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*A READER'S JOURNAL*

**Education for Adolescents, GA#302  
(also called Supplementary Course)**

by  
**Rudolf Steiner**

Volume X of Steiner's Writings on Education  
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Translated by Carl Hoffman  
Introduction by Hans-Joachim Mattke  
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In his Introduction, Mattke says that Steiner did not treat the adolescent period as comprehensively as the second seven-year period. I have found this to be the case in the twenty volumes of Steiner's works on education I have studied and reviewed: most of his effort went to the first and second seven-year periods of growth. His focus here on the third seven-year period makes this volume of lectures especially valuable. Mattke says:

**[page 10] We should not view puberty and adolescence as an isolated age but as a condition for transition, as a transitory state of being, paradise having been lost and not yet regained. We could also refer to this third seven-year period as a river flowing between the banks of childhood and adulthood — appreciating its connection with both the preceding and following seven-year periods.**

One of the aims of Waldorf Education is to allow to bloom out of children the goals they have brought into their life from the spiritual world, a world from which they have so recently arrived. They bring spiritual limbs, if you will, which must grow as they grow physically, so teachers do best to provide spiritual activities which foster the growth of ideas and feelings of their students, just as they provide physical activities which change as their physical limbs grow. Unless feelings and ideas mature as limbs do, they may grow into adults with fully developed arms and legs and stunted ideas and feelings more appropriate to pre-adolescents.

**[page 16] We must see to it that our teaching does not remain rigid, static, but that it can grow with them, change as they change during the course of development, so that at the age of thirty or forty they will still have the benefit of what they learned at seven or eight, because the learning has grown and developed as their complicated limbs have developed, because it has slowed down at the appropriate time, and so forth.**

Why are feelings important in the education of children? Feelings allow us to remember events of the past. Children are not robots to be filled with facts and data; they are full human beings of body, soul, and spirit. Data stored without feelings get as lost as valuables put into a bank safety deposit box when no record is kept of the box's location. Feelings provide our access to our vast vault of memories and allow us to retrieve the data stored in those memories.

**[page 18, 19] It is our life of feelings — with its joys, pains, pleasure, displeasure, tensions, and relaxations — that is the actual vehicle for the enduring qualities of the ideas and mental images that we can recall at a later stage. . . .**

**If in line with the convictions of most teachers today, we merely present to the children things to be looked at, to be accurately perceived by the senses, we are not giving them anything that will help them to remember later in life. Their memory will be greatly enhanced, however, if we put feelings into our words, if we teach with warmth, if we spice our lesson with the possibility of allowing the children to experience corresponding emotions, if we make them smile or feel sad, if we endeavor to go beyond the merely intellectual aspects to the life of feeling.**

Always the teacher should point to the unknown, to draw out the curiosity of the students by asking, "What might happen if?" or saying "Tomorrow we will do this." Every question the teacher raises without answering will plant a seed which will bring fruit in the child some days, years, or decades later when an answer appears in the child's mind. A librarian scanned through one book before letting me check it out at the age of ten. She never explained why, but allowed me to check out the book. The unanswered question spurred by her actions stayed with me a decade or so before I realized the adventures of the character Spiro, drawn in the pages of text (which I was unable to comprehend), involved the life cycle of the syphilis bug. I absorbed information about how the bug enters the human body, affects the eyes, and so forth at the tender age of ten and understood its importance at age 25 or so. The feelings that librarian stirred in me without saying a word led me to a revelation a long time later. Steiner suggests a teacher "add tension, expectation, and relaxation that will permeate and benefit the thought process." (Page 19) This is how teachers can provide a key to locating and unlocking important memories of our childhood education.

**[page 19, 20] We ought to make use of the unknown or half known in order to facilitate the children's effort at fitting the details into a totality. We really must not ignore such matters.**

There are two parts to teaching which I call *process* and *content*. Process involves activity and content involves contemplation, the first is external and the second is internal. Steiner emphasizes that these two must be intertwined with each other.

