The Evolution of Meaning

Robert Kegan's Psychology and the Three Stages of Development in Childhood

Peter Lawton

The goal of education is not to increase the amount of knowledge but to create the possibilities for a child to invent and discover, to create [humans] capable of doing new things.
Jean Piaget

Were all instructors to realize that the quality of mental process, not the production of correct answers, is the measure of educative growth something hardly less than a revolution in teaching would be worked.
John Dewey

Psychologist Robert Kegan believes the way humans make meaning is the fundamental force underlying not only our thinking, but our identity, personality, consciousness, essence, and entire sense of self. Like Rudolf Steiner, Kegan properly places the activities of thinking and cognition within a larger context. This framing has major pedagogical implications. Exploring Kegan's work may or may not add to anthroposophical or "Waldorf" understandings of the stages of development in childhood and the consequent pedagogy, but it certainly provides additional psychological and linguistic frameworks within which to explore and discuss the work of Waldorf teachers. Kegan's analysis of the processes involved in concrete and abstract thinking, for example, and his relation of these processes to emotion and volition, have been invaluable to me in my own work as a Waldorf class teacher. In a sense, what follows represents some of the results of my own quest to understand the nature of both concrete and abstract thinking, and to explore what that understanding means for my teaching.

Waldorf teachers working with younger children are admonished not to treat material abstractly, and Waldorf teachers working with older children and even adults still endeavor to introduce abstract concepts in a living, non-abstract manner. And yet, if you observe many Waldorf classrooms, mine included, you will surely conclude that working with academic material meaningfully *and* non-abstractly remains an ongoing challenge for many teachers.

Teachers, students, parents, and administrators each make their own unique, artistic contributions to an educational mosaic. Treating academic material in a living, non-abstract manner represents a central and integral aspect of the teacher's individual, creative, and artistic contribution to an overall art of education. If bringing material in a living manner represents the "art of teaching," this article and its forthcoming second part explore an important tray in the artist's paintbox, specifically the one containing the palette of cognitive colors (i.e., thinking skills) a teacher can use to paint her lesson. To be sure, Waldorf lessons are not organized around cognitive activities, but *soul*—experiential and imaginative—activities. However, if Kegan explains anything we didn't already know, it's that the *way* we think is not only inextricably bound with how we act and feel, but also with our sense of self. Recognizing the way a child thinks (and doesn't think) is, therefore, of critical importance when planning lesson activities.

This article, the first of two exploring Robert Kegan's psychology and its relevance for Waldorf education, draws on his two major works, *The Evolving Self: Problem and Process in Human Development* (1982) and *In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life* (1994). Following a brief overview of Kegan's overarching psychological claims and the tradition out of which they proceed, the article investigates Kegan's three main stages of child development and offers comparisons to the three stages identified by Rudolf Steiner. (The correspondences will be obvious to anyone familiar with Waldorf education.) A second article will explore the development of thinking in Waldorf schools and other pedagogical implications stemming from Kegan's psychology and its animating principle—the evolution of meaning.

Robert Kegan's Psychological Propositions

Kegan (1982) asks: What if the evolution of the way humans make meaning is taken as the fundamental force underlying personality, identity, and conception of self? He asks, What if thinking is part of a larger process? Making meaning in Kegan's understanding is not solely a cognitive activity; meaning is the larger movement out of which cognition flows, encompassing physical activity (sensing, grasping), psychological activity (feeling), and social activity (or relating) (Kegan, 1982). In

the context of Steiner's *Education of the Child* (1996), cognition is a consequence of the greater activity of the human soul, concomitant with affect (feeling) and volition (willing). In both views, cognition is subject to larger processes.

In an evolutionary context—that is, in the context of meaning, development, transformation, consciousness, karma, etc.—thinking may be differentiated from thoughts, knowing from knowledge. The processes of thinking and knowing may be distinguished from the static thoughts, knowledge, and facts that form the *content* of our thinking and knowing. For example, four- and nine-year-olds both "know" not to take a cookie from the cookie jar. But the dynamic cognitive processes by which they make meaning from that knowledge, including the way they experience emotions or act upon them (or hopefully, in this case, don't act), are not just quantitatively, but *qualitatively* different. Kegan's work concerns the evolution of the dynamic process of making meaning.

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Kegan continues in the tradition of Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget (1950), who described the stage-like changes children experience in their thinking over the course of childhood. Whereas other neo-Piagetians sought to operationalize Piaget's findings into other domains (for example, Kohlberg's (1984) theory of moral development), Kegan seeks to identify a fundamental or unifying activity linking cognition, affect, and volition. Rogers (1951) called this activity *self-actualization*, Erikson (1950) called it *ego*. Albeit with a different meaning, Steiner (1996) also called it *Ego.* For Kegan, the activity that gives rise to the self is *meaning-making*. Identifying meaning as the larger motion out of which cognition flows does not preclude other, even broader contexts encompassing meaning itself—such as karma, destiny, eternal spark, etc. It does, however, provide a powerfully descriptive and practical framework for understanding how children learn.

Piaget's and his followers' psychological approaches are said to be *constructive-developmental*. *Constructivism* is the theory that humans actively construct their own understanding of reality, that reality is not passively received. And *developmentalism* is the theory that humans evolve through normative stages of growth. Steiner and Piaget, it may be argued, are the two greatest developmentalists of the twentieth century (Sagarin, 2005). Although Steiner's approach is not what is normally meant by "constructivist"[1] (the view that cognition is a purely subjective act), both mainstream constructivists and Steiner viewed cognition as requiring active participation on the part of the knower (Schieren, 2012). Both constructive and developmental approaches take dynamic rather than static views of human activity. Viewed through constructivist and developmental lenses, humans do not passively receive circumstances (Steiner, 2013); they actively, we might say, *creatively,* organize those circumstances into *meaning.* The organizing, creative act is dynamic and productive (Schieren, 2012); it's a process, a verb. For Steiner (1996), the creative act of knowing is artistic, sculptural in nature. Development is likewise a process; it is never static, even during so-called stages or periods of seeming stability (Kegan, 1982). Development is a constant process of forming and reforming (Steiner, 1996). Each successive stage in the course of development does not simply replace the former stage. Nor is the process merely additive or cumulative. Rather, the changes are transformational, metamorphic, qualitative yet incorporative. Each older, organizing principle becomes an element of the new, higher-order, organizing principle. In other words, the growth is not mechanical, but, again, sculptural. Kegan (1994) describes developmental growth as geometric, and compared it to the relationship among point, line, and plane.

