on temperament.



The young person has to find him or herself within an inner world with the demands of the search for identity, love and devotion, and thus ultimately for having their own children. In another part of their souls however they are concerned with Eros. In earlier times this challenge was more inward, hidden from public view. Today it shouts its presence to us from the rooftops telling us that the nature of humanity is to worship Eros. The question is: how do these two inner drives relate to each other? For many young people it becomes a dilemma.

Personal love, the small sister of universal love

Steiner once characterised this when he spoke about the relationship of the head to the rest of the body, and that this relationship was once of a different nature:

Thus something strange has occurred...precisely in those organs that the human being associates with his lower nature he finds an image of the Gods. Only this image is corrupt because humanity lies on earth. Precisely that which represents what is higher in human nature, what should have been spiritual has become his lower nature. Please do not forget that this is an important secret about human nature. That what appears as the lower nature in the human being has become so because of Luciferic influences. It was actually supposed to have been his higher nature. That is the most paradoxical aspect of human nature. That is what solves countless world and life riddles, if one can understand it in the right way.¹

Let us try to understand this in the right way. Can one use this idea as the basis of one’s inner attitude as a teacher? Can we experience that holy things and profane things can lie close together, even in our own lives? Can we understand that education requires that we deal with young people with great tact? Do we know what tact means as an educational approach with young people?

Are we prepared to consider how we ourselves deal with this issue and what we have enforced on young people through our behaviour and attitudes? If so then we can acquire the necessary respect for the expressions of this age group and one can find the strength and honesty to meet these youngsters where they are and without the need to correct them in an unsympathetic way. We don’t need to rely on avoidance or preventative strategies but rather base our approach on going with them. Perhaps we can re-discover something of our own youth.

If they're going to do it, let them do it under our roof

In a summer camp for young people organised by the Christian Community the parents noticed how freely the boys and girls dealt with one another. As the leading priest was asked about this he replied laconically, "if they have to do it then it is better they do it while under our care". This is a wise statement. Those connected in some way with this age group experience a world process during this life phase that they also went through.

Understanding is a much used word these days. Can one really love these 'suffering' young people? Though little noticed, I recall Rudolf Steiner's motto saying that teachers differ from other people in that they can *love more* than others.

One cannot avoid the impression that from the pedagogical perspective of parents and teachers the phase of puberty generates considerable fear. Fear was always a bad adviser. How often does the feeling of fearful hopelessness lead us to make the wrong decisions and do the wrong things?

Awakening interest

If school, teachers and parents somehow manage to ensure that the pupils *intentionally* connect themselves to the content of the lessons, perhaps they get through this phase in a healthy way. This intentional connection to the content is no easy matter but is the greatest challenge to the teachers, especially at a time when the lessons are supposed to be more driven by content than by the personality of the teacher, in order that the pupils develop their powers of judgement. Exactly the opposite is the case. The teaching should not be factual but, rather, characterised by the struggle of the teacher to engage the interest of the pupils for the themes themselves (as opposed to studying for the sake of passing exams). Most teachers know how hard this can be.

Rudolf Steiner gave the following advice in this respect in the last lecture of the *Study of Man* lectures, when he spoke of the ages between 12 and 15 requiring the imagination and creativity of the teacher to a high degree. Especially in this age! We can add to this advice that the whole approach has to be original, free and confident, with a view of the pupils as developing human beings rather than as deliverers of attainments. In Classes Five and Six this should not be too difficult, since pupils in these classes are still largely free of that self-focus that comes later.



Rules are crap

A Class Ten student was caught smoking at school, which is obviously forbidden. Should he get the usual punishment or should we think of something original? Such banal situations are often decisive for an individual's destiny. The standard punishment says, "actually you are not our pupil but rather a case that requires correction". A teacher who thinks of something original in such a situation – such as requiring that the student make an exact botanical study of the tobacco plant – addresses the developing young person. That individual may recall the 'punishment' his whole life long. The standard punishment is quickly forgotten and is anyway a form of lack of recognition of the human being.

This fact is remarkable in that it shows the teacher a path of self-development. In Steiner's lectures on this subject in the book *Balance in Teaching*, he portrays with great sensibility how youngsters in this phase of their lives outwardly show us something different from what is going on within them. Now we have the question: how do I as teacher react in my encounter with a young person? Is the outer appearance of what is actually presented to me my point of reference, or

do I orientate myself towards something that is essentially not visible?

Seeing things from the inside

I must always ask myself the question: what does that appearance look like from the inside? Is this impossibly loud, crude lump proof of the inward uncertainty of the individual or a sign that he seeks contact? The German teacher has chosen a really provocative girl to make her life in the lessons a misery. But because the teacher recognised that she was actually dealing within another being within, she always just managed to avoid a confrontation. And then one day, when the teacher finally blew her top, the girl reacted with hurt and reproach saying "but you know me!".

With boys one has to be particularly aware of this mismatch of inward reality and outward appearance. Their loudness is an expression of deep uncertainty because in the emergent man the 'I' unites itself much later with the sentient soul. Thus they remain over long periods of time without orientation and focus. Precisely because of this fact their actual soul feelings are the exact opposite of what they live.



With girls in puberty the opposite is often the case. The 'I' often unites itself easily and early with the astral body or sentient soul and thus girls often reveal an impressive judgement and maturity. They give us the impression, long before we can recognise it in boys, that there is more to them than we can see. The girls sometimes dazzle us and even themselves with their powers, and this can sometimes collapse as hollow.

This basic pattern of human development is sometimes covered up by social factors. Thus we have a double task – not only to look through the veil of appearance that youngsters present to us but also to strip away the cover of culture that hides it. This is not an easy task. But if we love the pupils we can do more.

Do we really love them?

And here we are presented with a profound question about our understanding of education in puberty; can we love these young people? Can we meet them with an appropriately reticent – but thereby even more effective – human love? Convention says: yes of course we can. Experience says otherwise. It is not easy to demand this ability of ourselves. If we look back at our own memories of childhood in school and recall our teachers, for the Lower School our memories will tell us whether this or that teacher was nice, friendly, kind, or not. The competence or authenticity of the teacher left little trace at that age. If one tries to recall our own Upper School time then we find quite different memories. Above all we recall the ability of the teachers in relation to their authenticity. How the teachers dealt with the subject matter; how we

responded to the subject; the extent to which we were motivated by and enthusiastic about the subject and its handling – all were important to us. There were teachers with whom one could really relax, fool around and yet still achieve something. With others we had fun but didn't learn much; there was little respect. Then there were others with whom one had the feeling "we can really get to the heart of things and have deep discussions", because they really were *real*. With such teachers their personality matched

the subject they taught. That worked in a healing way because trust arose between us.

Those were encounters that led to strong experiences that the young person in puberty could hold on to. It is no coincidence that the choice of subject that young people later study, or the direction of professional training, is so often influenced by such encounters with a subject and a respected teacher.



But such qualities can't simply be characterised as an ability to love. Such a pedagogical quality can only be achieved if the teacher has really developed authenticity in his life. That is a quality of the human 'I', the spiritual core of the individual. In this characterisation we can recognise the working of a fundamental pedagogical principle; the pedagogical quality that streams from teacher to pupil works at the next lower level of the human being's physical-soul-spiritual constitution. That which can work in the soul life of a young person to kindle enthusiasm and interest in an encounter has to come from the individuality of the teacher. If we work towards achieving this, then we don't need rules, that bypass the opportunity for self-determination and self-responsibility, to govern how young people in the Upper School have to behave. If such qualities begin to be realised by the teachers in their own self-education, then young people will find the way to speak to their teachers about what needs to be discussed on the path to becoming an adult.

Perhaps we will have the chance to explore and understand everything that has to do with sexual awakening with our educational approach, but from the perspective of a deeper more active understanding of emergent human nature. Only thus can we relate truly to the biographical development of our students. I am clear about one thing; it has to do with the *art* of our education.

Thus one can begin to determine whether Rudolf Steiner's suggestions are still as relevant today.

Archetypal images and facts – we need them both

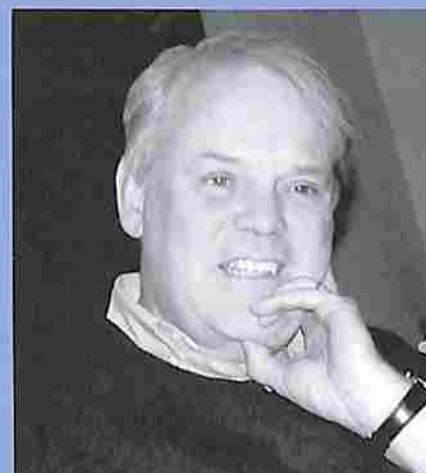
Finally I would like to express a personal thought on this matter. The times we live in also make it necessary that we inform young people of the many technical, scientific and rational aspects of all matters relating to human sexuality. We need to do this because there is a high risk of this information being manipulated if we don't take

it on. This raises whole new questions about tact and intimacy between teachers and students. It is also my conviction that Waldorf schools have always had this task, only we have done it up to now in other ways throughout the 12 classes. I am thinking of the Christmas Plays; the Birth of Christ; the Archetypal image of the Creation of Humankind; the Three Kings and the perversion of the mystery of birth through the Murder of the Innocents. If we are honest, these startling images in the Three Kings Play have prophetic character – but hopefully not a Menetekel for our culture.

Reference

1. Steiner, *The Spiritual Background of the Outer World*.

Christoph Wiechert is the Leader of the Pedagogical Section of the High School of Spiritual Science at the Goetheanum, the body that carries responsibility for the spiritual development of Waldorf Education worldwide and which co-ordinates many aspects of educational development. Before he took up this role, Christoph was a class teacher for over 30 years in the Hague in Holland. He is also the father of four children all of whom have either passed through or are still passing through puberty.



What do young people need?

By Albrecht Schäd

Youth today loves luxury, has bad manners and rejects authority. They contradict their parents, cross their legs and tyrannise their teachers.

This is not a recent quote but came allegedly from Socrates some 2,500 years ago. Has anything changed? Youngsters rebel and they probably turn into adults who, in their turn, complain about the youth of today! How do we experience young people today?

- They don't carry banners with political demands (though more and more young people turn out to protest against the war in Iraq or globalisation or for debt relief for the world's poor countries). Mostly, however, they flock to rock festivals with the intention, "we don't want to move anything except ourselves. We want fun, fun, fun".
- They don't appear to have any particular dynamic.
- They appear to have few interests.
- They risk little.
- They don't rebel. On the contrary. In a disco I know of there is a raised area – the so-called VIP lounge – in which the really important people can gather and look down on the masses, who aspire to being allowed to take their place in the VIP lounge. Clearly such aspirations reflect more the dream world of the bourgeoisie than the dreary everyday world they wish to escape.
- Or we can think of what Joschka Fisher, the German foreign minister and former rebel, says of the current generation, "You depress me, you are boring and heavy going. You lack the spirit of fight and adventure. You are a Heiapoepia-generation".

Protesting parents

That is strange. The protest comes from those who are usually the target for youthful

criticism. It comes from one who protested 30 years ago. At that time they protested against their parents' generation. Now the parents protest against their children. A crazy world.

Young people experience the generation of 1968, the last generation to protest in an original way against the Establishment. Their opposition and energy was new and necessary. What of today? Parents no longer feel provoked by the provocations of the younger generation and reflect on the good old days when "we were really revolutionary – let them try that, then they would see that things are not really so simple". Youngsters today, however, notice that the revolutionary behaviour of their parents was perhaps not really so effective since they have all turned into nice middle class folks with a nice holiday home in Tuscany. They reject these armchair revolutionaries.

For young people today this is a depressing situation. In my school the musical *Hair* was recently performed by Class Twelve. It depicts the long-haired Woodstock generation, drugs and all. A colleague tried to take up these themes in her lessons and asked the students how they would provoke today. Their reply was, "actually there is nothing today that would provoke your generation". The outer world is experienced as an understanding, liberal pudding. Adults stand there helpless before a mixture of aggression and resignation that comes



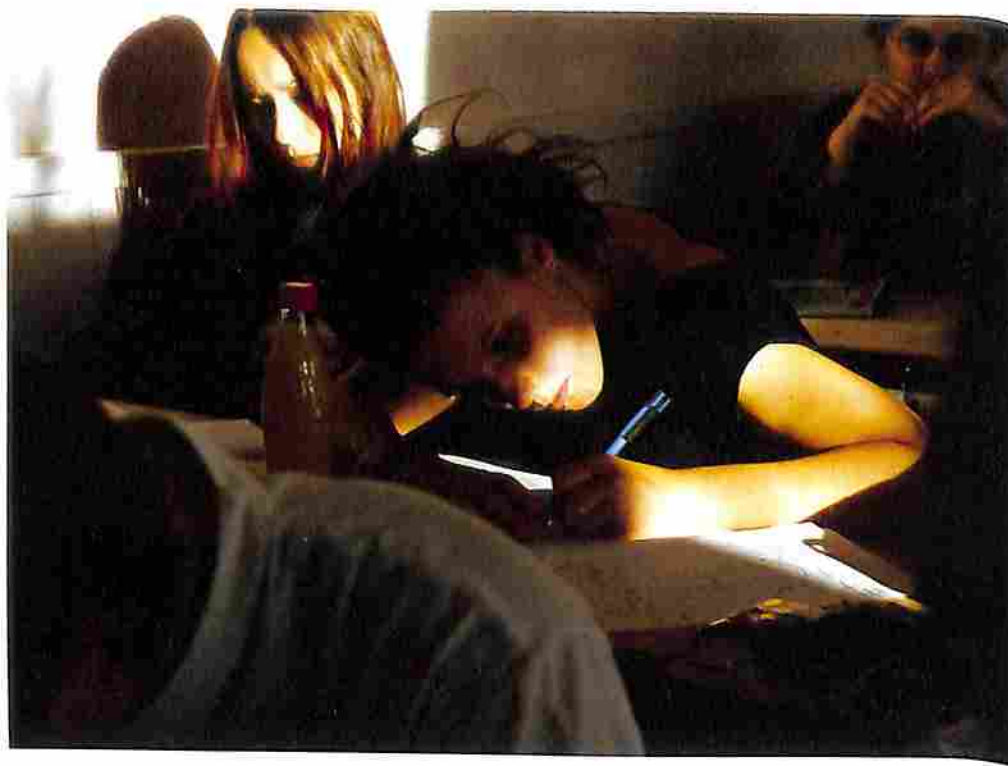
from young people. They are disappointed because their offspring are so different from themselves. We adults demand that they do something, take hold of life, protest (for something worthwhile of course) just as we did. We don't notice however that they do *do* something, only it is different to what we imagine it should be.