**[page 20] Essentially our lessons consist of two interacting parts. We instruct, we exhort the children to participate, to use their skills, to be physically active. Be it in eurythmy, music, physical education, even writing or the mechanical processes of arithmetic — we try to engender activity. The other part of our lessons is concerned with contemplation. Here we ask the children to think about, to consider the things we tell them.**

To focus only on contemplation in children creates "benumbed, confused adults." The teachers of history who must focus on *content* owe a lot to music teachers for the lively *process* which provides the balance needed in their children.

**[page 21] In children who are merely listening to stories, organic processes are called forth that are identical to those occurring during sleep, when the metabolic processes ascend to the brain. Making the children sit and listen, we engender in them, in the organism, a delicate sleeplike activity.**

Teachers always seem to want their children to sit and listen, unknowingly creating a sleep-like activity in their students. Sleep allows what is right or what is amiss to arise in the organism. What's a teacher to do if that's the case?

**[page 21] And this rising upward of what is amiss in the organism is continuously engendered by our insistence on making the children listen, think, and contemplate.**

**When, on the other hand, we teach them eurythmy, when we make them sing, or play instruments, when we employ them in physical activities, as in handwork and gymnastics, even when we make them write something — when they are in fact doing things, the organic processes thus stimulated are an intensification of waking activity.**

Even in objective subjects, *especially* in objective subjects, we must find a way to relate the objective outside world to the inner human world of the children; only thus can we stimulate their feelings, helping them to incorporate the important objective material into themselves.

**[page 24] We should always try to find such connections, and in fact, the most objective subjects are the ones that lend themselves most easily to our doing so, because all the world can be found within the human being.**

If you, as an experienced teacher wonder how the world can be found within the human being, you would do best to study anthroposophical works on the evolution of the cosmos, and soon you will be able to discern the human being as a microcosm of the macrocosm in which we all live.

Ever have something happen to you about which you said, "I cannot stomach that." Deeply sad experiences paralyze our digestive processes causing food to feel like a lump in our stomach. Look at unhappy, sad, and depressed people: they look like people with bad digestion because they are having trouble absorbing the events of their life and this trouble disables their digestion. What's the cure? A good laugh will help! Norman Cousins was diagnosed with a deadly disease and he fired his doctors and sat home watching Marx Brothers movies. He healed himself by extended courses of belly laughing.

**[page 25] In a healthy digestion, the food passes naturally from the stomach to the intestine, is absorbed by the villi, passes into the blood, then penetrates the diaphragm, so that it can be distributed in the upper organism. This physical process is, qualitatively understood, identical to the effect of laughing, when we artificially induce the vibrations of the diaphragm. Laughing is a process that makes us organically healthy; its effect is similar to that of a healthy undisturbed digestion.**

An old saw is, "He who laughs last, laughs best." I prefer to state it this way, "He who laughs, lasts!"

How can a teacher relate the physical objective processes of rain, thunder, and lightning to the human being, some skeptics may be thinking. Steiner explains it simply:

**[page 26] As soon as we imagine — when somebody is laughing, when somebody experiences laughter in the soul and spirit — that the event is connected with the diaphragm, we shall also gradually arrive at the idea of the effects of spirit and soul in rain, thunder, and lightning. We are led to these realizations by relating everything to the human being.**

We cannot live forever in rain, thunder, and lightning, can we? No, there must be some alteration, some rhythm between violent forces and calming forces and where better to experience this flow and ebb than in music?

**[page 27] The concepts we teach our students about stomach, lungs, and liver will produce in them a disposition that will again be offset in singing, in the way hunger alternates with eating — a rhythmic process. Only rhythm maintains life. The correct handling of the contemplative subjects will produce faculties that will correspondingly manifest in the other subjects.**

The only way I could endure long teaching sessions without a lick of imagination or humor in grade school and high school through was through my doodling. I got a 'C' in conduct in the second grade, and my mother was so furious with me that I had to find some way to survive without disrupting the class

from then on. Writing on a pad did not disrupt the class and was one of the few things teachers did not frown upon during a lesson. They assumed I was diligently taking notes on what they were saying, but if I had been taking notes on dull material, it would double my discomfort! No! I was drawing silly faces or war planes in dog fights in the sky. One technique I developed was to draw a long fractured and continuous line on the right side of the page and then, beginning at the top of the line, finding a person's face in a couple of the zigzag segments and complete the face. In the course of some delightful minutes of creativity, I had drawn 7 to 10 faces all connected along the randomly drawn line. If there was more dull class time to be filled, I could begin another line. I often chuckled silently at the funny faces which grew out of the randomly drawn line. Yes, occasionally I wrote down important points the teacher made, but always there were a lot more doodles on my page than notes about the teacher's lesson.