Piaget viewed cognition from the "outside," we might say, as if the children with whom he conducted his elegant experiments were machines-in-boxes, and his job was to test the boxes to see what the machines inside did. He only, but stunningly, described how children of different ages think. However, cognition in its meaning-making context concerns not only how we think, but how we relate to the world, to others, and to ourselves. What Piaget *didn't* do was investigate the same cognitive processes from the "inside" (or, we might say from a Waldorf perspective, from "above"), in terms of how the act of knowing is experienced by the self, the ego, the meaning-maker. Investigating knowing and meaning-making from the "inside" represents Kegan's larger psychological project. He attempted to broaden and extend Piaget's formulations beyond the merely cognitive and into the world of identity and subjective experience, into realms of feeling and will. In doing so, Kegan came to an obvious but powerful conclusion:

we *experience* our knowing, and this experience may be the very source of our emotions. Knowing is not only epistemological, it's ontological; knowing not only relates to thinking, but to *being.* Kegan (1982) writes:

> Loss and recovery, separation and attachment, anxiety and play, depression and transformation, disintegration and coherence—all may owe their origins to the felt experience of this activity, this [meaning-making] motion to which the word "emotion" refers. I use the word "meaning" to refer to this simultaneously epistemological and ontological activity; it is about knowing and being, about the remaking and investments and commitments of the self. (p. 45)

A simple example of the relationship between cognition and emotion is the fear and stress the infant feels upon separation from her mother. This stress is perhaps in large part the emotional consequence of her lack of object permanence—her cognitive experience that when Mother goes around the corner, she ceases to exist. Similarly, depression and dysfunction in many adult relationships may be due in large part to the cognitive inability in a surprising number of adults to subordinate their own and their partner's needs to some third, governing principle. A simple example (that will be further explored below) of the relationship between knowing and being is the qualitatively different manner in which nine- and 16-year-olds relate to their selves; the quality of the nine-year-old's thinking leads her to experience herself as a *what,* while the 16-year-old experiences herself more as a *who.*

Constructivism is the theory that humans actively construct their own understanding of reality, that reality is not passively received.

Developmentalism is the theory that humans evolve through normative stages of growth.

As we develop, we transform our former ways of knowing, "birthing ourselves" out of realities in which we were previously embedded, realities with which we were in complete sympathy, realities we couldn't "see." Our former subjectivity/self—the way we previously made meaning—is brought "inside" our minds, where it becomes the new object of a reborn subjectivity/self, a more complex system of meaning-making. Each stage in our development represents a unique subject-object relationship with the world, an "evolutionary truce" in the way we relate to the world and out of which we construct reality and meaning (Kegan, 1982). The overall motion of development is one of separation from and objectification of the outer world in order to have a better "guarantee" of its and our own distinctiveness (Kegan, 1982). This motion can be compared to the process of *incarnation*, the gradual animation and transformation of the material body by spiritual forces. For Kegan, we transform subject to object so we can "have it" instead of being "had by it" (Kegan, 1994). This is the evolution of meaning referred to in the title of this article, and this theory of the development and growth of the mind is similar to what both Western psychology and Eastern religious traditions mean by consciousness.

Kegan's Three Stages of Development in Childhood

Kegan named his three stages of child development *independent elements, durable categories,* and *cross-categories* (1994). They are so named for the meaning-organizing principle animating each stage. Kegan's stages of development correspond to Piaget's (1969) *pre-operational*, *concrete operational*, and *formal operational* stages, and to Steiner's (1996) *willing, feeling,* and *thinking* stages. All three formulations roughly correspond to the ages of two to six (nursery/kindergarten), six to teens (elementary school), and teens and beyond (middle/high school). In his 1982 book, Kegan first referred to the three stages as *impulsive, imperial,* and *interpersonal.* Later, he replaced the somewhat confusing and charged 1982-adjectives with the more neutral 1994-principles.

The first, *independent-elements* stage begins around the age of two. Previous to that, in what Kegan (1982) called a zero or *incorporative* stage, there is no object, no world separate from the infant with which he can subjectively relate. Infants are *subject* to the outer world, to their sensory-motor activity, to sights, sounds, sensations, to the activity of their mouths and hands. The result of their sensory-motor activities—that is, reality itself—is subjective, not objective. Realities are not experienced by the infant as separate from self, as there is not yet anything experienced as a self. Of course, the infant has a self, but that self may be said to be "outside." The infant's self is *one with the world*, not yet differentiated. The eventual differentiation of self is usually accompanied by the child's first use of the word "I" (Lievegoed, 2005). The object—a world separate from

a now-constituted self—appears with the dawn of the first, *independent-elements* stage somewhere around the second year. The "pièce de résistance" marking the end of the zero stage and the beginning of the first, the *independent-elements* stage is the creation of a self, an "I" that can distinguish itself from the rest of the physical world. The two-year-old is already well on her way in a lifelong process of development commencing at the physical birth, whereby what was previously subject—in this case, *external reality itself*—is brought "inside" to become the object of a new structure of meaning-making—in this case, a differentiated self. The first, *independent-elements* stage continues the lifelong process by which "what was structure becomes content on behalf of a new structure" (Kegan, 1982, p. 85).

Kegan provides a stunning example of how qualitatively different meaning-making structures operate across the three stages of child development. He tells the story of how children of different ages were presented with a situation and were asked the same question: "All purple snakes have four legs. I am hiding a purple snake. How many legs does it have?" The stage-one preschooler answers, "My brother has a snake." The stage-two second-grader responds, "Snakes don't have legs" or, "There's no such thing as a purple snake." The stage-three adolescent squints her eyes and says, "Umm, it has four legs."

In the descriptions that follow, these answers may be helpful in illustrating the organizing principles underlying each stage. In the companion article to the present one, they may be further helpful in imagining developmentally appropriate classroom activities that take into account not only where children are in their development, but where they are going.

Stage One: The Principle of Independent Elements

In the first, *independent-elements* stage (ages two to six), the child is subject to his perceptions and impulses. Young children think with their perceptions and impulses—they *are* their perceptions and impulses. *Thinking, sense of self, subjectivity*—these are all just different words for describing structures of meaning-making. Perceptions of physical reality largely "appear" from the outside, impulses from within. The objects of the young child's meaning-making structures are the results of his own sensorimotor activities, of his reflexes and actions. Earlier in the infant's zero-stage, children *were* sensation; now in stage one, they *have* sensation. Making sense as they do through their immediate and constantly changing perceptions and impulses, their thinking is magical and illogical, their feelings are capricious and fluid, and their relationships with others are egocentric (Kegan, 1994). In his 1982 book, Kegan called this the *impulsive* stage, and the reasons for the name should be obvious. Given the magical and illogical nature of their thinking, we might say that children of this age do not yet possess intellects, that they do not actually *think*. Or, we might say a first-stage child possesses the precursor or seed of an intellect. It's all just semantics; young children think in a qualitatively unique manner.

Steiner (2004) describes the sleeping or unconscious nature of stage-one thinking. Subject as they are to outer perceptions and inner impulses, stage-one children may be said to think with their bodies. There is no "awake" or conscious mental activity standing between the physical (perceptive) or emotional (impulsive) sensation and the construction of meaning. *The sensation itself is the meaning.* Although the nature of stage-one thinking is unconscious, young children recognize themselves as distinct from the world and others. They have distinct selves. They say, "This is a horse. That is water. That is Sally. This is me." Of course they also understand that objects continue to exist even if they can't sense them (object permanence).