The new generation: boring?

The researchers of the *Shell 2002 Study*¹ can tell us something of this generation. They offer what appears to be a quite positive image of the generation. Most young people look with optimism into the future. A sensational 90% say that they are happy to get into life, rather than to drop out. Just as many think that democracy is a good form of governance. They reject ideologies and intolerance. Three out of four are active in youth work, environmental activities, the churches and other 'good works'. There are always more applications than places for social programmes in gap years.

Closer examination of the results of this major study reveals two groups of young people – one group includes the doers and the idealists. The self-confident doers come from the broad middle classes and get on in life. They come from families where they have been helped, supported and encouraged to get on in life. The pragmatic idealists come mostly from well-educated backgrounds. The other main group consists of the materialists and those who don't stand out. Among the robust materialists and among the inconspicuous there are likely to be many potential losers. One group consciously goes beyond social arrangements and the other group retreats into passivity and resignation. Crassly oversimplified, we can divide youngsters into two groups: the winners and the losers.

In general one can say that certain values have become relevant again for many young people, such as hard work and ambition (75%), security has again become important for 79%. The significance of environmental behaviour has dropped from 83% in the 1980s to 59% in 2002. Total rejection is today rejected. Today's youth values taking the chances that are offered and minimising the risks in social life. That achievement and security are



once more important does not mean that one should be less tolerant or less keen in pursuit of pleasure. Rather, these values become the means to the end of having an interesting and meaningful life.

What are we dealing with – a bourgeois, adaptable, pragmatic generation? Is that all there is to it? To understand this, we need to look at the nature of adolescent development from the perspective of an anthroposophical understanding of development.

Harmonious development requires that bodily and psychological development harmonise. We know, however, that this is difficult because there is often considerable tension between body and soul. This is further complicated by the fact that development in these two realms of life occurs at different rates and that these rates themselves have varied over several generations.

Dissociation

We know from diaries and other sources that in earlier times, maturity occurred later. Today we see an acceleration in bodily maturity; physical sexual maturity occurs around 11-12 (in some cases 10) years old, whilst emotional maturity can be delayed until the age of 16 or 17.

With psychological puberty we see an inner space is discovered that is new and emergent. Rudolf Steiner described this as the "birth of the sentient soul". It is a sensitive process that is often hidden. I sometimes think that young people experiencing these birth pangs should wear as sign saying

'temporarily closed for renovations'. What happens during this birth process?

Male/female

With sexual maturity comes a strong separation between the genders. A one-sidedness occurs. This leads to the need to seek the other. Initially this expresses itself quite generally in an interest in the opposite sex. Later this focuses on individuals. I recall once a 16-year-old who lovingly took a series of girls to bed without them becoming jealous of each other. There was no real reason to be jealous because the boy was not really interested in particular girls but girls in general. Later he became more interested in their personalities.

Geographical differences

With puberty the individual grows more strongly into the physical one-sidedness of the ethnic group and geographical region to which he or she belongs. Before puberty children all over the world are far more similar than afterwards. As a child one is much closer the universal human archetype. Thus in certain valleys in Austria people have the largest noses in the world. Elsewhere one is either tall or small in stature. In southern Sudan live the tallest people on earth, the Tussis, in which the men are on average 2.20 metres tall. Not far away in the Congo Basin live the Pygmies, who are on average only 1.20 metres tall.

Talent and differentiated soul life

With puberty differences in innate talent really begin to show. This sometimes results in friendships being broken off because the process of individualisation leads to quite different interests. Gender difference in soul life becomes far more prominent. Girls are often more mature than boys of the same age and they know it.

Growth and weight

The girls are not only ahead of the boys in terms of their emotional maturity but are usually up to two years ahead in terms of bodily growth and weight, though the boys rapidly catch up and overtake the girls in Classes Eight, Nine and Ten. Girls in this age group usually choose their boyfriends from older classes. In both genders weight becomes much more noticeable. Arms and especially legs suddenly feel much longer and heavier and consciousness hardly seems to reach to the extremities. One lies on rather sits on chairs. Why can't the teachers put sofas and armchairs in the classroom?

The need for objectivity towards the outer world: thinking; forming judgements

Young people experience a strong need to relate objectively to the outer world. They want to understand the world in causal and often materialistic terms. Intellectual capacities reach their life-time highpoint. It is difficult to argue against a Class Nine student. The arguments are produced with great speed, counter-arguments are thrown in with accuracy and sharpness – adults can hardly keep pace. They experience and enjoy their own intelligence. In the middle, for example, when one discusses politics, one can often hear the opinions of the parents. Now young people form their own judgements. The head matures before the limbs. However there is a marked tendency to generalise and formalise the arguments. The power of thinking often separates itself from reality. The danger here is the dominance of the possible over the realistic. The hope lies in the openness for ideals which are future orientated. Rudolf Steiner advised us to give young people the opportunity to run aground, to follow their arguments into absurdum; in other words to experience a reality check for themselves. The soul needs this form of natural correction through life.

A farming practical can help very much in this respect. We can see this in the following quote taken from a student diary:

- Day 1. We dragged ourselves at 6.30 out of our warm cosy beds and went to see to the cows and calves in the barn.
- Day 2. It was even harder today than yesterday to get out of bed to visit the cows and feed and water them.
- Day 3. Since the battery in our alarm clock was flat, we slept in. As we arrived a few minutes late in the barn the cows and calves were bellowing because they were hungry.
- Day 4. Once we had fed the cows, calves and ducks we ourselves had breakfast.
- Day 5. Today we had a free day. Nevertheless we still had to get up at 6 a.m. to feed and milk the cows and lead them out to the fields.
- Day 6. This morning we arrived half an hour early in the barn and the cows and calves greeted us with friendly sounds.

One can observe a shift in perspective over the days.

Subjectivity; inwardness

Alongside the need for objectivity towards the outer world a clear need for personal subjectivity

develops. This leads to rapid mood changes. Today teachers, parents are friends – all nice good people; the next day, the exact opposite. However, deep questions often also arise: what kind of riddle am I in my innermost being? The boundaries of human existence are questioned and tested, though alcohol and drug consumption, through lack of sleep and so on. Death is explored and even attempted.

Many young people begin to question whether adults also have these questions and how they deal with them.

These phenomena have a certain chronological relationship to each other. Following the more physical changes are the freeing of the intellect and the power of judgement. The head leads the limbs in this development. In school the sciences have the task of helping to cultivate clear thinking that structures the emergent sentient soul.

In Classes Nine and Ten we reach a high (or low) point of emotional instability and restlessness. Today Class Ten is often the most challenging age group to teach. Suddenly we have difficult parents evenings in which all the above-listed problems are discussed, on top of which the question arises, will they ever pass their exams? It is almost certain, however, that things have quietened down by Class Eleven.

At the ages of 7 to 18 come the most intensive development of forces in the limbs. Young people want to take hold of the world and shape it, stand on their own feet and meet the world. The school becomes less important as a social environment. One looks to the future and the challenge of bringing aims and deeds together.

Something new emerges; the feeling of shame. Rudolf Steiner described it as follows:

Shame

The feeling of shame is that which flows through human nature; the feeling of shame arises in the human being when she experiences that she must draw into her innermost self something that she can't reveal to the world, a secret must be carried. That is the nature of the sense of shame... When we as educators carry the feeling within us, something that we respect in our own soul life, when we encounter the boys and girls that relates to that inner sense of shame then it already has an effect. It doesn't need words but can be experienced directly for person to person when we meet the pupils when we consciously know, there is something them that resembles

a flower bud that has yet to open. Simply having that feeling already has a powerful pedagogical effect.²

Steiner also said that during the transition to sexual maturity the physical and life processes remain in contact while the sentient soul and the 'I' of the individual form a new relationship. Between these two aspects of the human being – the bodily life side and the soul-spirit side – a strange exchange occurs. The soul forces have the need to emancipate themselves from the bodily processes.

What comes to expression in the sense of shame? In the case of girls, Steiner described how the sentient soul is much more differentiated than in boys and that the sentient soul absorbs the 'I' more strongly. Shame expresses itself in the spirit-soul realm in blushing, which in a way hides the true feelings. This leads girls to become outspoken, confident, even challenging, not allowing themselves to be intimidated. With boys something else occurs. The 'I' remains hidden though is much less absorbed by the sentient soul. The feeling of shame expresses itself in a more inward, less physical form of blushing. This expresses itself in awkward and rude behaviour.

Then he gave a brief piece of pedagogical advice:

With girls, if you want to bring out the other side it is necessary to respond to such behaviour by letting them know that you are aware of it, that you respond to the coquettish bad behaviour with a subtle graciousness that lets them know one is affected by it but does not respond outwardly. One allows the girls to live out their emotional outbursts. With boys one has to respond to the rough and rude behaviour though show that one does not take it too seriously or personally and one smiles in such a way that the boy doesn't take it too seriously.

New inner space needed

We can summarise as follows: the central process is that of the creation of a new inner soul space in which the sense of shame can be experienced. What has changed is the fact that this process does not occur in tandem with the physical changes. The emotional and psychological changes are relatively independent of the physical ones. Thus these years become much more dangerous than they used to be, not least because the whole process takes much longer. On the other hand there arises a great chance and more opportunities for the soul to have spiritual experiences, while it is less linked to the physical processes.

The task of being an adolescent has to do with discovering, exploring and mastering this new inner space and becoming free within it. In traditional societies, such as among the Maasai in East Africa, this process is accompanied by ritual and traditional ceremonies that objectify the experiences that need to be gone through, usually differentiated for the sexes.

Maasai boys spend their childhoods with their mothers and other women. From the time of puberty onwards they:

- Live in huts in the bush which are afterwards burned
- Live in strict seclusion supervised and instructed by older experienced men
- Their heads are shaved and clothes are burned
- They have to perform tests of their courage
- They are hardened through hunger, sleeping naked outdoors and various other painful experiences which they learn to suffer without complaint
- They are obliged to learn certain rituals and behaviour patterns
- They have to practice silence and taciturnity
- Everything connected to their childhood is destroyed.

Girls have a different form of initiation including:

- No exposure to painful challenges
- Good quality food
- They can live near the village
- They are instructed in the ways of sexual relations, menstruation, pregnancy and birth.

I do not recommend that we take on such ways of dealing with our young people! We cannot adopt other cultural forms, nor our own earlier forms that are no longer relevant. But we can learn from them that the time of puberty has to be culturally accompanied. The precondition is that we really understand the process. I notice in parents' evenings that this understanding is not always present. In Africa young people are exposed to a certain life situation in order that the emotional maturity can occur.

How do young people in Europe deal with the need for transformative experiences?



The trusted relationship to family and friends is usually partially, if not completely, broken down. Youngsters seek experiences that challenge their natural needs (for sleep, healthy food, security, warmth, calm, absence of pain, avoidance of toxic substances etc.)

Let us examine our problem a little more closely by looking once more at the relationship between the life body and the sentient soul. In doing so I draw on the recent PhD research done by Thomas Zdrasil, a Waldorf teacher in Semily in the Czech Republic.

Bad habits

First let us look at the child at the age of six to seven years, the age when children enter (Waldorf) school. Steiner spoke frequently of how part of the forces active in forming the physical body and its life processes transform into the forces used in learning, in thinking and in structuring the new emerging soul life. However, if the teaching is too one sided in emphasising the intellectual qualities, then the danger arises that the life processes are weakened, leading to symptoms such nervousness, headaches, stomach upsets, and sleep problems. Zdrasil investigated large numbers of pupils in both state and Waldorf schools in relation to these conditions and discovered the following outcomes:

	State school	Waldorf school
Nervousness	30%	8%
Headaches	25%	8%
Stomach upsets	18%	3%
Sleeplessness	36%	6%



These figures make it clear that the teaching in Waldorf schools makes the pupils less ill than in state schools.

Now look at puberty and the danger that the life forces and the soul forces penetrate each other too much, thus preventing the life forces from being emancipated. Then what would occur is what Steiner predicated as a kind of 'heightened desire'. How would this show itself? It would show itself, for example, in forms of consumption of toxic substances that heighten desire and sensation. Zdrasil's study revealed the following comparison:

	State school	Waldorf school
Smoking	31%	46%
Soft alcohol	56%	58%
Hard alcohol	25%	26%

The results show a high level of activity in this area among pupils in general, and greater tendencies towards consumption of addictive substances among Waldorf pupils.

Why do they do it

More young people than probably ever before experiment with drugs. Up to 80% of the pupils in any given class had taken drugs at some point and many do so regularly. I believe that we are dealing with a search for soul experiences. Above all, hashish is used. This is a drug that produces illusionary feeling, visual hallucinations, intensive experience

of being beyond normal boundaries and an extension of the normal range of feelings. Thinking is swamped by feeling. There is an illusionary quest for unity with the world, for comfort, for beauty and social acceptance. One could also say it is a search for ideals.

With the consumption of alcohol, thinking is suppressed and the feeling life is reduced to the physical-level sense of well being and pleasure. It is a lost search for that which is good – the feel-good factor. Why do young people want to take drugs? Because it offers the possibility of experiencing a new soul life with meaningful content. Accompanying this phenomenon is the wide-spread practice of bungee jumping. Apart from the fact that it takes courage to tie yourself to a 50-metre-long rope and plunge into the abyss, it is a search for the experience of overwhelming the soul with intensive feelings.

Today the risks of puberty are much greater. One develops an almost adult body at the age of 11 or 12 but with a still child-like soul.