Even the dullest exercise given during class by the teacher, I could convert into fun. I remember Mrs. Dixon in my eighth grade English class giving us this exercise: Write a sentence with each of these 17 words. She obviously intended us to write 17 sentences, one with each word, but I decided to write one sentence which incorporated all 17 words. Amazingly, she accepted my unique approach to following her instruction and appreciated the ingenuity it required.

I remember Carl Jung saying that a peptic ulcer is an unexpressed imagination. No one ever gave me a peptic ulcer, but unknowingly I may have given others one. There is apparently a mysterious connection between expressing one's imagination and being free of ulcers. Perhaps the laughing and even minor chuckling I did at my funny face doodles was enough to keep pepsin from getting stuck in a fold in my stomach.

**[page 28] Such connections are as mysterious as those between hunger and satiation. Ignoring the connections produces different results. For example, if we teach for an hour without stimulating the imagination of the children, their stomachs will be filled with acid, will have excessive pepsin. This cannot be avoided in a contemplative lesson. It is, however, not only a matter of acidifying the food in the stomach; there is also a spiritual dimension. All matter is at the same time spirit. When the children are singing, the pepsin's role is to produce in them the inner prickling they should feel during singing. This prickling cannot occur if the pepsin remains stuck in the folds of the stomach. And it does remain there if one only talks, without stimulating the imagination. When the imagination is stirred, the pepsin is distributed throughout the body, with the result that the singing teacher will be confronted by children whose organs are permeated by this prickling, this effervescent sensation. Without such experience — especially in the speech organs — the children will be lethargic and lazy, and they will sing without enthusiasm.**

Is Steiner's spiritual science only a fantasy as many claim? Or does it reveal secrets to living as a full human being? Those who have studied Steiner's work to debunk it have often become great supporters of his spiritual science, often taking on a new career path as they came to understand the reality of matter and spirit revealed in his works. And nowhere is his work more revealing and important than in the field of education of our youth.

As a teenager, I delivered newspapers and it gave me many chances to enter subscribers' homes when I collected on Saturdays. Usually the woman paid me in her kitchen and so often I would notice these beautiful wax fruit in a bowl. They were pretty, but completely lifeless, a state which one never had to test by biting on the fruit because the slightest touch revealed its dead state. Unfortunately human anatomy and physiology is often taught in a way that one might use wax fruit to teach botany: using leathery, lifeless corpses.

**[page 29] You must actually become pioneers in a certain sphere, must tell yourselves: "We have today, on the one hand, the abstract sciences — history, geography, even physics, and so on. They are practiced in the most abstract ways. People acquire concepts. On the other hand, we have the sciences of the human being — anatomy,**

**physiology — by means of which we learn about the human being, as though the organs were cut out of leather and reassembled." Truly, as cut from leather — because there is really no difference between the descriptions of living organs presented by our anatomists and cut-out leather pieces. The human being is not described as a totality. The spirit is ignored.**

Steiner closes Lecture One by explaining that you as a true teacher must have *weight* and *wings*, both in the wordy content you load upon them and the lively processes you lead children to experience as they acquire skills. This requires detailed advance preparation before a class begins. You must know the material all the way through, so your words are simply a road map you follow through your internal understanding of the material and that internal understanding flies from your soul to the soul of your children.[\(1\)](#)

**[page 30] Thus you may enter the classroom in such a way that your words carry weight and, at the same time, acquire wings. You will not torture the children with words that merely fly away, nor will you teach them skills and aptitudes that weigh them down.**

In Lecture Two Steiner reveals the process by which we as full human beings reach conclusions. We go through this process in three stages: 1) mental images, 2) judgments, and 3) conclusions. The mental images portion of the process happens in our head via our thinking process. The judgment portion of the process happen in our arms and hands via our feelings. The conclusion portion of the process happens in our legs and feet via our willing. Consider how we might speak about a man making a difficult decision: First, he mulls over all the possibilities (etheric memory function is active in his head). Second, he wrings his hands as he struggles with the alternatives; the decision is in his hands, we say, he's got a good grasp on it (astral function is active in his arms and hands). Third, he comes to a conclusion and stands up to put it into action (his I activates his will to implement the decision).