The transition between stages often involves a transitional object or fetish, or, as the child gets older, a transitional person or concept. Classic examples of objects marking the transition between an undifferentiated and differentiated sense of self, between the zero and first stages, are blankets, teddy bears, and dolls. The toddler shares an undifferentiated state with the fetish; child and Teddy are *one* and *one with the world.* But as the child begins to differentiate her self from the world and transition into stage one, so she begins to differentiate and objectify Teddy, which is essentially a trial run of the ultimate objectification of the self (Kegan, 1982). In a pattern that will be repeated again and again, an outer, physical motion or process is transformed and brought "inside" to become a mental- or *e*-motion.

While the stage-one child experiences his self as separate from the world, he is still subject to his perception of objects, of others, even of his self. Readers are no doubt familiar with Piaget's (1965) classic liquid/container experiment, in which young children observe liquid being poured between shorter/wider and taller/narrower containers. The stage-one child perceives the volume of a liquid to grow when poured into a taller/narrower glass. For the young child, subject to his perception, the liquid actually, magically grows! When poured back, the liquid magically shrinks!

Stage-one children experience their inner impulses in a manner similar to the way they experience outer perceptions. With regard to the affective realm, the first-stage child can distinguish the difference between an outer stimulus and an inner feeling. They understand that the joy or anger they feel is a sensation generated on their "insides," and they can distinguish between two emotions. However, they are, again, subject to or embedded in the immediate feeling or impulse. If the young, stage-one child is frustrated by a baking project gone wrong, he screams, "I hate cookies!" He has no enduring sense of self apart from his impulse in that moment to help mediate the immediate feeling (e.g., "I tend to like cookies; I just don't like *these* cookies"). The classic expression of a stage-one child in the throes of a negative impulse is the temper tantrum. The tantrum is the outer manifestation of cognition hitting a brick wall. There is no larger, enduring sense of self the child can appeal to for help in ameliorating the immediate, negative emotions. We might more truthfully say, the tantrum is having the child! In between the outer physical world and an inner psychological space is the social, interpersonal realm of self and others. With regard to the social realm, stage-one children *can* recognize that others exist separate from themselves, but they *cannot* recognize that other people have their own, unique purposes, nor can they take another person's point of view (Kegan, 1994).

The independent *elements* in the name given to first stage refer to components of the child's experience and include physical (spatial and temporal), psychological (emotional), and social (relational) elements. *The elements are independent because, for the stage-one child, they don't belong to larger sets or classes having properties or rules, which regulate membership in the respective sets.* In other words, the stage-one child cannot see the relation between two or more elements. For instance, *the stage-one child cannot distinguish between the part and the group to which the part belongs* (Kegan, 1982). In the liquid example given above, each liquid appears to the stage-one child as an independent liquid possessing qualities unique unto itself. For the stage-one child, a particular liquid does not belong to a class of liquids that are subject to laws and share properties (what in stage two will be called *durable categories*). Young, stage-one children cannot dis-embed their perception of that one liquid in that one moment and appeal to a larger category of liquids which, among other things, possesses a volume independent of perception. The independent elements relate not only to space, as with liquid, but to time. For example, *the stage-one child cannot construct a relationship between cause and effect; nor can they produce a sequence of events.*

Similarly, in the affective or social realms, the child cannot ascribe to herself or others a class or category possessing enduring characteristics. While they can imitate, pretend, and role-play (e.g., play "Mommy"), they cannot take on a formal *role* (e.g., daughter, student, peer). They have a sense of self, but that self is constantly changing based on physical and emotional conditions. Self for the young child represents something distinguished from the rest of the world more than something possessing enduring qualities (Kegan, 1994).

In the example shown, young children were asked, "How many legs does the purple snake have?" Each word in the sentence that reveals itself to our adult thinking as a class or set appears to the stage-one child as an independent element. For the stage-one child, "leg," "purple," "snake," are all independent elements possessing no properties that regulate membership in some larger class. The stage-one child can compare one snake to another, but not one snake to a class or category of snakes. The most striking element of the sentence to the child's *independent-elements* consciousness is "snake." In a stream of consciousness response that would make Jack Kerouac or Bob Dylan blush, the child is understandably excited to report that her brother has a snake.

A Developmental-Stage-Theory Disclaimer

And here, as the article begins to more explicitly explore the qualities of different stages and provides more descriptions of what children of different ages *can* and *cannot* do, some readers may begin to feel certain statements are too emphatic, or the characteristics defining each stage are too rigid. For instance, the picture of a five-year-old who *can* take on the formal role of "daughter" may spring to mind. So, here I would like to offer several caveats to consider when viewing human development through a stage-theory lens. Developmental stages represent an archetypal progression of qualitatively different ways of thinking, feeling, and relating socially, of qualitatively different ways of relating to the world and to the self. Humans, in the normal course of development, progress through universal stages of growth true for most humans. These stages are sequential and incorporative. For example, most humans develop the ability to think concretely (explored in the next section), and the ability to think concretely precedes the development of abstract thinking capabilities. However, the first boilerplate developmental caveat goes something like this: *while new capacities tend to develop sequentially and incorporate earlier abilities, development follows different timetables for each individual.* Some first-stage five-year-olds are fairly secure concrete thinkers, while some nine-year-olds may just be beginning to find their stage-two, concrete foothold. The second boilerplate caveat goes like this: *stages are dynamic, not static.* In the first, *independent-elements* stage considered above, for example, *the defining quality that gives the stage its name represents not a seven-year period of time in which the child can never distinguish the element from the class or category in which it is a member, but a period of time in which the capacity to classify and categorize is developing.* Similarly, the second, *durable-categories* stage considered next is not a seven-year period of time in which the child is completely incapable of thinking abstractly, but in which the ability to think abstractly is being incubated, as the physical body incubates in utero. Although the physical body may be said to be born at birth, it has, in fact, been developing all along. Issues that require further exploration include how, for instance, an educational environment can protect and incubate the ability to think abstractly during the second stage of development much in the same way the womb protects and incubates the growing fetus.

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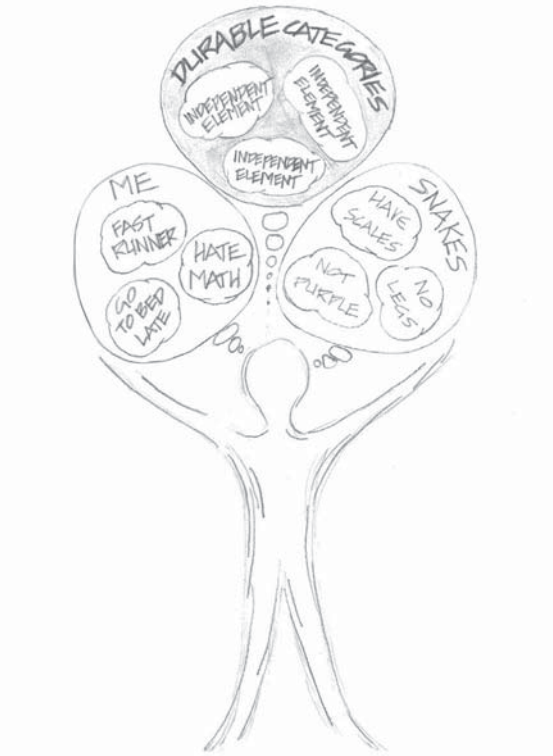
The type of description and analysis offered here takes on a style that might be uncomfortable to some, as it proceeds mainly through nominalization. Describing a developmental phenomenon tends to freeze time in order to capture and name qualities that are actually in a state of constant movement and change. For example, there really is no *point* at which a child is a concrete thinker. Children are either *in the process* of developing a more sophisticated sense of concrete reality, or they are *already using* their newfound, concrete cognitive abilities to achieve even more expanded, abstract forms of consciousness. Pinpointing where a child is developmentally in a particular moment is like calculating the speed of a falling object under the acceleration of gravity.