Over a period of years the sentient soul is at risk of drawing the life processes into itself and sinking into the realm of pure physicality, and thus preventing the powers of thinking from developing independently. What can we offer young people in order that young people can emancipate their soul forces without the aid of drugs?

They need to separate physical and bodily processes in order to open for new spiritual experiences. As the Shell study shows us, there is not much openness among most young people for such experiences.

What kind of environment do young people usually experience today? Ever-fewer parents make the effort to discover the world with their children or allow them to discover the world with others. They experience few situations that challenge them to their limits. Both parents have to work or one has to be a single parent. Parents are exhausted when they get home.

For many years now I have taken Class Nine on a trip to the Swiss Alps. My experience is that the students' sense of satisfaction is the greater, the more such mountaineering trips push them to their limits. It has proved ever-more difficult to do such trips over the years because parents are ever-more worried about the risks. It has also become harder to insist that the students leave all kinds of technical comforts (mobile phones, walkmen, ipods, etc.) at

home – all gadgets that limit the ability to let go, and experience nature and one's self directly.

To this picture of the current situation I have to add the fact that ever more time is spent surfing the internet. The internet is a wonderful tool to get information quickly. That is not the issue. It is also the ideal medium to get in touch with even geographically-remote friends quickly, to say nothing of the virtual world of relationships through chat rooms. Scientists at the Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburg published a thorough study of internet behaviour in 1998 that revealed that the internet makes youngsters lonely and depressed. Every hour spent during the week on the internet made them 1% more depressed and 0.5% more lonely. Apart from this, the participants lost 2.7 of their on-average 66 friendships over the course of the study. The internet user sacrifices real relationships and prefers the chat room. Whoever starts surfing the net feels worse afterwards. The illusions of real human contact, which is what young people are really searching for, is answered with a feeling of loneliness.

What can we do in order to return to young people the meaning that puberty once had? What can we do to provide young people with the inner foundation to their lives that would enable them to develop a sense for the future quality that this phase of life should bring them?

A few words from Rudolf Steiner provide us with orientation:

We prepare the child – we have to do this – in the right way for the start of their adult lives, if we take into account that subjectivity can develop itself independently with the sentient soul. Just as the human body needs a healthy bone system, so the sentient soul and the 'I' nestling within it needs in order to develop inner stability in the right way, ideals in this age. Ideals, those concepts that have will character, ideals with will-character, that is what we need to provide the sentient soul with a solid structure.³

If one works with this idea more closely (in the context of the whole lecture cycle), it becomes apparent that it is highly practical. What Steiner means is:

- Subjectivity has to find a relationship to objectivity. This means that the soul has to find itself through experiencing reality in the world.
- We have to create with young people the imagination of a mythical figure that exemplifies the need to develop courage, overcome fear, exhaustion, etc., to act as an ideal for youngsters.

- That one can do this through experiencing nature in a fundamental way, in remote places yet within the context of the social group.

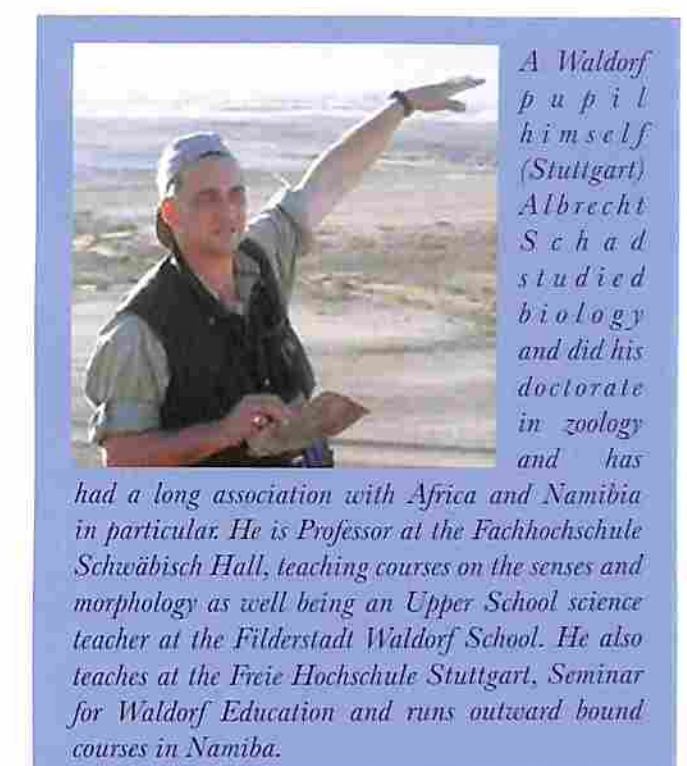
One can do this in different ways with different age groups.

The preconditions – that ideals can be found that can be brought with them, that independent thinking can develop, that inner feeling and strong will can develop – lie in the fact that a psychological emancipation occurs. Without this emotional maturity the physical body can suffer serious damage.

This is where outward-bound education has a vital role to play. This is where it belongs, helping young people over the challenges of this difficult life transition. The question at heart is: how can we offer young people an opportunity to explore the uncharted regions of their own souls? What implications does this have for the 7th, 8th and 9th Classes? This article invites colleagues to enter into dialogue. The old forms no longer meet the challenge of puberty in the world of today and tomorrow.

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A Waldorf pupil himself (Stuttgart) Albrecht Schädler studied biology and did his doctorate in zoology and has

had a long association with Africa and Namibia in particular. He is Professor at the Fachhochschule Schwäbisch Hall, teaching courses on the senses and morphology as well being an Upper School science teacher at the Filderstadt Waldorf School. He also teaches at the Freie Hochschule Stuttgart, Seminar for Waldorf Education and runs outward bound courses in Namibia.

Waldorf Education in China

A report by founding teacher Harry Wong (Huang Xiaoxing)

It has been an exciting year to see Waldorf Education develop in China. Our small school is tucked away in Chengdu in the southwest part of China. The school opened in the autumn of 2004. We have been through a hell of jumping through bureaucratic hoops and have finally been granted a licence. Our friends may worry about the political situation for us. It needs some talent to work it out. Therefore, there are some things that westerners would not be able to understand in our school.

There are 13 children in the Kindergarten and 8 in the mixed age primary class. Li zewu is taking up the mixed age primary class. And Li zhang is the lead teacher for the Kindergarten. Tammy Hughes, an American colleague is helping with the Kindergarten and training new teachers. I am helping in the primary school and helping to train new teachers for the grade school for the further development.

There are 14 young people coming from all over China to help build the school. They are playing different roles in the school while they are studying Anthroposophy. They are assistant teachers, translators, administrators and gardeners etc. They hope that they will be able to become lead Kindergarten teachers or Class teachers one day. Some mothers have moved from other cities in order to enrol their children to our Kindergarten. A community of young people has formed around the school. They study together, do artistic work and support the work of the teachers.

We are inviting guest teachers from the west to train our teachers and future teachers. There are people coming from all over China. Many student teachers have participated in our school during the year. Our group is not only serving people in Chengdu but also the movement in China. We have also been to Hanzhou, Zhuhai, Shenzhen, Guangzhou and Beijing to speak about Waldorf education. These trips highlighted the responsibility to deepen the work here at the school. It is important that we remain responsive to requests to speak with groups interested in the education, but we are acutely aware of our lack of experience. The school is still new and has not yet found its feet.



This is a dynamic time for China. What happens here is of global significance.

The country is in the grip of materialism, embracing the western unhealthy value on many things that were abundant a long time ago. The physical need is much greater than the spiritual although we are working in such an anti-Michaelic environment that cost double strength and courage. The requests for information about our school and Waldorf Education increases daily as newspapers begin to report on our work.

We need considerable support for our work. As we plan to provide more classes next year, and train more teachers, it will be necessary to have qualified staff. In order to have teachers we will need to provide a salary which we are currently not able to do. We need support for individuals, such as Tammy Hughes, who have volunteered for the year in our school. It has been very helpful to have her here. Someone like Tammy has worked in many areas of the school – Kindergarten, Lower School, teacher training, fund raising, out-reach, etc. After a year of volunteering she is no longer able to continue in this volunteer role. While it is possible that she seeks more English teaching, it would be more valuable to the Waldorf movement in China if she were able to focus on the work in Chengdu and the new initiatives in Shenzhen and Beijing. The new initiatives need an experienced teacher to visit and train teachers. Tammy is able to communicate in a mixture of Chinese and English. Her work in these cities has already been helpful. We would like it to continue. Our small school is not able to fund the development of Waldorf education in China. We are working to keep our school and teacher training going. We are seeking outside financial support on a regular basis. We are looking for 300 to 500 \$U.S. each month for each teacher. Currently we have 4 trained teachers and 10 are training teachers. With your support we can give Waldorf education a good start in China.

Donations to keep the school running:

If you are in Europe or elsewhere, donations can be sent to:

Freunde der Erziehungskunst
Rudolf Steiner ev.
Koepenicker Str. 175,
10997 Berlin, Germany.

Cheques should be earmarked:
Chengdu Waldorf School.

Thank you

The Friends
of the Art of
Education

Waldorf Education: Transformation Toward Wholeness

Vladislav Rozentuller and Steve Talbott

Researchers studying human speech have shown, through careful analysis of slow-motion film, that in normal conversation both speaker and hearer perform an elaborate dance, rhythmically moving their bodies in synchrony with the speech. The movement is not isolated to particular parts of the body, but is harmonious and whole. We speak and listen with our entire bodies.

Moreover, infants mimic and move with speech well before they actually give voice to words. And not only do they respond to the *sounds* of speech, but they also imitate the *visible gestures* of the mouth. In this way, the 4-month-old child already displays forms of movement characteristic of his culture. By analysing bodily behaviour, researchers can identify children according to class, culture, region and gender, well before they have learned to speak. So, in the words of Peter Lutzker, who summarises this research: when a child finally utters its first words, “We are not witnessing the beginnings of language acquisition, but a relatively *late* stage in an ongoing process” (Lutzker 2002a, p. 21).

A speaking world

We find here a paradigm for all education. The infant responds to – you could almost say “resonates with” – the speech of its environment, and in so doing internalises that speech as a new capacity for speaking. Moreover, the infant’s engagement with the world occurs through its entire organism. The powers of expression that flow from the world into the dawning consciousness are gestural and laden with inner significance. This is why the child’s language is so little abstract, so full of meaning.

Patients with damage to their right hemispheres illustrate the importance of what you might call a gestural and artistic approach to the world’s speech. While these patients can still comprehend words as such and can speak correctly, language may become flat and emotionless for them. The tone and intent of words is lost. Lutzker points out that patients with right-hemisphere lesions “often evidence more profound difficulties in their lives and relations than patients who, through left-hemisphere lesions, have suffered damage to the brain’s so-called language

center” (Lutzker 2002b, p. 41). Oliver Sacks, in fact, asks whether the aphasic patient (who is unable to understand words as symbols of ideas due to a damaged left hemisphere) might not gain a deeper understanding of language than is often the case when both hemispheres are intact:

One cannot lie to an aphasic. He cannot grasp your words, and so cannot be deceived by them, but what he grasps he grasps with infallible precision, namely the expression that goes with the words, that total, spontaneous, involuntary expressiveness which can never be simulated or faked, as words alone can...[aphasics] have an infallible ear for every vocal nuance, the tone, the rhythm, the cadences, the music, the subtlest modulations, inflections, intonations, which can give – or remove – verisimilitude to or from a man’s voice.

(Quoted in Lutzker 2002b, p. 42)

So we can recognise, in the description of early language learning above, that the infant is engaged – perhaps more intensely than will ever again be the case – in a whole-body, whole-soul acquisition of language. We can, further, surmise that the intensity of this undertaking has a lot to do with the profundity of the result. And contributing to the intensity, as Waldorf educators are well aware, is the fact that not only the human environment but the entire world speaks to the child through all his senses, penetrating and filling his being with images possessing the power to shape life.

Of course, over time, as every parent and teacher can observe, the centre of gravity in the exchange between child and world shifts away from the environment and towards the child. Where at first the surroundings seem to work on the child from without, ‘speaking’ new capacities into him, he progressively learns to speak his own intentions into the world. Learning is less and less something done to him, more and more something he does. Correspondingly, the language of interaction becomes less will-centered, less a matter of imitation, less mediated through the senses, and instead becomes more centred in consciousness. True exchange begins to require initiative and struggle.

But this shift in centre of gravity never severs the connection between human being and environment.

The surroundings that once spoke to the child do not cease speaking, and the maturing youth does not cease responding. We are speaking beings engaged with a speaking world. However, we may choose to attend less and less to the world’s expressions, ceasing to resonate with them out of our entire being. We then exchange meaning for abstraction by emptying the word

of its movement, feeling, and imaginative content. Our thoughts become head thoughts, no longer warmed by the heart’s sensitive revelations and no longer given muscular form by the will. If we are to continue hearing the world’s speech, we must work at being imaginative, flexible, and active in listening and responding.

The dynamic of wholeness

Part of the widely-recognised mission of Waldorf education in our day is to prevent the progressive rigidification of speech and thought by attending to the whole human being. Here we can say that wholeness and metamorphosis are two keys for a living education.

Wholeness in the classroom is provided on one side by the teacher, who must represent within herself all the different subjects. From the other side, these subjects are seen, not as a collection of curricular requirements, but as mutually-interpenetrating reflections of one living world. Only within such a context can the student experience the connection of mathematics with music, of poetry with movement, of projective geometry with biology.

But there can be no wholeness without transformation. It is the process of becoming and the active interpenetration of qualities that make a whole. Without these you have a mere inert collection of things – objects, thoughts, impulses – existing side by side. The transformation of the student’s relation to himself, to his social environment and to the natural world, is an



obvious fact, the foundational condition of any live education. The familiar sequence from imitation to respect for authority to free-thinking – from will to feeling to thought – is just one movement within an all-embracing metamorphosis.

All this makes clear the central connection of education with art. Art, too, as a defining element of human spiritual life, is founded upon creative transformation, the perception of wholeness, and processes of integration within the individual. Only through art can we overcome frozen abstraction and reckon with the full, gestural engagement of child and world.