**[page 31, 32 Head] Of the three stages — mental images, judgments, conclusions — only in the first is the head involved. We ought to be conscious of this: The head is concerned only with the forming of mental images, of ideas, and not with judgments or conclusions. . . . It is really only the etheric body — besides the physical — that is fully active in the head. . . . We really must get away from the materialistic view of the head that attaches too much importance to it. We need our head as a reflecting apparatus, no more.**

**[page 32, 33 Hands and Arms] The forming of mental images and ideas is indeed connected to the head. But not our judgments. These are actually connected to arms and hands. It is true — we judge with our arms and hands. . . the processes leading to judgments are carried out by the mechanism of arms and hands.**

It is only the mental images of the resulting judgment which, as a reflection, take place in the head. The hands and arms are connected to the rhythmical organism residing in the middle of our body which mediates the world of feelings. Steiner says, "Judgments are, you will agree, deeply related to feelings, even the most abstract of judgments." We can hardly be aware our feelings because the feelings of confirmation or negation leading to a judgment are deeply embedded in our subconscious. (Page 31)

**[page 33, 34 Feet and Legs] In considering conclusions, the drawing of conclusions, we must understand the connection to legs and feet[\(2\)](#). Our contemporary psychologists will, of course, ridicule the idea that it is not the head that draws conclusions but the legs and feet. But it is true. Were we, as human beings, not oriented toward our legs and feet, we could never arrive at conclusions. What this means is that we form ideas and mental images with the etheric body, supported by the head organism; we make our judgments — in an elementary way — with our astral body, supported by our arms and hands; and we draw conclusions in our legs and feet — because we do this with our ego, and the ego,**

**the I, is supported by legs and feet.**

In many places Steiner explains that our head is a product of our previous lifetime, arriving from the cosmos, formed out of our previous life's arms and legs. Our current life's arms and legs are inherited from parents and grandparents. We learn how our head, arms, and legs are involved in the three processes of choosing among options, making a firm decision, and effecting a follow-through.

This next passage is remarkable because Steiner pulls the rug from under materialists by accusing them by not studying material phenomena adequately, saying that if they did, they would recognize the absurdity of their own position and the reality of the spiritual underpinnings of the material world.

**[page 37] When one stands firmly on the ground of spiritual science, of anthroposophy, it no longer matters if one is a materialist or a spiritualist. It really doesn't matter. The harm done by materialism is not the study of material phenomena. If this study were performed thoroughly, the phenomena would transform into spirit and all the materialistic concepts would be recognized as absurdities. The harm done is the feeble-mindedness that results when we do not complete thought processes, when we do not concentrate enough on what the senses perceive. We thus lose sight of reality. If we were to pursue thoughts about the material world to the end, we would arrive at the picture, the idea of the spirit.**

Similarly the spiritualists come under a similar criticism because they also accept incomplete thought processes.

**[page 38] Be one a materialist or a spiritualist both perspectives will lead to the same result, provided the thought process is completed. Again, it is not the spirit that is the problem in spiritualism but rather this uncompleted thought process that so easily turns the spiritualist into an idiot, a nebulous mystic, a person who causes confusion and who can only vaguely come to grips with reality.**

As Steiner closes out Lecture Two, he reinforces what he said earlier that teachers must work out of the totality of the human being to reach their children effectively. I see him pointing to how meanings fly from soul to soul on the wings of words(3), and teachers are most effective when they absorb material into their souls so that meanings can fly to their children in the classroom.