Stage Two: The Principle of Durable Categories

In the second, *durable-categories* stage (roughly six years to teens), perceptions and impulses move "inside" to become the new objects of cognition. Second-stage children can now "see" or think about their own perceptions. They can recognize the difference between a perception of reality and reality itself. Whereas the first-stage child peers down from the tall building and says, "Look, the people are tiny!" his older, second-stage sister says, "The people *look* tiny." The new subjects of the stage-two child—that is the new, second-stage, meaning-making structures—are enduring needs and dispositions. The nine-year-old self *is* her needs and dispositions. Needs—the objects of the child's desire—are felt by the child to exist outside her self; dispositions are felt to exist within. In the previous, *independent-elements* stage, perceptions and impulses were immediate and fleeting. Stage-two, *durable-categories* needs and dispositions now endure over time—a stage-two child's sense of self is enduring! The self in stage two is no longer felt to be a that-which-is-not-everything-else, as it did in the earlier, first-stage. The self is now felt to be personal. The second-stage child has a personality!

Steiner (2004) described the sleeping or unconscious quality of earlier, first-stage thinking. Does this mean that stage-two thinking is now awake? No, because in order for thinking to be awake and conscious, one's own thinking itself must be the object of thinking (a third-stage capability). In this second, *durable-categories* stage, the child can observe their own perceptions, not their own thinking. This gives second-stage thinking a dream-like or semi-conscious quality (Steiner, 2004).

A fully-awakened intellect is something completely untethered to the physical world, a purely mental (one might say, spiritual) activity. A "dreaming" intellect is *half* an inner, mental activity, and *half* an outer activity embedded in the physical world. I like to think of the stage-two consciousness as similar to the way our unconscious and/or semi-conscious drives play out in our dreams. We can "see" them, but we are simultaneously captured by them. We are incapable of directing some other course of action or "waking up." We do not have dreams so much as they have us. This is similar to the way reality is experienced by second-stage children. While the stage-two child continues to possess a rich and fluid imagination, concrete reality captures the conceptual aspects of the second-stage child's thinking; the stage-two intellect needs concrete examples! The world of the stage-two child has lost some of its magic, but a portion of his magical wonder is transferred to the activities of exploring and marveling at the limits of the physical world. Children of this age love to collect, keep records, and memorize facts. Another portion of the child's wonder is transferred to the exploration of allegorical, mythical, and fantastical stories, which offer concrete examples of abstract concepts.



Using Piaget's (1950) language, the second-stage child thinks *concretely* for the first time. No longer embedded in his perceptions, the second-stage child now grants the physical world its concrete and durable properties and laws. An aspect of the stage-two child's newfound concreteness is what Piaget (as cited in Kegan, 1982) calls *reversibility*. One form of reversibility is *inversion*—the ability to recognize that objects can be changed and then returned to their original condition. When the liquid is poured into the taller/narrower glass, it appears to grow. It appears to return to its original state when poured back into the shorter/wider glass. For a younger, first-stage child, the liquid magically grows and shrinks. For the second-stage child, appearing to grow and shrink is a *property* of liquid. Stage-two children think, "Liquids do that." Another form of reversibility is *reciprocity*—the ability to recognize that different factors or operations balance each other out. The liquid appears taller in the second glass, but the glass is narrower; the two factors—taller and narrower—*balance* each other out. (This ability to balance concrete factors in the mind is nothing less than the concrete precursor or seed of the future abstract ability to apply independent judgment![3]) The first-stage child wonders at the magic liquid again and again. The more worldly, stage-two child shrugs her shoulders and says, "No biggie." A world that was previously magical and labile now begins to sit still (Kegan, 1982).

Like the *independent elements* of the previous stage, *durable categories* may refer to outer reality, inner psychology, or outer-and-inner sociology. Elements in stage two are no longer independent, but *categorical*. The categories in the stage's name refer to classes or sets that have properties and are subject to laws. And what is a category but a *relation* between elements? That relation is a mental construct, if you will. Steiner said *understanding*, itself, constitutes the recognition of relationships (as cited in Schieren, 2010). The stage-two child thinks in a formal sense for the first time, or, in Piaget's (1950) language, she *operates* in the world for the first time. She is, we say in Waldorf schools, first-grade-ready! A classic Piagetian-style experiment illustrating the stage-two child's newfound cognitive ability to categorize involved beads (Langer, 1969). Stage-one and stage-two children were shown various white and black beads. Some of the white beads were plastic and some wooden, and the same for the black beads. Asked to separate the beads into black and white, each group of children quickly accomplished the task. Asked to separate the white from the wooden beads, younger, stage-one participants simply repeated the process of separating the beads into black and white. Up against the limits of their cognition, they unwittingly and blithely redefined the task. Stage-two, *durable-categories* participants, on the other hand, quickly folded their arms, said the request was ridiculous, and disparaged the experimenters. The stage-two group understood all

white, wooden beads belong to the class or category of white, wooden beads. As members of that class, they are subject to the laws of bead-ness, whiteness, and woodenness. White and wood were inseparable elements of the category. Wanting it to be otherwise did not make it so.

Durable-categories children can categorize not only spatial, but temporal elements. *They can think consequentially (ascribe cause and effect), sequence events, and relate one point in time to another.* Essentially, according to Kegan, whether regarding time or space, or outer or inner realities, the main cognitive achievement of the stage-two child is the ability to categorize, to recognize and understand the relationships connecting independent elements. *While stage-two children can think concretely, they cannot think abstractly. They cannot theorize, generalize, idealize, hypothesize, or discern overall patterns* (Kegan, 1994). They cannot perform any of these mental feats because each requires next-stage, *cross-categories* thinking. *Stage-two children can relate independent elements together into a category. What they cannot do is relate two categories*, which is an operation that will define the next stage of development. In simple terms, stage-two children cannot relate relations!

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As they grant concrete qualities to the physical world, so *durable-categories* children apply similar concreteness to the social and affective domains. Just as the bead belongs to a class, so the self and others are members of classes with durable properties. In his 1982 book, Kegan called this second stage *imperial*. The child is imperial, in Kegan's definition, because he is subject to his needs—needs constitute his sense of self. Although a stage-two, school-aged child can now ascribe properties (such as points of view) to others, he does not yet possess the cognitive ability to hold his own and another's needs in relation to each other. In other words, his own and another's needs form two distinct categories, but as yet he cannot simultaneously hold or relate the two categories. To do that would require the ability to submit the two categories to a third, superordinate, governing category—a category holding the categories. Because, in a cognitive sense, the stage-two child *is* his needs, not having them met constitutes an existential threat. As such, he can plan, strategize, negotiate, and manipulate others on behalf of his needs, and in this sense, a second-stage child may be said to imperialize others (Kegan, 1994). The second-stage child can and does maintain relationships; however, he does not do this by forming abstract obligations and expectations (Kegan, 1982). Obligations and expectations would, again, constitute third-stage, cross-categorical categories.

