

From the Editor

Stephen Keith Sagarin

The Heart of the Matter

When Barfield pointed out that we need at least two words to say what we mean by “heart,” one for the muscular organ in our chests and one for courage, sympathy, and other qualities associated with feelings in and around the muscular organ. In earlier times these meanings were tightly bound. To speak of one was to speak of the other; material and immaterial meanings were virtually identical; quantity and quality were inseparable. Our present world favors material meanings and quantity over immaterial meanings and quality. Qualities are believed to be secondary characteristics, illusions, subjective perceptions, or “mere” metaphors. Several of the articles in this issue of the *Research Bulletin* address this imbalance of meaning around the word “heart,” implicitly and explicitly.

Dirk Cysarz, in research on rhythm and education, provides a subtle and provocative characterization of rhythm as a polarity or tension between mechanical repetition and motionlessness. He begins with the development of heart rate in childhood and continues with circadian rhythms (waking, sleeping cycles) and memory. Living rhythm is central to interest, learning, and memory; it is, we might say, the heart of education.

Jon McAlice, Patrice Maynard, and I examine various research studies on education pointing to the value of the “heart forces” that Waldorf schools develop in their students. McAlice examines German, Swiss, and North American studies on Waldorf school graduates, and I examine a Swedish study, all of which generally find that there need be no compromise between the qualitative goals of Waldorf education and quantifiable results. This is consistent with Barfield’s claim that quantity and quality are one; to sacrifice one is, in the end, to sacrifice the other.

McAlice ends by drawing attention to the small number of graduates who pursue training in anthroposophical endeavors. McAlice wonders if this is a sign that Waldorf schools do not do enough to demonstrate their own value to their students. Others, like Bo Dahlin in the Swedish study, are not bothered by this number, and see it as a sign of successful nest-leaving. This point of view might regard a higher number as an indication of unhealthy indoctrination.

Maynard writes on research by the Dana Foundation that validates the arts in education according to their positive effect on cognition and motivation. The arts here are not valuable in and of themselves, but as they support our prejudice toward cognition as “real” knowing. Still, education that includes the arts, even for an ulterior motive, moves closer to the heart-warmth that will allow students to find their place in the world.

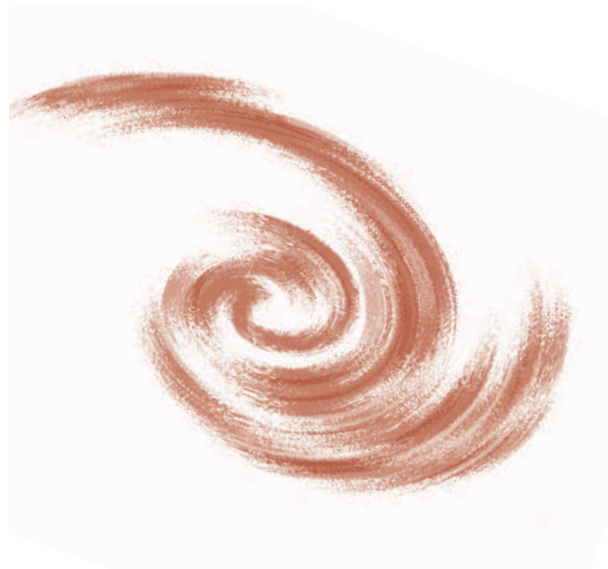
Further, David Mitchell, Douglas Gerwin, et al., and Renate Long-Breipohl have pieces here that arise from a heartfelt understanding of education and children. The first is a dissent on standardized testing, one that offers suggestions for alternative assessments; the second is a plea for the value of play for young children. High-stakes testing aims at quantifying not only education but human subjects, too. While it has its place—heart surgeons and automobile mechanics should be trained to the highest standards—standardized testing threatens to dehumanize education. Reducing or eliminating play—one result of the pressure of testing—locates the same threat in the realm of young children. Renate Long-Breipohl’s argument for the humanizing role of play aims to return the heart of childhood to children.

Barbara Schiller’s piece on aiding children in Lebanon and David Mitchell’s piece on a socially responsible and responsive school in Mannheim, Germany, extend the heart forces of this issue to sympathy brought to action in different parts of

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the world. Schiller was part of a team of doctors and teachers who worked with traumatized children, using the arts to begin to heal the emotional damage of war-torn childhoods. Mitchell visited a school for students from working-class, largely immigrant families, where the methods of Waldorf education address a population that needs support to integrate healthfully into modern Germany.

Finally, Douglas Gerwin's review of a German study of the health of Waldorf school students speaks literally about the heart: Waldorf school graduates seem to have healthier—quantifiably healthier—hearts than those who attended other schools. The heart qualities practiced by Waldorf education may, in fact, promote healthier muscular organs in our chests.



The Research Institute is seeking financial support to undertake new research. If you wish to make a contribution or are aware of an individual or a Foundation that may be interested in supporting the research of Waldorf education, please contact David Mitchell or Douglas Gerwin at:

researchinstitute@earthlink.net

or

(603) 654-2566