The role of art may become clearer if we consider drama, which so naturally incorporates all the other arts.

The school as a stage

The theatre stage is not only a physical space, but also a soul space. The actor has to do with imagination, feeling, and will impulses in close collaboration. In acting, he reveals an inner, imaginative world; in storytelling, he brings feeling and movement into speech, radiating images into his surroundings.

Every inner image summons fitting movements, and every movement invites corresponding fantasy. Epic, lyric, and dramatic speech offer different modes of interaction for the soul, with epic emphasising how we bring will into our thinking, and drama emphasising how we bring imagination and thoughts to action. This should remind us of

the two main functions of the teacher: to act and to tell.

The actor has to do with the entire qualitative world – the world of perception – which includes colours, sounds, forms of movement, even smells and tastes. These are united because they are all experienced within the soul. Thus, a character can be dark or bright. Feelings can be bitter or sweet. (Rudolf Steiner mentioned that ancient Greek actors partook of bitter or sweet substances in order to stimulate certain feelings in their soul – which illustrates the connection between the outer world and soul qualities.) A scene's atmosphere can be red or blue, heavy or light. Every inner process, every inner action, can truthfully be imagined in perceptual terms – for example, as if someone were falling into an abyss or ascending to the top of a mountain. Even the spatial qualities of the stage become the qualities of soul space. Distances, the configurations of objects and persons, the dynamics of movement and posture – all become a language expressing inner realities.

Moreover, the dramatic work on images, on life situations and on character biographies, develops the 'I am' sense of individuality, the importance of which can hardly be overestimated in pedagogy. The teacher who would understand the psychology

of the child must be able to transform herself into the character and concrete living situation of the child. In sum: practice in drama provides a basis for understanding the temperaments, for gauging the rhythm of activities, for presenting lessons artistically and dramatically, for experiencing one's own bodily movements and how they speak, and for dwelling spontaneously in the present moment.

And so, through an aesthetic sensitivity, the teacher learns to speak to this girl with one feeling and to that boy with another, transforming herself into a different 'character' depending on the needs of the student before her. In addition, she is a kind of stage director creating an artistic community, with each person responding to the other through improvisation. She arranges 'complementation' throughout the community, with different individuals balanced against each other. The teacher can manage all this only through her own transformation and by getting rid of everything hardened in her own character.

Drama in relation to the curriculum

Apart from the development of purely artistic skills, we can see direct profit to the curriculum from art in general and drama in particular.

In the area of *science*, it is already recognised within Waldorf circles that a phenomenological, or Goethean, approach to nature is an approach informed by art. Goethe himself was the consummate union of scientist and artist. Reading the gestural language of nature is not an altogether different task from reading the gestural language of a painting, sculpture, or dramatic performance. And learning to create appropriate gestures on stage trains and disciplines the imaginative faculties that are required by the scientist. Through artistic exercises we develop the ability to see creative forces not only in ourselves, but also in the world – and to recognise that they are the same forces. All our understanding of the world then becomes an artistic understanding, and our science becomes a truly humanised science.

The relevance of drama to *social studies* is immediately apparent. The challenge on stage is essentially a social and creative one, requiring intuitive action grounded in the present moment. I must learn to receive what comes to me from my partner, and adapt my response in a creative, balanced, and constructive way – which is also to say, in an artistic way. Social action (for example, participation in a town hall meeting) is always

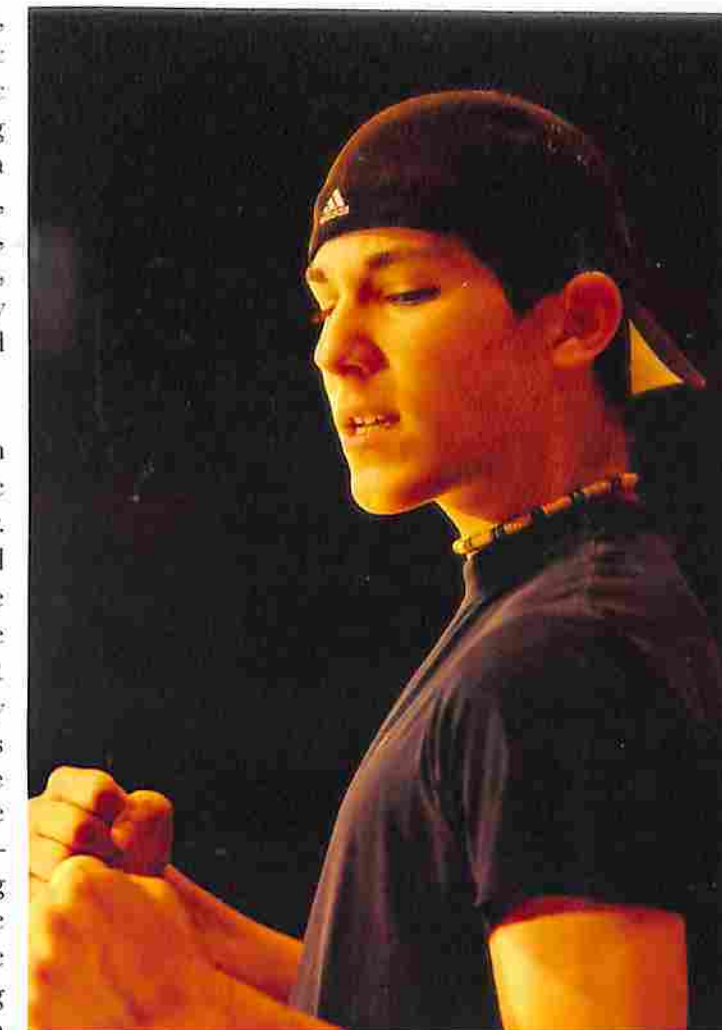
an exercise in improvisation. Furthermore, appropriately-chosen literature and dramatic performances can encourage sympathetic understanding of other social groups, bringing alive different cultures and historical periods in a way no mere textbook description can. In addition, rehearsing, making decorations and costumes, and managing the production are complicated, interesting, and important social processes. They can bring out special capacities in a student and are excellent occasions for social education.

There can also be a strong *therapeutic element* in drama. Because children are so soft, they are more easily transformed through soul activity. It is a commonplace that the child with a cruel streak who plays the role of a caring, gentle character may find his own life changed by the experience. Similarly for the proud or arrogant student who must enact the character of a deeply humble person. In general, the more characters or scenes a student can act, the healthier the soul life he can develop. But beyond this, the experience of artistic transformation itself – quite apart from the particular character being portrayed – works as the best therapist. On the teacher's part, such work can become more conscious, enabling her to break up her 'feeling clichés', or fixed forms of feeling. These are then caught up within a living metamorphosis.

The unity of the curriculum

These brief indications illustrate how the arts are keys to elementary education, while offering to the high school teacher many possibilities extending beyond the intrinsic value of the artistic activities themselves. They provide a basis for cross-disciplinary projects that encourage creativity and a synthesis of perceptions. For example, we can easily combine literature and theatre; history and theatre; biology and painting; zoology and sculpture; geometry, music, and eurythmy; foreign language and theatre. To elaborate a little upon this last possibility...

What we saw above regarding the infant's acquisition of a native language applies directly to the student learning a *second language*. Language is a whole-organism activity, with words naturally finding their embodiment not only in sound and image, but also in physical gesture. This accords well with the modern recognition that we learn language best under conditions of 'full immersion' – not translating textbook sentences with little relevance to our lives, and with a premature emphasis upon correct grammar over expressive



content, but rather through interested engagement with people and our surroundings. Literature, dramatic presentations and improvisation are thus important not only for learning about the foreign society and culture, but also for learning the language itself.

It is important to understand that these various interdisciplinary projects do not connect incommensurate elements. They are means for bringing the Logos of the world into conversation with itself – a conversation that takes place within the soul of the student and teacher. This in no way diminishes the scientific side of education, but brings feeling and experience into it, thereby making it more intense and qualitative rather than abstract and logical. Such feeling and intensity are always aspects of artistic experience – and they can be cultivated throughout the curriculum.

Each subject can, in its own way, become a revelation of the entire world. That is, the world can be apprehended through its colours, or its musical harmonies, or its geometrical and mathematical patterns, or its historical and evolutionary transformations. For example, there are different qualities of sound that belong to every aspect of the world – streams and oceans,



mountains, clouds, human suffering. Students can learn to penetrate the nature of these phenomena from the direction of sound, as well as from many other directions.

Everything said here presupposes that students are not just sitting in the classroom, but are fully immersed in the natural and social world around them. The other side of an emphasis upon the artistic element of experience must be the discipline of observation in the Goethean sense (Rozenzeller and Talbott, 2005). The crucial thing is that in every subject the *whole being* of the student should participate. Getting to know nature should not only be a matter of gaining a body of knowledge along with survival skills, but also of learning receptivity to the beings and qualities of nature and developing a moral response. Likewise, history should bring not only an intellectual understanding of events and of the overall evolutionary process; it should also engender compassion for the deeds and person of historical characters, along with a sense of personal responsibility within the current historical context.

The unity of the curriculum arises, not only because of the unity of the world itself, but also because the teacher approaches every subject through the gestural language that is the language of the world's 'becoming' – a language uniting imagination, feeling, and movement with the sensitivity of the artist and the systematic rigor of the scientist. In this way, the full being of the student is engaged, keeping alive the intensity of the infant's original conversation with the world,

but now with a different balance between giving and receiving. Problems in a student's behaviour and learning typically mean that this conversation has somewhere been blocked.

To speak about combining the sensitivity of the artist and the rigor of the scientist is, it might seem, to place nearly impossible demands upon the teacher. But precisely because the language she has learned is one of becoming, or transformation, she can accept herself and her classroom as works in progress. This is the only way to strive for excellence without falling into despair over imperfection, on the one hand, or swelling with arrogance through over-identification with the high ideals of Waldorf education on the other hand.

Both the despair and the arrogance work against a spirit of true excellence and artistry. The result of abandoning a living and realistic pursuit of excellence is that we tend to encourage in the student either dead intellectualism or a state of naive innocence. Along a healthier path, by contrast, the crucial thing is how the forces of will and feeling are transformed into a wisdom still alive with these forces. When this is happening properly, the student can be pushed to the furthest edge of his current powers.

A problem with many young people today is that they are not aware of the possibilities of striving. We are too concerned not to overwhelm them. Every production has to be pronounced 'good'. This may contribute to the passivity of so many high school students, who take the attitude that the world owes them a living. If everything they do is always perfectly fine, why shouldn't they be rewarded regardless of how much they exert themselves?

Teacher training

Every teacher, you might say, is a Representative of Man for the students. She faces a group of children each of whom is a question. Her task, through art, practical skills, and moral development, is to draw out of the world of nature and spirit – and into herself as a vessel – the answer to the child's question.

We have seen that the teacher deals forever and always with the expressive word, discovering it in nature and allowing it to modulate her own expression. In a world received as Logos, the teacher's first skill must be to experience like an artist what speaks through every phenomenon – to resonate with the phenomenon – so that with her help the student, too, may hear, see, and feel its speaking, and then offer his own response. In this way the soul of the student converses with the soul of the world.

Everything we have said so far presupposes a radically different teacher training. It is no small task to learn to experience the world as word, or Logos, so that one's own words become more deeply meaningful and one can work with the world's qualities like an artist. The difficulty is evident enough in one of the unfortunate symptoms of Waldorf education today: whereas it was originally conceived as an artistic enterprise, and whereas all Waldorf schools cultivate the arts in one way or another, the artistic activities too often are not organic to the rest of the curriculum. They do not find a proper place.

The foundation for teacher training should be intense work in all the arts, but especially in literature and drama as direct bearers of the word. There is a wealth of useful exercises in, for example, the publications of Paul Matthews (*Sing Me the Creation*) and Michael Chekhov (*To the Actor: On the Technique of Acting*). The teacher must first be trained in the language of qualities that is the basis for all further work. Together with this, the training includes what you might call practical Goetheanism – perceiving the other person, perceiving nature, perceiving the condition of humanity, and enlivening these observations through art. Knowledge as such, important as it is, is not as important as an ability for vital and objective observation.

Because the school is a social organism – with relationships, for example, between teachers and students, between faculty members, and between school and parents – attention must also be given to the social and moral aspects of teacher education. Only a person prepared to engage questions of good and evil – but now on the firm foundation of objective observation and artistic creativity – can be a true educator and Representative of Man for students. The teacher must understand the universal problems of life, bringing together knowledge, creativity, and morality. So the training naturally leads to depth psychology, sociology, and philosophy.

The psychology of man ("menschenkunde") can become a book of artistic and Goethean exercises for the future teacher.

And only after all this can the teacher receive instruction in the particular subjects and the year-to-year curriculum. She will now bring to bear upon these the artistic sensitivity, the perceptiveness, and the powers of full-bodied expression previously gained. The subjects will come alive for her students because they live in her as a set of growing and metamorphosing capacities.

It is fair to say that something has gone badly wrong with this process when teachers are brought to the point of day-to-day desperation to receive nothing more than aids and helps for the next day's lessons.

Education for a global society

When, through artistic training, we learn facility with the language of qualities, we can begin to break down the barriers between disciplines. Qualities that speak in one place are found speaking also in another place. The solidity of a rock is not unrelated to solidity of human character or to the material aspect of our bodies. And the light of the sun or a candle is not unrelated to the light of the understanding mind. Through qualities the various curricular subjects gain unity and wholeness. One language speaks through all things (Rozenzeller and Talbott 2005).

Surely wholeness is the aim of all education? Not only must the student and teacher find a connection to every activity, every domain of knowledge, but the school itself as a community strives toward a wholeness where every individual finds his own place. And the school in turn can become an organ of wholeness for the entire society.

In the end, a proper education will prepare the student to become a citizen of the world. Each school would become a cultural centre within a global network – an Institute of Man with its own core learning processes, but also in dialogue with the surrounding community and larger world. There would be student and teacher exchanges and the sharing of performances – myths, legends, classics, modern works. A high point of the yearly school calendar could be a festival with concerts, performances, and exhibitions.