The *durable-categories* child's ability to take another's point of view is a milestone in the evolution of meaning-making, and it gives birth to a *role*, that of child, student, peer, friend, etc. In the cognitive equivalent of granting the liquid its own properties in the experiment described above, the second-stage child grants enduring qualities and points-of-view to others and in turn to the role itself. The literal nature of the stage-two child's concreteness makes him an ideal role-taker and rule-follower. My former fourth grade students didn't really play football so much as they argued about the rules of football!

The second-stage child has made not only her perceptions but her impulses the object of her cognitive and meaning-making activities. In a sense, she *has* her impulses. The second-stage child can therefore control and regulate her impulses in order to realize short-term goals—she can delay immediate gratification. A stage-two child can further *categorize* her *self*, which in stage two is still contained by her needs and dispositions. The younger, stage-one child, with all his "me's" and "mines" is telling the world *that* he is. The stage-two child now tells the world *what* she is (Kegan, 1982). The *durable-categories* child is a self-contained category, and she can describe many of the independent needs and dispositional elements that belong to her set or class that make up her self. For example, stage-two children can describe their abilities (e.g., "I'm a fast runner"), likes and dislikes (e.g., "I hate math"), or habits (e.g., "I go to bed late") (Kegan, 1994). One of the transitional objects bridging the zero and first stages is the teddy bear. The late-stage-zero, early-stage-one child's newfound sense of a differentiated self is rehearsed first through Teddy. Similarly, a transitional object bridging the first and second stages is the imaginary friend (Kegan, 1982). If the need or disposition is scary or negative, it can be first attributed to the imaginary friend: "Janey did it. Janey said it. Janey wanted it."

The second-stage child can ascribe concrete (physical and nonphysical), independent elements to the larger category of his self. What second-stage children *cannot* do is identify relationships between the independent elements. They cannot organize inner elements into larger groupings or themes. For instance, they cannot correlate their inner elements to describe inner motivations (e.g., "It's all about trying to get my father's attention"), biography (e.g., "My sister's anxiety has really affected me"), and other more complex self-attributions (e.g., "I'm compulsive") (Kegan, 1994). The stage-two, concrete meaning-maker cannot recognize, for instance, her inner motivations because she can only hold one level of categorization in her consciousness at a time. After all, she is already categorizing her self. The category of self already represents a relationship, albeit one tethered to the concrete world. To relate the elements of self to each other is to relate relationships, categorize categories, conceptualize a relationship independent from concrete examples of that relationship, which are all examples of next-stage, *cross-category* thinking.

When a stage-one kindergartner says, "I don't have any friends," trapped as she is in her impulses, she means that in that exact moment she doesn't have someone to play with. However, when a stage-two fourth-grader says, "I don't have any friends," he means "friendless" is an enduring element of the category of his *self*. Even worse, he may believe another element is, "Other kids don't like me." And here it may be worthwhile to pause and consider the possibility that the so-called nine-year-change,[2] at least from a cognitive perspective, may be understood to be the result of the stage-two child's newfound concreteness. This does not negate the interpretation of the psychological crisis many nine- and ten-year-olds face as the result of the influence of encroaching forces of individuation (Steiner, 1988). In fact, the move in stage two from a sense of *thatness* to a sense of *whatness* does represent a higher level of consciousness, of individuation. A cognitive analysis simply represents a different layer of interpretation. The second-stage child's ability to think concretely—to ascribe to things, other people, and themselves enduring qualities—invariably will involve triumphs and challenges, as does every new stage or evolutionary truce. Each stage is an opportunity *and* a limitation (Kegan, 1982). One obvious limitation in any stage of development concerns the lateral accumulation of knowledge, namely the lack of a knowledge-base at the outset of the stage. In this example, nine-year-olds just don't know much about friendships and having friends. A much more significant limitation, however, is developmental, and concerns not *what* nine-year-olds know, but *how* they know.

The triumph of stage-two meaning-making is the ability to categorize: to ascribe to the world, to others, and to the self, enduring qualities. The stage-two child's sense of self is categorical, a *what.* The nine-year-old self is, in a sense, closed off from the world, trapped in its category, its concrete realities. The nine-year-old categorizes his self… and that's that. He does not have a sense of self apart from the elements that constitute his *category.* He does not have a sense of self independent of his strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes, triumphs and challenges, etc. as an adult does. An adult thinks, "I have challenges, but those challenges are not *me*." Neither is the nine-year-old able to "share" or co-inhabit troubling feelings with others, as we will see a third-stage adolescent can. Second-stage concrete thinkers are closed off. This is their great cognitive achievement! However, in their categorical isolation, feelings of loneliness must be excruciating. I mentioned above that not getting their needs met poses an existential threat to stage-two, *imperial* thinkers. Negative and isolating emotions must cause a similar threat. In terms of the evolution of meaning, the nine-year-change represents the child's struggle with *whatness.*

Similar to the way in which outer physical movements are brought "inside" to become inner movements of feeling and thought, new cognitive abilities are first applied to the outer, physical world, before being applied inwardly, psychologically (Lievegoed, 2005). The reason the same negative, nine- or ten-year-old emotions are not experienced by six- and seven-year-old concrete thinkers may be because, in the outside-in motion just described, the new cognitive abilities are still in transit or "out for delivery"; they just haven't arrived "inside" yet.

The younger, stage-one child, with all his "me's" and "mines" is telling the world that he is. The stage-two child now tells the world what she is.

Returning to the four-legged, purple snake conundrum for the second time, the second-stage, *durable-categories* child understands the snake is a member of the category "snakes," containing any number of concrete properties true of all snakes. Embedded as they are in the concrete characteristics of snakes, stage-two children cannot mentally subordinate the concrete category "snakes" to some theoretical, hypothetical, or

ideal class of snakes. When asked how many legs a four-legged, purple snake has, second-stage thinkers must point out the interlocutor's mistakes: (1) Snakes don't have legs; (2) Snakes aren't purple. Older, stage-two children may additionally suck their teeth and/or roll their eyes for effect.