**[page 44, 45] Again and again you will find that when you have spent long hours in preparing a lesson, when you have grappled with a subject and then enter the classroom, the children will learn differently than they would when taught by a "superior" lecturer or instructor who spent as little time as possible in preparation. I actually know people who on their way to school quickly read up the required material. Indeed, our education and teaching are deeply affected by the way we grapple not only with the immediate subject matter but also with all the other things connected to skills and methods. These things, too, should be worked and grappled with.**

**There are spiritual connections in life. If we have first heard a song in our mind, in the spirit, it will have a greater effect on the children when we teach it to them. These things are related. The spiritual world works in the physical. This activity, this work of the spiritual world, must be applied especially to education and didactics. If, for example, during the preparation for a religion lesson, the teacher experiences a naturally pious mood, the lesson will have a profound effect on the children. When such a mood is absent, the lesson will be of little value to them.**

People learn about the Waldorf School system of covering a single subject over the course of several weeks to exclusion of all other subjects and they discuss this practice. Is it healthy? Is it good for the children? Do they learn more? And they never come to a conclusion. One cannot come to a conclusion by discussion, only by absorbing knowledge. Steiner famously declared, "Discussion begins when knowledge

ends." We could re-state it this way: "Knowledge makes discussion meaningless." The knowledge of the reasons for the single subject approach to education will make all discussion about it meaningless, rightly understood. I will do my best to summarize this knowledge which Steiner presents in Lecture Three.

When we sleep we learn deeply what we only experienced during the day. If our day experiences have been focused on one subject, the deep learning will be more powerful. What goes on within a child to create this enhanced learning?

**[page 47] The children go home, they go to bed, they go to sleep; their egos and astral bodies are outside their etheric and physical bodies. What you did with the children in this roundabout way through the physical body and also the etheric body continues in the astral body and the ego. But the latter two are now, during sleep, in a quite different environment. They experience something that can only be experienced during sleep, and everything you taught the children participates in the experience. The *effects* of the lesson that remain in the astral body and ego are part of the experience during sleep. You must know that you let flow into the astral body and ego what you teach the children through this detour of the physical body and that you thus affect the children's sleep experience. The children will present to you on the following morning the results of what they experience between falling asleep and waking.**

Waldorf education is the only one which can understand what happens in a child during night time after a day's worth of learning because it incorporates knowledge of the four bodies of the full human being: physical, etheric, astral, and I.

Next Steiner explains something that may seem counter-intuitive: that what we resist we absorb deeply. When I first learned this truth, I created a simple acronym to help me remember the process: EAT-O-TWIST(4). It's easy to say, eat-oh-twist, and it means everything always turns out the way it's supposed to. Resisting something is a strong way of supposing it to be true, so whatever we resist we systematically reinforce and make it stronger within us. Here's the process he explains: the astral and ego body (I) resist the movements of the physical and etheric body, and during sleep at night, they repeat the resisted activities, causing the child to enter school the next morning having deeply absorbed the experiences of the previous day.

**[page 47] Let us think of a child who is doing eurythmy or singing. The physical body is active, and the active physical body and the etheric body impress this activity on the astral body and ego. The ego and astral body are forced into participating in the movements of the physical and etheric bodies. But they resist, because actually they have other forces to concentrate on. These forces must now, in a way, be subdued. And although the ego and astral body resist, they must accept what their own physical and etheric bodies mediate to them — in eurythmy it is more the physical body; in listening to a piece of music, it is more the etheric body.**

**Ego and astral body then enter the world we live in between falling asleep and waking up. Everything that has been impressed on them continues during sleep to vibrate in them. Ego and astral body actually repeat — in the more intricate and spiritualized way peculiar to their nature — what they experienced in eurythmy and music. They repeat all of it. And what they thus experience during sleep, this the children take with them to school on the following day.**

Even in a materialistic science like physics, there is a spiritual component of learning which goes on overnight as a child sleeps.

**[page 51] Yesterday I experimented, and in reviewing the experiment I then appealed to the children's imagination. In today's lesson I add the contemplative element. In doing so, I not only meet the pictures in the children's heads, but also help to bring the**

**pictures into their consciousness.**

First you teach the experiment with the apparatus in class, next you review it without the apparatus, then you add the thinking dimension. Steiner explains.