In this way the different cultures could move towards mutual understanding, recognising each other's unique contribution towards the global



evolution of mankind. The only way to fight a pernicious, culture-destroying, commerce-driven globalisation is by educating young people who can withstand the destructive forces. This requires schools that are artistically creative meeting-places for cultures, where different societies are no longer 'foreign', but sources of enrichment. While each culture would speak the Word with its own accent and dialect, all the accents and all the dialects would be experienced as essential to the full symphony of the Word.

In speaking of this imperative, Rudolf Steiner remarked that we need to re-awaken the spirit of language in each of the various languages in order to "counteract the tendency to separate nations from one another according to language":

We live in an age when, against everything that separates people and nations, we must consciously cultivate whatever brings about unity. Even between individuals who speak different languages, whatever divides them can be cleared away if each experiences the picture quality of his own language.

To arrive at a unifying, spiritual content (Steiner is saying here), we must attend to the "picture quality" of language. But we cannot take into ourselves the qualities of a picture except through an artistic understanding. And we can hardly restrict this project to the language classroom. After all, the significance of words is that they mean something beyond themselves. Their meanings are at the same time the meanings of our world. If we need to understand the picture qualities of words, it is because we need to understand the picture qualities of everything we speak about.

There can be no approach to spirit and truth – to that which unifies mankind – unless it is founded upon qualitative sensitivity of an artistic sort. It is precisely because the reigning notions of truth verge so severely upon the quantitative and logical extreme that the truths of science cannot flower into the diverse riches of a global culture. Instead, they congeal into little more than a common body of global (and largely commercial) technique.

In the face of these challenges, we should neither adhere strictly to tradition nor simply replace it. We must find new wineskins for old wine. The only way we can walk this middle path is by experiencing the guiding ideas of Waldorf education for ourselves. This experience cannot

be real and vital unless we have a certain freedom to do new things and make mistakes.

Nothing, after all, can tell us what a Waldorf school is. The principle of transformation governs, finally, the school itself. Every school should be a place of continuing experimentation. The institution is not an answer, but a question that must be sustained as a living inquiry: what does it mean to be a Waldorf school? This may remind us that to be a Waldorf school is to be in pursuit of meaning – and through the continual transformation of meaning to be approaching wholeness.

Vladislav Rozentuller graduated with honours in Theatre Directing from Moscow University for the Arts. He has spent many years teaching in Waldorf schools in Russia and Germany, and currently teaches at Waldorf teacher training institutes in Germany and the United States. He also conducts "language of gesture" workshops, and leads groups in the spiritual reading of texts – poetry, fairy tales, and literature. E-mail: nkalnova@taconic.net. Phone: 518-672-5106. Address: P.O. Box 32, Philmont, New York 12565.

Steve Talbott is senior researcher at The Nature Institute (<http://natureinstitute.org>) and editor of the online NetFuture newsletter, containing numerous articles about technology and education, among many other topics (<http://netfuture.org>). He is author of "The Future Does Not Compute: Transcending the Machines in Our Midst", available at: <http://natureinstitute.org/txt/st/details/fdnc.htm>.

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SE Interview with Christopher Clouder

Martyn Rawson asks Christopher Clouder...

Christopher, as founder and Chairman of the European Council for Steiner Waldorf schools you have seen many developments within the Waldorf Schools movement. Which have inspired you the most?

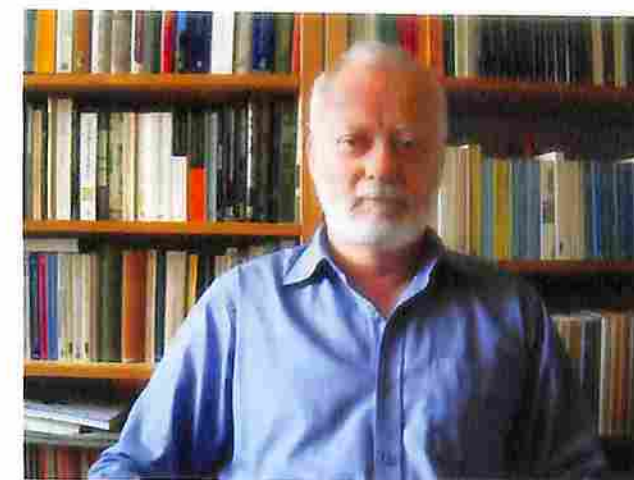
On the whole there seems to be a greater willingness to engage with the educational problems of our times. After years of growth and consolidation in Europe and the world we are reaching a point where we can look beyond the fences of our institutions. This is especially the case with early years' work on which so much depends. Seeing the dedicated work with deprived children world-wide supports a vision of pluralistic forms of Waldorf within widely diverse contexts yet striving for a common vision of humanity. Working with colleagues to explore beyond the boundaries of the past that were often exclusive in terms of gender, ethnicity, national history, religion and culture is an inspiring experience. Waldorf education reveals itself to have an extraordinary capacity to regenerate and adapt without losing its fundamental principles.

What do you see as the greatest threat to the development of Waldorf education in Europe?

Governments world-wide tend to want to increase regulation under the banner of accountability and this applies to both publicly funded and non-funded schools. The concomitant increase in bureaucracy runs the risk of stifling creativity and disempowers the teacher in reaching the individual child. There is also the competitive element that brings pressure for a too early and unnecessary start for formal learning. The result could be a retreat into a fortress mentality within our schools and that would undermine the potential of Waldorf to do much good in the world. Our co-operative and collaborative efforts, which are essential, could become submerged in the struggle for day-to-day survival.

There are few people in the schools movement who have as much teaching experience and experience of Waldorf schools in so many different cultures as you. In what ways do you think the educational challenge has changed?

The culture of childhood is fluid; one childhood is never exactly like another. We face ethical and complex problems that can appear insoluble. Within our school movement working together is a problematic area where we can no longer rely on



strong individualities to take a lead. The children need to learn in a healthy social climate and that demands much from us, including the ability to consciously evolve and, if necessary, to transform both ourselves and our schools – never an easy task, but nevertheless an important one if we are not to become peripheral and irrelevant. This is what is being asked of us by our cultural and educational environment.

What do you see as the most positive challenges to Waldorf education over the next decade?

We work increasingly with educators who come from other perspectives bringing supportive but also probing questions. Our role in a technologically-driven and economically-obsessed world is to express the essential poetic quality and spiritual nature of teaching as an art, and its value for future generations. For this we need to find the right words and an approach that contains vocational humility as well as courageous foresight.

Finally, I'd like to ask a question about the British 'home front'. As Chairman of the Steiner Schools Fellowship in Great Britain, what do you really think the Waldorf schools movement in the UK will look like in ten years' time?

Between hope and realism. We have grown very slowly in the UK over the last decade and each new venture has required an incredible amount of energy and dedication. It has not been easy to find either the finance or the teachers. However new opportunities and unexpected good-will are coming towards us in varied guises and hopefully we can summon up the will to deal with them all constructively. At times it looks like a demanding and awesome task and at others an enthralling opportunity. If we can raise ourselves to the challenge then the future could see our movement become stronger in both an inward and outward sense and accordingly our children will benefit.

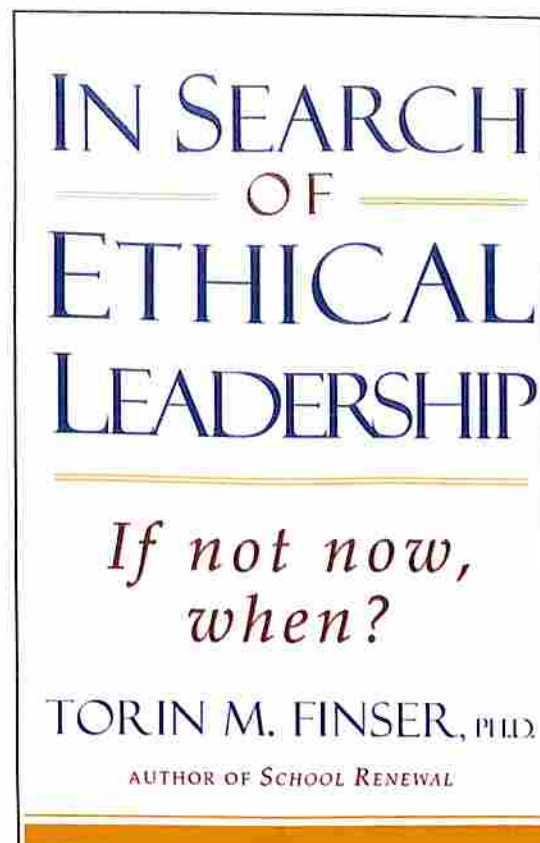
Thank you for answering our questions.

Book Reviews

Kevin Avison reviews *In Search of Ethical Leadership* by Torin Finser. Steiner Books, 2003

Torin Finser's third book will be welcomed by those who have read his previous ones; his chosen theme is an important one. Ethical leadership is certainly needed today and this urgency is reflected in the powerful examples the author chooses to illustrate this: the Bush Administration's response to the events of 9/11, Enron, WorldCom all demonstrate that the exercise of modern leadership poses moral questions on a large scale. Some readers may question whether this selection represents what is truly significant, or whether their prominence results more from the all-pervasive, self-referencing and narrowly-focused nature of modern news media. However, that is a leadership question in its own right; while the world has always held its share of sociopathic tyrants, neither the consciousness of humanity in general, nor the technological possibilities of the time, enabled Xerxes, Attila, Giovanni Borgia, or Henry VIII to wreak the scale of havoc that a Pol Pot, Hitler or a Stalin could accomplish. Captains of globalised industry in the 21st century can make decisions with the potential to ruin more lives than Alexander or Nero could have imagined. The possibility for the attitudes and misdemeanours of the powerful to be studied, or imitated, has expanded to most corners of the world.

Perhaps it is partly because of this that leadership has become one of the growth industries of the current century. Speakers, such as the historian David Starkey, can command guest-speaker slots at conferences or dinners for executives. Starkey's favoured theme involves extolling the leadership of Elizabeth I. According to him, great leaders lack a sense of humour, tend to be foul-mouthed, and lead "acutely disordered sex lives". In his opinion there is very little leadership that doesn't have a serious foundation in fear. One may wonder what practical effect his depiction of leadership has on his audiences! Meanwhile, on the same circuit, football management analogues, workshops on Shakespearean kings or conventional consultants pedalling their own prescriptions like 19th century quack doctors aided by PowerPoint.] In the field of education, the UK government has invested millions of pounds in setting up the National College of School Leadership in a striking purpose-built facility in Nottingham. Here "Distributed Leadership" is one of the newer buzzwords in an already crowded hive. OfSTED inspections, too, give particular attention to the "quality of governance and leadership" in schools, and careers can be enhanced or damaged at the stroke of a



criterion. Blackwell's Business Books shelves groan with leadership!

Surprisingly, though, few of the theorists seem to offer much characterisation of the qualities they are concerned with: leadership is what leaders do – or, in the case of schools, what an effective Head does. As with David Starkey and his anachronisms, one finds little analysis of what forms of leadership might be needed in different situations and little evidence of any developmental perspective. The usual attempts to define leadership gravitate to generalities such as (to quote OfSTED) "providing a clear sense of direction", "encouraging, motivating and inspiring the commitment from their staff". OfSTED in particular associates strong leadership with pupil achievement, but it is less clear whether the chicken of leadership or the egg of achievement guides the inspectors' judgement. Torin Finser has attempted to get under the skin of the question of leadership. His search is directed not to simple leadership but to the ethical variety and his subtitle sounds a desperate note, "If not now, when?" For me this echo of Primo Levi is unfortunate and invites comparison that, inevitably, does not flatter a book, which reads like an assembly of essays or detailed lecture notes. More importantly, Finser seems reluctant to engage with what I must call the "archaeology" of his theme. In the chapters that do try to dig into the subject he falls back on child rearing and the history of conscience as a bridge between the opposite ethical perspectives of Plato and Aristotle, but while he explores the influence of environment (the Russian "beautiful schools" movement and

sensitively-designed buildings), the role of arts in education and creative play in the early years, he appears reluctant to anchor the principles he identifies in the concrete experience that has given the breath of life to his earlier books. As a result, his depiction of the biography of Kenneth Lay (CEO of Enron) and his prosecutor tends to suggest a direct causal link between childhood and adult decision, out of keeping with Steiner's *Philosophy of Freedom*, a text that must surely be a touchstone for the subject under discussion. More obviously, the analysis of the childhoods of Lay and his prosecutor is an argument from retrospect that overlooks the obvious questions of opportunity. As Thomas Gray put it in his *Elegy on a Village Churchyard*, "Some village Hampden here may rest/Some Cromwell guiltless of his countries' blood". In an age that can use the Nazi holocaust and Stalin's gulags as reference points and where Rwanda, Bosnia and Dafor are recent or on-going, the deepest question of personal choice propels us roughly over a threshold of discomfort; we have to comprehend the incomprehensible.

How is it that 'normal' people who, but for extraordinary events, would have passed their lives in relatively obscure respectability could become mass murderers, torturers, rapists and violators of the very codes and norms they themselves depended upon in the part of their lives in which they continued to be pillars of their families and communities? An SS investigation at Auschwitz in 1943 revealed a shocking truth: some of the camp guards detailed to reception processing had been pocketing for themselves some of the most valuable effects from their victims. The Nazi hierarchy were outraged! Years after the Nuremberg trials established, albeit shakily, the principle of individual responsibility in carrying out morally repulsive orders, the question of the individual and the collective, and therefore of leadership, is no nearer to being resolved. Torin Finser's compass needle quivers towards the issue of personal leadership, but his experience as a trainer and consultant to Waldorf schools is too little evident in this book for clear bearings to be taken. Perhaps part of the problem is the episodic nature of the book, but it results in the tendency to settle on the obvious lapses of others rather than the serious challenges of the "self-administering" schools with which the author is professionally concerned. The suggestion may seem counter-intuitive, but, I feel, if Torin Finser could have limited his view to Waldorf schools alone, and had he been less focused towards the news headlines, he might have written a book with a wider relevance. The problem is compounded by lack of reference to current thinking in the philosophy, psychology or sociology of the subject, which is a serious difficulty, making the argument appear as though addressed to a narrow audience. If Rudolf Steiner was correct in suggesting that

the form of leadership in such activities as Waldorf schools is a necessary stage to the preparation of what will be needed for future human development (see *Preparing for the Sixth Epoch*), we should not consider such an emphasis merely parochial.