Stage 3: The Principle of Cross Categories

In the third, *cross-categories* stage (roughly teenage years and beyond), enduring needs and dispositions are now taken to be the objects of a new meaning-making system. The third-stage child now makes her own needs and dispositions the objects of her thinking. (It may be a stretch to imagine a fourteen-year-old looking at anything objectively! Objectivity in this sense means to make something an *object* of thinking; it doesn't necessarily mean the resulting thinking is what we as adults might describe as objective.) The new subjects or meaning-making structures of the stage-three consciousness are other people, ideas, and the emerging self. The new subjectivity—the new self—is one *co-inhabited* or shared with other people (intersubjectivity) and big ideas (idealism). The "reborn" self also forges a new relationship with *itself,* which is often called *identity* (Kegan, 1982). In other words, the stage-three self *is* its relationships with others and with itself and its big ideas. The younger, stage-two child worked from a plan, subordinating momentary impulses in service to some enduring need. The stage-three child now works from an even bigger plan, subordinating his own needs and dispositions to relationships and ideals, and to the coherence of an identity (Kegan, 1982). The self, which was previously "closed up" in stage-two, a fixed category, now becomes a more dynamic process, defined by a more reciprocal, mutually-constructed relationship with the world. Previously in stage two, the child tells the world *what* he is; the stage-three child tells the world *who* he is (Kegan, 1994). Whereas the stage-two child "liked to play soccer or paint," the stage three child becomes a "jock" or "goth," and represents membership in a friend group or in an ethos larger than themselves. The new cognitive, meaning-making triumph of stage-three children is the ability to think abstractly, to be self-reflexive not only about their thinking, but their emotions. Stage-three, *cross-categories* thinkers dis-embed from the world that *is* into a world of *what might be* (Kegan, 1994). The stage-three child can think propositionally, hypothetically, inferentially, and ideally. They can think about thinking, reason about reasoning, and have feelings about feelings (feelings squared!).

> In stage two, the child tells the world what he is; the stage-three child tells the world who he is.

In their ability to perceive or examine their own thinking, stage-three adolescents may be said to be more awake and conscious in their thinking (Steiner, 1967). (Although, as we will see, this ability is not guaranteed, and it doesn't occur immediately upon reaching adolescence.) There is a burgeoning mental space in the young adolescent between the activity itself—the observation, the desire, the experience, and increasingly the *explanation*—and the act of making meaning. There is the opening of a mental space, often called an intellect, that parents and educators may appeal to directly. However, there are several important caveats regarding the emerging intellect that will need further exploration in regards their pedagogical implications. First, according to Kegan's (1982) model, the mental space that opens is a *shared* space. Stage three thinking may be said to be awake, but because it is shared or co-constructed, it is not independent. Steiner (1967) said the possibility of independent judgment[3] isn't born until age 18 or 19, possibly even later. Second, as Steiner (1994) observed again and again, the young intellect only works properly when operating on material already explored through sensory-motor and imaginative activities (think: knowing "in your bones," or "in your heart"). This view is confirmed by research showing that reasoning skills are enhanced when applied to an existing and familiar knowledge base (Byrnes, 2005). An abstract concept, we might say, is only properly understood and applied when the learner is familiar with many *concrete instances* of the concept, both experientially in their bodies and imaginatively in their minds. Put another way, a *definition* is only properly understood when the learner is familiar with many *examples* of the definition.

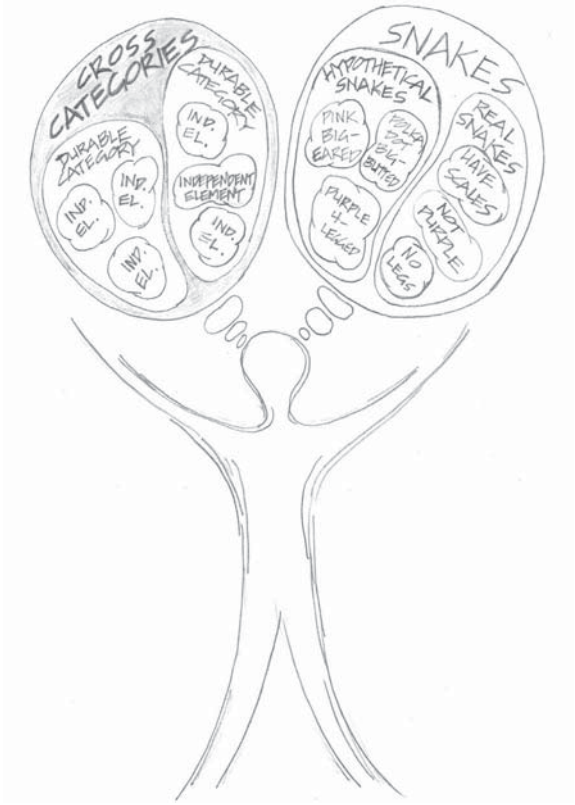
In their ability to think, adolescents may be said to be intellectually open to the world for the first time. They are, in a sense, laid bare. Opening themselves to others and to ideas, they are vulnerable to threats from the outside. The intellect is just as capable, for example, of opening itself to healthy ideologies as to harmful ones. The ability to think abstractly allows individuals to bypass other forms of knowing, to bypass what their intuition and their feelings may be telling them. One doesn't necessarily have to have any actual, corroborative experience to believe in a concept. The ability to think abstractly is the triumph of third-stage, *cross-categorical* thinking. It is also its inherent limitation.

Piaget (1950) called this third stage *formal operational.* It is *operational* because it involves thinking, and it is

formal because the operation is abstract. Younger, *concrete operational* children display different forms of reversibility in their thinking. For instance, they understood that an object can undergo changes and return to its original state—*inversion.* They further understand that an object is subject to factors that can balance each other out—*reciprocity*. The advancement of reversibility in the stage-three child is what Piaget (as cited in Kegan, 1982) called *inverse reciprocity.* Earlier, stage-two *inversion* and *reciprocity* could be understood as elements of concrete categories. For instance, a property of liquid is that it can appear shorter, then taller. In the new, stage-three formulation, the new category is *reversibility itself,* a relationship that exists independently of concrete entities such as "liquids." Once untethered from concrete examples, reversibility can be applied hypothetically or theoretically. Every conceivable relation or operation suddenly has a hypothetical inverse! This is an example of how newfound cognitive abilities allow for hypothetical, theoretical, and idealistic thinking—for truly abstract thinking. *Formal operational or abstract thinking is the ability to think about relationships or processes independent of concrete examples of the relationship or process.* In a classic experiment demonstrating this ability, Piaget (as cited in Duchesne & McMaugh, 2003) asked children of various ages where they would place a third eye. Stage-two children consistently answered: the middle of their foreheads. Stage-three children answered with a variety of creative answers, such as on the back of the head (to see what's behind them) or on the palm of their hand (to see around corners). For younger, stage-two children, after all, the category of "eyes" contains the concrete, independent element of being on the face. For stage-three children, the process of seeing is a category in and of itself, independent of foreheads, and contained wholly in the child's mind.

What the third-stage child *cannot* do, however, is "systematically produce all possible combinations of relations" or "systematically isolate variables to test hypotheses" (Kegan, 1994, p. 30). This is an important distinction that is often misunderstood and misreported. In many of Piaget's—or Piaget inspired—experiments, stage-three thinkers have been shown to try different combinations and isolate variables, but they *cannot* do this systematically (Kegan, 1982). The activities of trying different combinations and isolating variables both involve the higher-order, hypothesizing capability of stage-three thinking. However, third-stage thinkers cannot systematize these activities according to some even higher-order, more generalized organization. This would be tantamount to asking a stage-three child to perform thinking cubed!