A developmental perspective would seek to answer that question of leadership from the point of view of a process of a social/spiritual evolution. The trends that, according to Rudolf Steiner, began to emerge in the 15th century – and which he described as the Consciousness or Spiritual Soul – are also fundamental to the narrative of leadership and attitudes towards leaders. Developmental theorists as diverse as Carol Gilligan (from the perspective of eco-feminisms), Dr. Clare Graves and the Spiral Dynamics school based on his work (Barry Cowan *et al*), Jürgen Habermas or Jane Loevinger confirm characteristic patterns of transformation in the common mind and will of humanity. There is now a huge volume of evidence from a variety of cultures that point to increasing individualism and, with it, decreasing acceptance of authority. It is not that the story of the Templars, for example, is irrelevant to the question of leadership, or that the personality of Elizabeth I, of whom David Starkey is so evidently fond, has no significance for modernity, but that the positives and negatives of those examples must be translated into a language of which those leaders were unaware and which those who choose to write about them do not speak with any fluency. No-one does yet! – for the downsides of the Spiritual Soul about which Steiner was so concerned, and the need to balance these through social renewal, calls both for a heightened form of rigorous thinking and the equivalent of a 'users' manual', a toolkit of moral technique, for people working in socially-inclined activities. Such a work will probably need to be a collaborative exercise in its own right and those who take it up can be grateful for books like *Ethical Leadership* for setting out the essential first draft of the task. I suggest that task amounts to a re-creation of *The Philosophy of Freedom* in contemporary terms. But the new work will need to be collaborative and multi-disciplinary – not simply a volume of philosophical discussion and psycho-social anthropology, but a practical guide for application involving both generalists and specialists. Such a work will have to be written in life as it forms itself, as well as in print. Steiner Waldorf schools, Camphill communities and other Anthroposophical enterprises, provided they can begin to realise the deeper intentions of their founding, will be among the potential authors. *Ethical Leadership* is to be welcomed, but its tenor is still that of a medieval map-maker indicating unexplored territory with the legend, "here be dragons". The warning serves the unwary traveller, but disciplined explorers prepared for the difficulties are now urgently needed to take up the challenge implied by the warning.

Martyn Rawson reviews *Phases of Childhood; growing in Body, Soul and Spirit* by Bernard C. J. Lievegoed. Published by Floris Books

Few followers of Rudolf Steiner have done more to bring the revolutionary and prophetic ideas of anthroposophy into the mainstream of social life than Bernard Lievegoed. In his native Holland this paediatrician, educationalist and one of the founders of the modern science of management consultancy and organisation development, was a well-known public figure decorated with prestigious honours. Building on totally new ideas by Steiner on the nature of human development, Lievegoed has given us a highly coherent framework, not simply for recognising the underlying principles of human individual, social and organisational development but practical guidance for their – there is no other word for it – development.

Lievegoed's life spanned the 20th century (born in 1905, he died in 1992) and he was immersed in its historical development. Yet he was a man well rooted in the Middle European cultural tradition of Novalis, Kant, Goethe and Schiller. This heritage gave him a profound sense of the spiritual nature of human "consilience" which literally means 'coming together of knowledge' (the term was coined by William Whewell in his work *The Philosophy of Inductive Sciences* published in 1840). Lievegoed discovered that the principles of individual human ontological development are reflected in principles of development in social bodies and organisations. Lievegoed's achievement was to bring to exact scientific knowledge, psychological perception and an unyielding awareness of the eternal and unique nature of human spirituality. In his later works he drew on extensive knowledge of the origins of human cultures, the mystery streams that were the origins of religious experience, and was able to translate this knowledge into terms that were above all relevant to the times he lived in. He was an inspiration to two generations of young people who went on to cross-over between anthroposophy and mainstream stream social and economic life. He was a father figure – some who knew him personally say he was occasionally patriarchal and aristocratic (a common weakness of genius) and above all inspirational.

This book has been a standard text since its publication in 1946 and has provided student teachers, therapists, parents and many others with a basic overview of child development from an anthroposophical perspective. I have been saying for years it should be updated and now this has happened. That is to be welcomed and this book is quite simply a 'must'.



PHASES OF CHILDHOOD

Growing in Body, Soul and Spirit

Bernard C J Lievegoed

Having said that, I have to take the publishers to task for not investing in a really modern revision. Firstly there are no references and no bibliography. This does not stop the book being a great help to the reader but it is a major limitation on the book's validity for students. Throughout the text there are references to the results of scientific studies ("Zeller described..." , "Since Stratz carried out pioneering studies..." , "Rudolf Steiner pointed out..."), to other works, to philosophers and other relevant and interesting figures, without a single reference or even the correct titles. Some of these people are so well known we can find their works ourselves, though in the case of Steiner, the task would be daunting since there are over 300 volumes... The 'updating' has overlooked other classic pioneers of child development such as Vygotsky, Piaget, Bruner, to say nothing of the current leaders in the field such as Daniel Stern, David Elkind, Michael Tomasello, Katherine Nelson etc.

I do not wish to seem overly academic in this criticism but Lievegoed himself was scrupulous in his other major works and he continually sets out to integrate the ideas of anthroposophy with those of the developmental sciences and culture in general.

There are also some very curious expressions. On page 82, in a summary of the chapter covering the period from birth to the change of teeth, we read that from five and a half years old the child is ready for school. Perhaps the text doesn't really mean that literally but the reader could easily get this impression. Given the huge significance of the concept of school readiness in our times and the pressures on early child development, this loose formulation is simply careless.

The central issue of the changing and changed circumstances of child development today could have been more prominent in the book. The whole issue of the dissociation of biological, emotional and spiritual maturation, which really is the dominant theme in education and among school doctors today, is barely referred to. On page 192 there is reference to the important topic of the tension between the processes of individualisation and heredity. We read that, "In the last century physical maturity has come at a considerably earlier age..." . There then follows scant discussion of this hugely important phenomenon. For a theory that proposes archetypal developmental phases and the correlation of biological, psychological and spiritual development, the fact that these processes are manifestly accelerating in their disassociation should be the first point to address. The fact that the concept of school readiness – which is a key marker for integrated development – has been scientifically marginalised and replaced with the concept of school competence should be addressed. The approach advocated by Lievegoed is the strongest argument against dropping the concept of maturity and unfortunately is not well presented here.

My criticism of this book is that an opportunity has been missed to reinforce the brilliant analysis that Lievegoed brought to the subject. Today more than ever, in the light of the Decade of the Brain, the Human Genome Project, modern studies on gender, on the key role of imitation and emulation, on language development and, above all, the discovery of the science of salutogenesis – the science of the creation of health-giving processes – Lievegoed's approach could have been shown to be more relevant than ever.

The task for anthroposophy today is to interpret the results of contemporary science and cultural endeavour in ways that help us to recognise the human spirit – because we need that more than ever.

There is much in this book that is inspirational and highly relevant, such as simple statements like; "The spiritual structure of the developing child depends to a large extent on whether the mother tongue is spoken well or badly..." . In this way the child is rooted in the spiritual structures common

to a people, and saved from greedily grasping later at artificial national passions..." . This simple idea alone would be worthy of a PhD or, better still, a language strategy in the National Curriculum. Perhaps Floris Books will take the hint and commission a follow up work!

Arthur Edwards, editor of *Talking Economics Monthly*, which brings an associative perspective to economic events (www.talkingeconomics.com), reviews *Freeing the Circling Stars – Prefunded Education* by Dr. Christopher Houghton Budd, New Economy Publications, 2004

In the preface to *Freeing the Circling Stars*, Christopher Houghton Budd makes the radical contention that those who fund education should not thereby also determine its content. In his view, the function of finance is merely to provide the 'chalice' for pedagogy, and while education must needs be 'paid for', it should not however be 'bought'. Such a premise will provoke questions: For example, how is one to steer between the Scylla of state and the Charybdis* of private funding? Who, if not the piper, should call the tune? What is the proper relationship of finance to education?

This book is a handbook for those wishing to travel the path into a landscape in which education is provided, not with a backward look at those who put the money in the teachers' hands, but for the benefit of the children, enabling them to grow together into adults capable of freely realising their future. The book's title indicates the crucial role of the teacher in enabling children to meet one another through their schooling, in a way that is not determined through economic considerations but out of the logic of life's circumstances.

Arguing from first principles, Christopher Houghton Budd examines educational financing and describes the path that must be taken if "... a powerful ideal is to become a concrete practicality". Teachers taking responsibility for running education must do so right into its financial aspect. The effect of this would be that teachers would cease to be mere functionaries, whether of government ministers or wealthy parents, and they would have their own hands on the financial reins. Through addressing the financial questions, the issues of curriculum choice, pedagogical autonomy and social inclusion can also be constructively addressed.

The borderlines of the current crisis are well known – state funded education comes with strings attached which deaden cultural freedom; privately funded education tends either to impoverish the teachers (and the fabric of the school) or

to pander to the concerns of those who can afford to make their wishes count. Christopher Houghton Budd advocates pre-funded education as a way of releasing education from its financial determination. Effectively this means creating channels by which finance can flow into education without influencing its content. Pre-funded education allows the teachers to determine the pedagogical content of the curricula and the children to attend schools based on their parents' choice, but not on their financial situation. If teachers were to organise themselves on an independent, professional basis to attract such funding to their schools, they would find themselves freed from both parental and governmental 'customers'. In order to bring this about they would need structures in place that enable them to invoice their costs realistically (i.e. paying themselves properly), while at the same time remaining in the driving seat. The question of to whom such an invoice should be sent is, of course, a crucial one, but the fact that the invoice exists and must be paid for is indisputable. The financial amount of the invoice is secondary.

Yet just here there is a threshold, which must indeed be crossed, if the situation of contemporary education is to improve. One cannot expect to understand the economics of educational provision at the level of sophistication needed only to understand the economics of buying bread. Teachers may need to take not only themselves but, effectively, the whole of society across this threshold with them if they are to ensure that the question of financing education is sufficiently met. For the issue of education affects the whole of society, and correspondingly, society, in its attitude to education, allows for what it knows: for better or worse. If the change does come from educators, the effect on society will, in turn, allow for further change, but left to itself society will tend only to replicate the thoughts and institutions with which it is familiar, however inadequate. The universal benefit brought by education is sometimes alluded to by pointing out that the sun, when it shines, does not only shine on one man; perhaps one should also point out that, when it rains, everyone gets wet. The financing of education must not be made to depend on un-thought conventions. True practicality begins with clear thinking. Pioneering examples prepare the way for rational strategies. One must find the courage to act and thereby allow the thought implicit in one's actions to become visible to others. To blame policy-makers for their unwillingness to consider what to them is unfamiliar is a lame excuse. The responsibility lies with those who do not first need to see an example, but are able to grasp the idea in thought. Public opinion, if it is to follow, will do so only after the event.

What for one person is a challenging threshold, is a stumbling block for the next. In order to change a situation one must develop the capacity to rethink it, to separate what is pertinent from what is not. Only then can one countenance a new perspective. To think the impossible is the necessary preliminary to enacting it. For some, the practicability of pre-funding education may be that very stumbling block, while for others the fact one can think it through should serve as the necessary stimulus to make it happen.

Christopher Houghton Budd's book is not so much a how-to guide, but a grounding in education, giving both historical context and ideal content. The book opens with the view of philosopher John Stuart Mill, proposing the idea that the state should require education without taking it upon itself to direct it. He then shows that to understand the financing of education one must realise that education is 'the great consumer' but consumption is no less a thing than production. Economics depends on the balance of one with the other. Although education consumes resources, it creates resourcefulness, which is the most important factor in production. The fact that these ideas are not sufficiently present in the world does not invalidate them, nor does the fact that society at large fails to embrace them, take away the onus of responsibility from those who recognise their logic.

The issues surrounding the relationship of finance to education are complex. Dr. Houghton Budd uses the first section of the book to bring clarity into the thinking around the debate; he then goes on to describe what he understands as an archetypal model of a pre-funded school; and finally he outlines structures and strategies for the implementation of such a model.

As a practical guide this book offers some help in sketching out what a pre-funded school would look like. The relationship between the functions of teacher, administrator, fund-raiser, promoter and property manager is drawn out. Financial flows are described between those functions and the need for differentiated budgets is shown. A strategy for establishing a revenue fund is described and the potential benefits of skilfully managing increasing property values is outlined.

Although Dr. Houghton Budd, in his epilogue, laments the absence of citable examples of this approach, just such a one was given earlier this year on national radio in the UK. A small primary school, Peaslake in Surrey, offers pre-funded education, which is independent of state subsidy and free to those who attend. The school was established on a financially independent basis

because the teachers wished to work free from state interference, although they do choose to follow the national curriculum. It began as a school in someone's living room and was able to grow through dedicated fund-raising and local support. Many people living nearby pay voluntary monthly subscriptions to enable the school to stay open, not because they are parents (most aren't) but because they recognise the benefit that the school brings.

One theme, which is hinted at but not really developed (perhaps because it is a country-specific one), is the issue of double taxation. Parents paying fees are effectively paying an education tax twice over. A strong argument could surely be made that donations to revenue funds (leaving aside for the moment the issue of whether these are to be classified as gifts or fees) ought to be tax deductible items. This issue might be the chink which opens apart the whole debate at a societal level.

It is to be hoped that the crisis facing independent and state schools alike should be sufficient cause to invest in this approach, which, seemingly, lacks only our will to implement it. This is easily said, yet in bringing our wills to expression we face our greatest challenge. This book will not by itself change anything, but it does at least provide key thoughts which have, apparently, until now been missing from the debate and perhaps the presence of such thoughts will enable teachers to better chart the waters that lie ahead.