In the first stage of *independent elements*, each individual element constituted its own category. In the second stage of *durable categories*, each category contained many independent elements, and the category itself was an idea constructed by the stage-two knower that related all the independent elements together. The name *cross categories* refers to a category that contains categories, that is, a concept that describes the relationship between relationships. *Cross-categorical* thinking subordinates durable categories to higher-order principles; it subordinates the categories to the interaction between them (Kegan, 1994). *This is a very simple, mechanical definition of what it means to think abstractly. Concrete thinking involves concepts that represent the relationship between real (physical, non-physical) elements. Abstract thinking involves concepts that describe the relationship between relationships. It is thinking completely unbound from concrete objects or examples—a purely mental activity.* The kindergartner looks down from the tall building and says, "The people are tiny!" The second-grader says, "The people *look* tiny." The high-school junior says, "Size is relative."



In his 1982 book, Kegan called this third stage *interpersonal.* The third-stage child's ability to share an inter-subjectivity with best friends, members of his clique, romantic partners, and others gives the stage

its name. Unlike the younger, stage-two child, the stage-three child is now able to simultaneously hold in consciousness the two categories of self and other, while at the same time subordinate self and other to a third category—the relationship itself. Kegan's 1982 term, however, left out two other important areas of co-subjectivity (Lewis, 2007). Not only do third-stage children "become" their interpersonal relationships, they also become their ideas. We've all experienced the enthusiastic and inflexible idealism of adolescents. This fervor and intractability is the result of the adolescent *inhabiting* or *becoming* a thought or system of thought. The stage-three child does not yet have a generalized worldview or overarching set of principles that mediates or governs new concepts. Therefore, they are subject to the ideal "du jour." The lack of a generalized or systematic worldview in the adolescent anticipates further stages of development in adulthood. In fact, Kegan described two more stages after the three of childhood.

In addition to forming new relationships with others and with ideas, stage-three children forge a new relationship with their self, which for the first time might be called *identity.* Erikson (1950) believed that beginning the long-term task of trying to establish a coherent identity was the main psychological and social task of adolescence. Earlier in the second, *independent-elements* stage, the self was a category of elements. In the third, *cross-categories* stage, the self is more of an ongoing and complex *process*, the humble beginnings of a generalization that subordinates the stage-two durable categories to a larger motion. However, similar to the way in which stage-three children do not yet have a generalized or systematic worldview that can regulate multiple big ideas, so they do not yet have a generalized or holistic sense of their self (Kegan, 1982). Stage-three children therefore try on identities as one tries on different clothing styles (the two often go hand-in-hand). Stage-one children develop the ability to differentiate themselves from the world—a *that*. Stage-two children develop a sense of self—a *what*. Stage-three children begin to develop an identity—a *who*—and they do this by first co-inhabiting other selves, ideas, and identities. Earlier, stage-two, generalized feelings of "like" and "dislike," of dispositional preference, transform in stage-three into individualized emotions. In stage two, generalized feelings, such as "likes," represent elements in the category "self." In stage three, individualized emotions such as shame or pride represent categories that contain categories, relations that relate relations (again, feelings squared!). Stage-three children begin to sense their own individuality and destiny (Steiner, 1997). Contrary to playing a discrete role like a stage-two child, stage-three children play a role of one. While the stage-two child's role is defined from without, the stage-three role is co-defined with the world and with others.

In the social realm, younger, stage-two children cannot hold their own and another's needs while simultaneously organizing them in accordance with a higher principle. Stage-three children can now subordinate their own and another's needs to shared feelings, agreements, and expectations (Kegan, 1994). They *cannot*, though, construct a generalized system of thought governing all relationships. The *cross-categories* children do not have relationships so much as they *are* their relationships. In the affective and interpersonal realms of shared feelings, agreements, and expectations, the stage-three self internalizes another's point of view in what becomes the construction of a shared self. The resulting emotions are experienced as shared rather than transactional. *This co-construction initiates a new pathway for developing empathy and sharing at a more intimate level.* The relationship, however, is not intimate in the way we understand intimacy as adults, because, as Kegan (1982) points out, "there is no self to share with another; instead the other is required to bring the self into being" (p. 97). In other words, the third-stage child cannot distinguish her self from her relationships. In a sense, the besties and BFFs of adolescence, and even some romantic relationships, are transitional objects in the grand tradition of teddies and imaginary friends. The bestie with whom the third-stage child shares a subjectivity is a practice run. The bestie provides the training ground for the stage-three child to develop the future ability to inhabit a shared space while maintaining his own subjectivity and the sense of a coherent, independent identity (Kegan, 1994), which is a hallmark of stage-four thinking! In the same way that he cannot generalize a system governing all relationships, the *cross-categories* thinker does not experience himself as the writer of the drama of his life so much as the theater in which the drama is acted out (Kegan, 1994).

In the affective and interpersonal realms of shared feelings, agreements, and expectations, the stage-three self internalizes another's point of view in what becomes the construction of a shared self.

Every new stage of development involves a new cognitive opportunity and limitation. And each stage entails its own inner crisis, the result of the expression of the new opportunity hitting the brick wall of limitation. The stage-two, *durable-categories* crisis described above was the nine-year-change. Interpreted through the lens of the evolution of meaning, the crisis was not brought about by a new way of thinking (that happened more around the age of six). It was a result of the new ability to think concretely being turned inwardly and being aimed at the self, where the cognitive limitation was felt most acutely. What we typically describe as some of the more negative aspects of adolescent behavior—insecurity, moodiness, impulsivity, even dangerous behavior—can certainly be interpreted as facets of a bigger, messier, nine-year-change: *the teenager-change*! That is to say, negative adolescent behaviors may be the result of a new, stage-three cognitive crisis. On the contrary, the classic cocktail party or parking lot explanation for all manner of negative adolescent behaviors is *raging hormones*. However, research and common sense has shown this explanation to be highly overblown (Dahl, 2003). Moreover, the "raging hormone" theory has little predictive, prescriptive, or practical utility. I mean, what are we supposed to do with a "hormonal" teenager? Lock the door and throw away the key? Give them old-person hormones?

The *cross-categories* thinker does not experience himself as the writer of the drama of his life so much as the theater in which the drama is acted out.

Adolescent cognitive changes go much further than raging hormones in explaining teenage emotions and behaviors. Interpreting adolescent behavior through the lens of cognitive changes also has greater prescriptive power. It is probably the case that many adolescents are having some manner of *teenager-change,* the inevitable result of cognitive changes, of the newfound ability to lose themselves in others or in big ideas, or to try on and discard different identities. However, it may be equally true and descriptive that the same adolescent behaviors—moodiness, impulsivity, etc.—can be explained by the realization that *many adolescents are still thinking in stage-two, durable categories. Many, especially younger, adolescents, are as yet incapable of third-stage, abstract thinking.* And the crisis for these adolescents is not an inner, psychological battle fought between their new ability and its own, inherent limitation, but a societal or educational battle fought between the child and the outer world. The challenges faced by many, especially younger, adolescents, may, in fact, be the result of inappropriate challenges and expectations placed upon them by families, schools, and society at large, in addition to the simultaneous granting of freedoms and access to resources that they can't handle. For instance, adolescent feelings of invulnerability and the resulting delusional behaviors are usually attributed to bad stage-three thinking, that is to say, to the idea that stage-three thinkers *can* simultaneously think about their future and the stupid things they want to do in the moment; they're just not that good at it. This may be the case for some. Certainly, stage-three thinkers might not make the best decisions precisely because of their intersubjectivity, their sense of a shared self, which leaves them particularly susceptible to peer pressure. An equally possible explanation, however, is that these adolescents are still cognitively at stage two, and are incapable of submitting their needs in the moment and in some future time to a governing principle that defines a relationship between the two, to a principle that makes sense of the need to drink A LOT with friends tonight, and the need to do well on the English exam tomorrow morning.

I allude to stage-four capabilities above. Studies in the adult population have shown that a majority of adults do not consistently demonstrate stage-three thinking (Crain, 2005). Certainly not all of them are able to fully realize stage-three capabilities the instant they reach puberty, but many never do. If a number of Piagetian-style experiments, including Kegan's own (1994), are to be believed, *we should view the third, cross-categories stage as a ten-year phase of gradual, gentle transformation from second- to third-stage thinking.* Steiner (1967) said powers of judgment[3] are not born until the eighteenth or nineteenth year. In fact, Steiner (1994) claimed that adolescents are not really able to think independently until around age twenty-one.

To return to the purple, four-legged snake conundrum for the last time, to the stage-one preschooler, every snake was a category unto itself, an independent element. Two snakes may be compared to each other, but not to a class of snakes. A purple, four-legged snake, therefore, may be compared to "my brother's snake." To the stage-two grade-schooler, snakes belong to a larger category of all snakes, and legs are not elements of the class. Therefore, "There's no such thing as a snake with legs." To the stage-three high-schooler, classes or categories are not limited to concrete (physical or nonphysical) objects. A category may represent

a relationship independent of any concrete examples of the relationship, including hypothetical, theoretical, and complete-BS categories. Ergo, "A four-legged, purple snake has four legs. No duh."

Summary

In this first of two articles exploring Robert Kegan's psychology and its relevance for Waldorf education, the emphasis was placed on Kegan's (1982) three stages of development in childhood. Particular attention was paid to the differences between concrete and abstract thinking. Kegan's three stages were compared to and interpreted through Piaget's (1950) and Steiner's (1996)

three stages of child development. Following Kegan and Steiner, each stage was interpreted from the "inside," in terms of how cognitive changes in childhood relate to the affective and social domains and to the child's very sense of self. The following table, adapted from Kegan's *In Over Our Heads* (1994), summarizes Kegan's three stages of development in childhood:

Kegan extended Piaget's formulations beyond the merely cognitive and into the domains of identity and subjective experience, into realms of feeling and will. In his earlier work, Kegan (1982) asked the question: What if meaning-making is not interpreted solely as a cognitive activity but as one encompassing physical, psychological, and social activities? Meaning-making in a developmental sense is as much about "waking up" as it is about growing up, and as such, it is similar to what both Western psychology and Eastern religious traditions mean by the development of higher consciousness. As we evolve in our ability to make meaning, as we expand our consciousness, we "birth" ourselves again and again out of our former selves. As we *incarnate* in childhood, we separate from and objectify the outer world in order to have a better "guarantee" of its and our own distinctiveness.

The next installment of this article will investigate pedagogical implications stemming from Kegan's (1982) three stages of development in childhood,

STAGE	COGNITIVE (THINKING)	AFFECTIVE (FEELING)	SOCIAL
1. Independent Elements (ages two to six)	**Can:** differentiate themselves from an objective world; recognize that objects exist independent of their sensing of them (object permanence)	**Can:** distinguish between outer and inner sensation	**Can:** recognize that other people exist separate from their self
	Cannot: distinguish their perception of an object from its actual properties; construct a logical relation between cause and effect	**Cannot:** distinguish one's impulses from oneself	**Cannot:** recognize that other people have purposes independent of their own; take another's point of view
2. Durable Categories (ages six to teens)	**Can:** grant to objects qualities independent of perception; relate cause and effect (reason consequentially); relate one point in time to another; relate elements into a fixed category	**Can:** organize impulses in service of needs and goals; delay gratification; ascribe to self enduring, concrete qualities (e.g., abilities, likes and dislikes)	**Can:** construct own point of view and grant to others distinct points of view; take the role of another person; have goals; make plans; strategize
	Cannot: reason abstractly; make generalizations, form hypotheses, construct possibles or ideals	**Cannot:** distinguish one's needs from self; coordinate or organize more than one need; ascribe to self more abstract or thematic qualities (e.g., motivations)	**Cannot:** take own view and another's simultaneously; construct obligations and expectations between self and other
3. Cross-Categorical (teens and beyond)	**Can:** reason abstractly; think about thinking, reason about reasoning; think hypothetically; relate relations	**Can:** internalize another's point of view in what becomes a co-constructed POV; coordinate more than one point of view internally	**Can:** be aware of shared feelings, agreements, and expectations; have these shared elements take precedence over individual interests
	Cannot: reason with governing principles (systematically relate all relations); produce all possible combinations; systematically isolate variables	**Cannot:** organize own self into a systematic whole; distinguish self from relationships; see one's self as the author of own psychology (as opposed to the theater)	**Cannot:** construct an overarching system governing all relationships

(Kegan , 1994, pp. 30-31)

with a specific focus on the development of thinking in Waldorf schools. *Thinking* is interpreted through the lenses of Kegan's (1982) and Steiner's (1996) three stages of child development, as well as their descriptions of developmentally sound pedagogy. Our leading question will be: What does the evolution of meaning *mean* for the classroom?

ENDNOTES

1 Steiner believed that thinking is the process by which thoughts, which are animate in the structure of reality, are discovered, re-*cognized* by the knower (see Schieren, 2010). In simple terms, Steiner believed concepts correspond to objective reality. However, the joining of what we might call the *thought-in-the-thing* with the knower's own thinking requires a subjective, constructive act on the part of the knower. Although one might argue that the thought is not "constructed," as it already existed, the bringing together of the thought-in-the-thing with the knower's thinking still requires an act of volition. Schieren (2010) explains that this activity is not an act of construction but of concurrence.

2 The nine-year-change is recognized in Waldorf schools as a psychological/spiritual crisis occurring in some children around the ages of nine or ten. The nine-year-change is brought on by increasing faculties of self-awareness and is often accompanied by anxiety and moodiness. See Koepke's book *Encountering the Self* (1989) for a more exhaustive and nuanced description of the nine-year-change.

3 *Judgment* in Steiner's formulation comprises the subjective, individual attributions the knower applies to perceptions and/or concepts (Steiner, 1979). Attributions of judgment are contextual, analytical, evaluative, and also highly personal; they explore both inner and outer relationships and processes. Waldorf schools recognize that before adolescence and the emergence of abstract, third-stage, *cross-categorical* thinking, the learner is not yet capable of forming reliable independent judgments. In more simple terms, the learner is not yet capable of forming reliable judgments free of many concrete examples or experiences. The formation of judgments in stage-two—that is the subjective and contextual attributions the knower applies to perceptions and conceptual categories—is not independent because it requires the concrete examples to bring the judgments into existence. Later, in adolescence, the child begins to develop the ability to form judgments between two or more abstract concepts, and independent of concrete examples (Steiner, 1979).

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