For information about New Economy Publications go to www.cfae.biz or call 00 44 (0)1227 738207.

* Scylla and Charybdis: Two dangers or extremes such that one can be avoided only by approaching the other. These were names of a monster and a whirlpool in Greek mythology. (The Pocket Oxford Dictionary, 1992.)

Caroline Ritchie reviews *Jake and Suzie Stories* by Brigitte Marking, illustrated by Rebecca Bale. Published by Michael Hall School/IPF

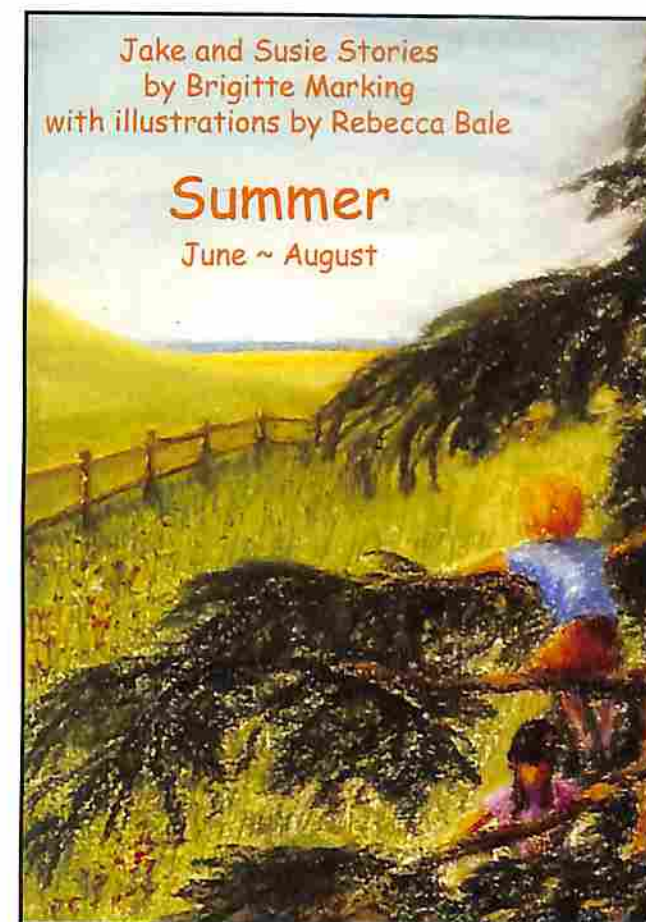
As Steiner Waldorf teachers we are always on the look-out for age appropriate reading material that is beautifully illustrated and will capture the imagination of our children.

The Jake and Suzie stories certainly fit these criteria. Brigitte Marking's text has plenty of repetition to give confidence to the emerging reader, and the contents of the stories reflect the seasonal activities and festivals of the year. Extracts of seasonal songs that are sung by Jake

and Suzie provide familiar text for the children, and the teacher may well choose to ensure that the children have actually sung the songs in Class before they meet them in the books. Some of the stories contain number questions for the reader to answer which can provide a talking point if the books are used with small groups of children. The layout of the text is clear with indented lines to help the reader not to get lost and with no more than half a dozen words to a line. This format gives a poetic feel to each page, and there is a delightful touch in the July story where the text takes the shape of the tree that is being described.

Rebecca Bale's illustrations are beautiful. Each book has a full colour cover, and each page carries a motif of Jake and Suzie's Grandparents' house and garden as it would be in each season. Alongside this there are small illustrations throughout the book that reflect the text and give additional clues for the reader. The blue print on a cream coloured page is gentle on the eye and is aesthetically pleasing.

These books will be a very appropriate addition to the Class Two library and will be excellent for individual and small group reading. My only concern though is the inclusion on the page giving bibliographical detail the statement "reading age 8 years". Not only is this unnecessary but it may discourage an older reader.



A New Approach to Teaching English in the Elementary School

By Dr Christoph Jaffke

From April to June this year, Dr Christoph Jaffke, for many years a teacher of English in a Waldorf School in Stuttgart, carried out an interesting project with Grade 1 of Hara Elementary School in Higashi-Hiroshima.



Having attended a number of English lessons in Japanese elementary schools, I decided to ask for permission to teach a newly-started Grade 1, based on the method that is used in Steiner Schools worldwide and which he had worked with for over 30 years in a Steiner School in Stuttgart/Germany. According to the necessities of the children's curriculum and the time-table, it was only possible to have sessions with the students after their regular school time had finished. The children could only be taught for about 10 minutes a day.

The teaching was done according to Steiner's indications given to teachers at the start of Waldorf Education in Stuttgart 86 years ago (in 1919). From the very first moment, the children were only spoken to in English. The focus of learning during these 33 sessions was on the human body and the objects in the classroom. In the first few sessions, many children only joined in the movements of the action rhymes that were being learned, but in the course of the weeks all the 25 children in the class joined *speaking* in chorus. In the course of time, most children were able to take active part in little guessing games and in singing-games. Several children could recite long action rhymes alone in front of the class without any help from the teacher.

The astonishing progress that the children made in only 33 very short sessions seems to confirm the experience of Steiner Education in countries around the world:

- Age 6/7, the beginning of elementary education, is the ideal time for children to start foreign

language learning: The children are still totally uninhibited, spontaneous, curious and highly capable of imitating speech sounds precisely. Their speech organs are still flexible enough to adapt to the new sounds.

- Children respond well to everything that involves moving in the classroom.
- A rich language input, preferably strongly rhythmical language and a choice of formulaic expressions (chunks), enable the children to grasp the new language sounds and their meaning easily. This way they can use English in communicative situations, above all in games, from very early on.
- When the focus is on meaningful actions learning takes place incidentally – largely without being conscious of any effort – similar to the way the child learnt his first language.
- It is essential that the children learn to understand directly. Translation should be avoided by all means as it prevents the children from developing the faculty to understand directly.

Dr Jaffke was a visiting professor at the Department of Learning Science at Hiroshima University from January to June 2005. He can be contacted at: c.jaffke@email.de

Hiroshima Kids Sample Steiner Approach

Report in The Daily Yomiyori, Japan, 14th June 2005

By Midori Matsuzawa, Staff Writer

When first-grade students at Hara Primary School took an extracurricular class one recent afternoon, one child announced to his classmates in Japanese, "Let's start studying English".

However, in the following 15 minutes, the children did not seem to be aware that they were studying. Instead, they just enjoyed various play activities with Christoph Jaffke, an education expert from Germany.

The class was an example of Steiner education, an alternative approach to education of which Jaffke is a proponent. "Who would like to sing?" Jaffke said as he started a recent lesson, asking several students to stand first to sing together. "Good morning, good morning, good morning to you", they sang softly. "Good morning, good morning and how do you do?"

The chorus soon got louder as some of the seated children spontaneously joined in before the instructor eventually involved all the students, numbering more than 20.

The children were very responsive, quickly imitating almost every word and movement presented by their instructor. Jaffke, 66, offered several different activities when the song ended. In one, the children recited a poem:

These are my eyes/And these are my toes/These are my fingers/And this is my nose/These are my knees/And this is my head/And when I sleep/I am in bed/My arms and legs/I use to play – /A happy child/the whole long day.

While reciting the verse, the children touched each mentioned body part and made other set gestures. This was a good example of "the direct method" – learning by matching words in the target language with actual physical objects – favoured by Steiner education.

In his lessons, the instructor tried to expose his students to the poetic aspects of language – rhythm and rhyme – because this is what he regards as "the ideal vehicle" for learning a language, while at the same time using a lot of movement to allow the children to learn in a way "involving the whole of the human being".

Although Jaffke's visit to Hara Primary School occurred just after gym class on this particular day, the first-grade students were focused throughout the lesson, showing they are already used to Jaffke's approach as they have taken his lessons almost every day since mid-April.

Homeroom teacher Toyoko Kimoto has noticed a great difference between Jaffke's English lessons and those she did before at the school, which began offering English lessons a few years ago.

"We tend to teach English through letters by, for example, posting cards with spelling on the blackboard", the 43-year-old teacher said. In Jaffke's lesson, in contrast, "the children enjoy the sounds of English through various games and songs. I've found that approach effective in helping children become curious about the language".

Jaffke has been in Japan for six months as a visiting professor at Hiroshima University. The first-grade students will have had more than 30 lessons from him by the end of his stay later this month.

Steiner education – also called Waldorf education – was devised in 1919 in Stuttgart, Germany, by Austrian educator Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925). It covers 12 years of education corresponding to the primary through high school curriculums in Japan and combines academic subjects with artistic and practical activities.

The visiting professor is an expert on English-





"It is very important to start (learning foreign languages) at this age – not later – because the faculty of imitation goes down quite rapidly when you start in junior high school", Jaffke said. If students start this late, he said, "they never get a good pronunciation". According to the expert, one of the main purposes of foreign-language teaching in Steiner education is to help children gain a balanced development of the mind.

"Steiner was convinced that every language is 'one-sided', or limited", he said, adding that children should go beyond the limits of their mother tongues "at the right time", gaining new perspectives of the world through other languages.

language education for students in the early years at Steiner schools. A Steiner school graduate, Jaffke taught at one Steiner school in Stuttgart for more than three decades and still works at the teacher-training college in the city.

Jaffke said important elements of foreign-language teaching under Steiner education include emphasising a lot of formulaic phrases, or chunks of speech. Students learn such expressions as "Is he/she standing/sitting...?" or "Have you taken off/turned up...?" through various games that involve repeating them over and over.

Jaffke brought a British penny to Hara Primary School for a game in which he asked the students to guess in which hand the coin was hidden. Steiner education requires teachers to present their students 'authentic' materials that come from places where the target language is spoken.

At Steiner schools, 'unconscious learning' through various activities lasts for the first few years. The children start bringing unconscious use of grammar to the level of consciousness at the end of the fourth grade.

"Because they were emotionally involved (in the activities so far)", the Steiner education expert said, "they are much faster able to find the rules".

In addition, this is also the grade when the children start writing the foreign language before being given their first readers, he added.

Since its foundation nearly 90 years ago, Steiner education has been teaching two foreign languages when children enter its schools at age 6.

"The right time is not when the child is 2 or 3 because then he doesn't acquire a firm standing in one language", Jaffke stressed. "The child should first really be at home in one language".

Foreign-language teaching at Steiner education is opposed to using media tools, such as CDs and computers, at the beginning stage. Children should have living human beings as their role models, who should speak the target language all the time, Jaffke stressed.

However, the visiting professor found "the main problem" in English lessons he observed at public primary schools in Japan is that "there was a lot of translation going on".

"I think the first step to change things (in Japan) would be to make it compulsory for those who want to be English teachers to study abroad" so that they can become confident in speaking the language to their students, he said.

Steiner Schools in Japan

Currently, there are about 950 Steiner schools worldwide, according to Steiner education expert Christoph Jaffke. Seven of those are in Japan: two in Kanagawa Prefecture and one each in Hokkaido and Tokyo, and Tochigi, Gifu and Kyoto prefectures, according to the Anthroposophical Society in Japan, a Tokyo-based research institution on Steiner education.

The school in Fujinocho, Kanagawa Prefecture, last year became the first Steiner institution in Japan to be accredited by the government. This was made possible when the local government was given permission by the

central government to launch a tokku, or special structural reform zone that takes advantage of specified types of deregulation.

In applying for tokku status, the Fujinocho government invited Tokyo Steiner Schule – which was the nation's first Steiner school when it opened in 1987 – to move from Tokyo to the town by offering it one of the Fujinocho's primary school campuses slated for closure in March this year.

In April, Tokyo Steiner School made its new start in the town, offering more than 230 students a nine-year educational course corresponding to mainstream primary and middle school curriculums.

Except for the Fujinocho case, Steiner schools in

Japan are usually run by nonprofit organisations as unauthorised institutions whose students are registered with local public schools. There are also Saturday schools organised on Steiner precepts in many parts of the nation, according to the society.

Shigeki Kudo, an official of the organisation, pointed to the many hardships in running Steiner schools in Japan. "Teachers have to develop their own [Steiner-based] methodologies suitable in the Japanese context", he said.

He also mentioned that such schools generally receive no government subsidies. "In running the schools, they do not enjoy firm financial foundations", he said. "Thus they have to depend on the parents of their students for support".

School Readiness: Transition from Kindergarten to School – a school doctor's perspective

By Dr Bettina Lohn

Starting school is an important and life-changing event for most children. It therefore warrants careful consideration and attention.

The concept of "school readiness" is not generally accepted and recognised in mainstream education in the UK. Children commonly start school according to their chronological age, usually between 4 and 5 years of age with the legal "school duty" starting at age 5 years. In other European countries, especially in

Scandinavia, school entry is later, between the ages of 6 and 7 years. As is often assumed, this does not lead to lesser achievements – as comparative studies have shown. Nevertheless the current European trend is to favour a young school entry age. Several European countries, like Germany and Switzerland, will reduce their school entry age in the near future. This poses particular challenges for Steiner Waldorf Schools.

Learning

'Learning' is often associated with the more formalised approach of schools but children, of course, don't just start learning when they enter school – they start the minute they are born (if not before). So the question is not only when, but how children should learn appropriate to their age. At birth, the process of familiarisation with yourself, especially your body, and your immediate family and environment begins, initially requiring great care and support. Gradually the acquired abilities enable you to become increasingly independent. This process is ongoing throughout childhood and continues at least until adolescence.

When starting to attend Nursery and Kindergarten the child's horizon expands. Social interactions and challenges, including separation from home, gain increasing importance in the child's life. At this time the creative activity of play, involving a multitude of skills and the tool of imitation, is the child's method of learning. It is interesting to notice



that play is no longer something every child is able to do. Some children require instructions about how to play. Skills, which previously children used to pick up 'by osmosis', now need to be 'taught' directly. This tendency of requiring direct teaching seems to apply to an increasingly younger age and all areas of life, including social and emotional skills.

Ready for school?

The question whether a child is ready for school, is the question whether a child is developmentally mature enough, ideally on all levels, to face the challenges presented by school, relating to behaviour, social interactions and learning. If one would strictly apply this criterion, every child would have her/his own school starting date. This would present schools with an impossible task and would also have a disruptive effect on the social fabric of a group/class. However the fact that there is usually only one Class One start per year can pose problems.

In Steiner Waldorf schools the start of formal learning is delayed until the age of 6/7 years. Even then the introduction is gradual, taking the pictorial and play-orientated nature of the child's method of learning into account. The reasons for this are specific developmental changes around the age of 6/7 years, according to the concept of child development within anthroposophy. In the first 7 years of a child's life the emphasis lies on growth and development of the body. We never again grow as fast as in the first few years. The physical and ether/life body are especially involved in this, of course under the guidance of the astral/soul body and ego organisation. When approaching the age of 7 years the intense interaction between physical and ether/life body, leading to the establishment of life functions and organ maturation, reduces. One part of the ether/life body activity continues to be involved in life functions, another becomes available, is 'freed up' for other tasks. The availability of these 'free' ether/life forces is what enables a child to be 'ready' for school. These formative forces, initially engaged in body growth and organ differentiation, transform to become the forces we use for our thinking. Although this is a gradual process it reaches a decisive point at the age of 6/7 years, when the child is able to access thought processes more consciously and independently. With thinking also the memory becomes more available. The child is, as it were, no longer thinking at the cost of its bodily development. Although we are not able to observe these transformations directly, one example is the formation and emergence of the second teeth. Having been formed invisibly in the gums during

the first 7 years of life they then start to emerge – every tooth evidence of a completed process. The above-mentioned transformation of etheric/life forces, when taken seriously, puts a new slant on the issue of health care. Starting school at the right time, i.e. being able to cope with the challenges exposed to, can contribute to future health in the broadest sense.

Areas of observation

When asking about developmental maturation, the following areas should be considered:

- Social situation: social skills and interactions, relationships within the group (e.g. leader/follower), family situation, including the position of the child in the family.
- Emotional maturity and independence: self-confidence and self-esteem, presence of an emerging inner space.
- Behaviour: levels of concentration, attention, perception and listening.
- Movement: gross and fine movement skills; co-ordination (including hand/eye-co-ordination), balance, spatial awareness and relationship to the three dimensions, 'mastering' of the body, pencil grip, finger games.
- Speech and Language: development of speech sounds and clarity, understanding of language, ability of expression in language. (This is in my experience of great importance in view of the emphasis of oral teaching in Steiner Waldorf schools).
- Cognitive ability: difficulties and special abilities (e.g. gifted children).
- Drawings: representational drawing of a person, orientation on the paper/proportions, awareness and ability to copy certain shapes (e.g. square/diamond).
- Gender: the experience is that the difference of maturation between boys and girls is around six months, with the girls usually ahead. This can make a crucial difference especially when considering children, who are born between May and August, for school entry.
- Health: any known medical issues (e.g. asthma), vision and hearing, stamina (managing regular Kindergarten attendance?), energy levels, constitution, sleep- and eating habits, relationship to rhythms. Age-appropriate bodily changes, including the start of the change of teeth, lengthening of the limbs in proportion to the trunk and the emerging S shape of the spine. Also, the general roundness of the body shape disappears, like the toddler tummy, the knuckles become more prominent, the facial features more distinct etc.

Of course these areas overlap and are only crutches to understand the complexity of a child, but in my experience detailed observations are essential to enable an appropriate individual decision.

In my experience the following questions are helpful:

1. Is the child's development age-appropriate?
2. Are there any particular problems or areas of concern?

If these two questions have been answered and concerns have arisen, one can then ask how these concerns relate to the question of school readiness. Are the concerns development-related or can they be expected to accompany the child into the school years and beyond? Is the child delayed in one developmental area, which may need to be specifically addressed but not necessarily require a whole further year in the Kindergarten? Or is the child globally delayed in her/his development and a further year in the Kindergarten would give time and opportunity, maybe including additional help, for the necessary developmental steps to take place?

Issues could for instance relate to health problems, constitutional challenges or social/emotional struggles. A combination is of course possible and in reality often the case.

These questions also highlight the importance of observation and expression of concerns throughout the early years and Kindergarten. Although every child should be given the opportunity to develop in her/his own way and time, sometimes encouragement and specific help are needed. The timing of these can be crucial for the child's further development and life fulfilment. (Please see also *Steiner Education* Spring 2005).

Of course there are also potential difficulties to be considered when a child's school entry is 'delayed', i.e. entering school aged just 7 years old. One is the likelihood of an earlier puberty in comparison to their peers; another is the relatively late completion of school with its consequences for further education.

On the other hand there is a wealth of anecdotal evidence about experiences by children, who have started school too early. They often cope in

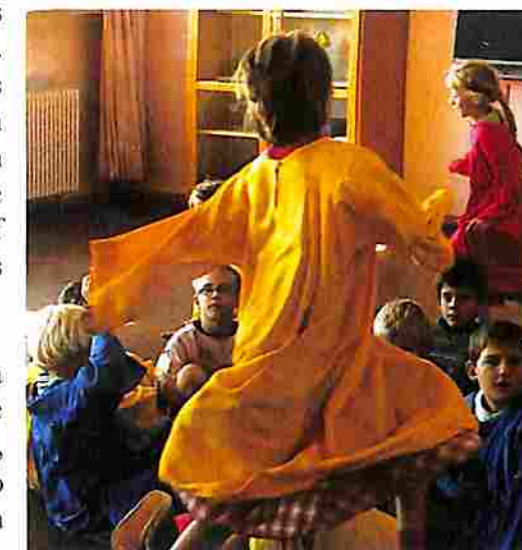
Classes One/Two, although frequently showing difficulties with their learning, but struggle when reaching Class Five/Six. This can at times lead to a transfer into the class below – the one they would have joined would they have repeated a year in Kindergarten.

A challenging decision

The challenge is the absence of a decisive and foolproof 'school readiness test'. No criterion should be taken in isolation. The process of decision-making is always a joint effort between Kindergarten teachers, school and parent/s with the advice, if available, of the school doctor or other professionals (e.g. eurythmy therapist). It is usually assumed that a child will move up to Class One if he/she will be 6 years old by April in the same year unless particular concerns arise. Children who will be 6 years old between May and August in the year of school entry will be carefully assessed and considered. Steiner Waldorf schools vary in their approaches to this, especially in situations with joint classes. The decision is always an individual one.

Although the decision about school readiness is straightforward for the majority of children, with some children it is challenging. A difference of opinion between school and parent/s may arise. On those occasions it is in my experience that it is frequently the parent/s who feel/s the child is ready to start school, but the teachers recommend a further year in the Kindergarten/Transition group. In those situations it is important to have clarity (beforehand!) about who takes the final decision. As far as I am aware, this always rests with the school. Of course every effort will be undertaken to enable a joint decision, assuming good communication between parent/s and teachers. Clarity and awareness of the decision making process in advance, transparency throughout the whole process and good communication are essential to reach a satisfactory and individually appropriate decision and do justice to every child.

I am very aware of the complexity of this theme and that this contribution is far from comprehensive. Nevertheless I hope that it will evoke questions as the expressed concepts and the wealth of people's experiences ask for further research and exploration.





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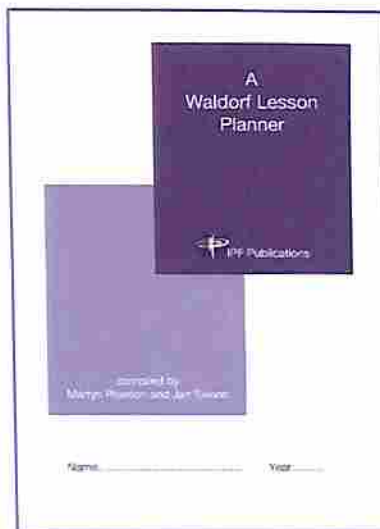
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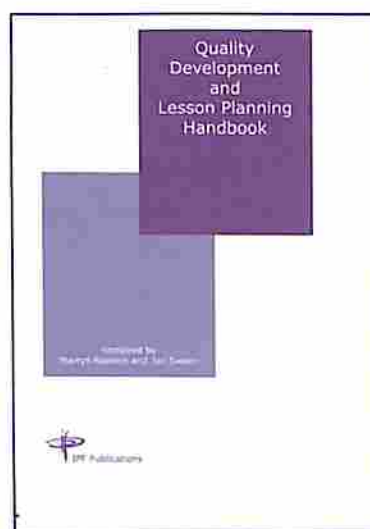
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For further details, please contact:
Faculty of Education, University of Plymouth
Douglas Avenue, Exmouth, Devon EX8 2AT
T: 0044 (0)1395 255325
christine.dowling@plymouth.ac.uk
www.plymouth.ac.uk/steinerwaldorf

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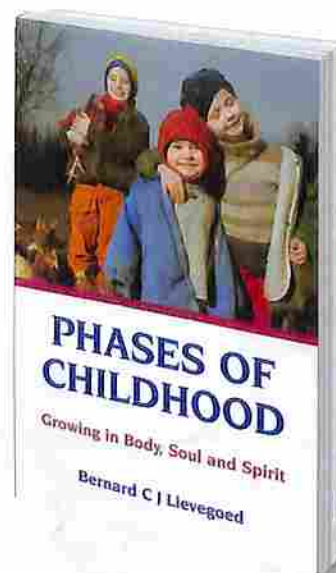
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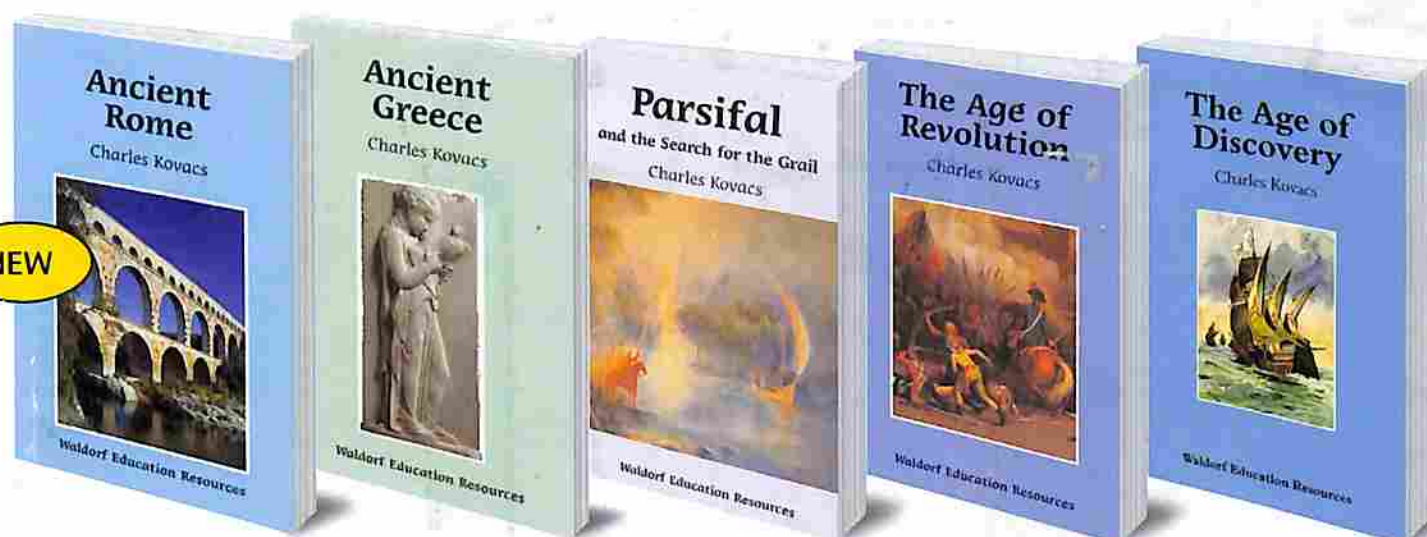
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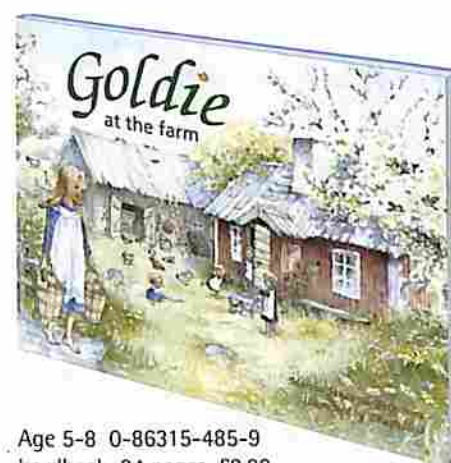
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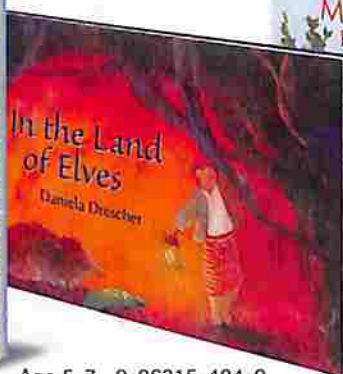
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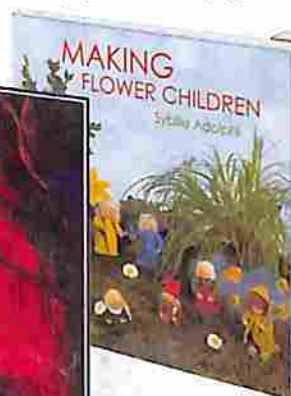
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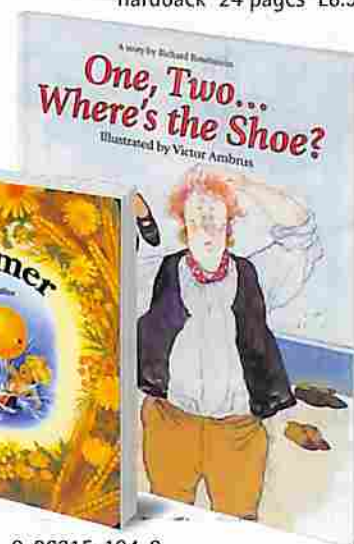
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