**[page 51, 52] Remember the progression: I teach a physics lesson, make an experiment, then recapitulate the stages of the experiment without the apparatus. On the following day, we discuss the previous experiment, contemplate it, reflect on it. The children are to learn the inherent laws. The cognitive element, thinking, is now employed. I do not force the children to have mere pictures in their heads, pictures they have brought with them from sleep, pictures without substance, without meaning.**

Imagine a conventional school classroom, where physics is nestled between literature, history, geometry, and biology classes, each one hour long, imagine the chaos this creates in a child's head, a chaos which may be expressed outwardly as, "I hate school!"

**[page 52] Just imagine the children coming to school with these pictures in their heads, of which they have no knowledge. If I were to immediately start with a new experiment, without first nourishing them with the cognitive, contemplative element, I would again occupy the whole of their being, and the effort they would have to make would stir up these pictures; I would create chaos in their heads. No, above all, what I must do first is consolidate what wishes to be there, provide nourishment. These sequences are important; they adapt to, are in tune with, the life processes.**

The Waldorf system of concentrating on one subject each morning for several weeks eliminates the chaos because it harmonizes with the child's life processes.

**[page 52, 53] When I make an objective, characterizing approach on the first day, I shall allow the three parts of the threefold human being to interact, to harmonize in the right way.**

Steiner told this story in an earlier lecture: One new Waldorf teacher gave a child a punishment: he was ordered to remain after school to do math exercises. The other students asked the teacher if they could also stay over to do math exercises. This interest in school work is the sign of a teaching which harmonizes with the life processes of the students. One can begin to comprehend the rationale behind the Waldorf system of focusing on a single subject for several weeks and then moving onto the next subject.

**[page 53] These examples show what can be done if the lessons are properly structured, if they are adapted to life conditions. The structuring and adaptation are only possible in our curriculum, which allows the teaching of a subject for several weeks. They are not possible in the traditional schedule, wherein physics is taught on one day and, perhaps, religion on the next. How could one thus consider what the children bring with them? It is difficult, of course, to structure all the lessons in this way, but one can at least come close to doing so. And by taking a good look at our schedule, you will see that we have attempted to make that possible.**

Metabolic changes occur in children when they are reading with comprehension. Small spikes of salts are formed which will be re-absorbed by glandular secretions if a child is interested in the material. Lack of absorption of these salt spikes can create migraine-like symptoms.

**[page 63] Genuine interest is connected with a delicate feeling of pleasure that must always be present. That feeling expresses itself physically in very subtle glandular secretions that absorb the salt deposits caused during reading and listening. We must endeavor never to bore the children. Lack of interest, boredom, leads to all sorts of metabolic problems. This is especially the case with girls. Migraine-like conditions are**



**the result of a one-sided stuffing of material that must be learned without pleasure. The children are filled with tiny spikes that do not get dissolved. They tend toward developing such spikes.** `

Whenever we were asked to do rote memorization, we were told to memorize the passages "by heart". It never occurred to me the importance of the phrase "by heart" until reading Lecture Four where Steiner emphasizes the importance of evoking a heartfelt enjoyment in the child for the passage being assigned for memorization. A mood of reverence for a prayer and a mood of enjoyment for a poem is important for a child.

**[page 69] The children must never be asked to learn anything by heart before they have a deep feeling for all the details contained in the words — especially a feeling that allows them to relate to the content in the right way.**

**Let us consider an extreme case. Let us think of a prayer. The children should, when asked to learn a prayer, be urged to be in a mood of devotion. It is up to us to see to this. We must almost feel a horror if we teach the children a prayer without first establishing this mood of reverence or devotion. And they should never say a prayer without this mood. We should thus not make the children recite a lovely poem without first arousing in them a faint smile, a pleasure or joy; we should not order them to have these feelings but rather allow the content of the poem to awaken them. This principle applies to other subjects as well. . . . It is essential to prepare the children correctly for such things that are to be learned by heart: prayers and poems. Their feelings must be engendered, the feelings they must have when they listen to themselves.**

During the adolescent years from 14 to 21 the astral body is especially active, and the amount and type of activity is different between boys and girls. Boys tend to be more bashful and girls seem to be more mature: these are a couple of the usual observations made about adolescent teens. In Lecture Five, Steiner gives us an insight into what is happening with the astral bodies in teens.

**[page 75] What we see initially is that the astral body has a stronger influence in girls than in boys. Throughout life the astral body of women plays a more important role than that of men. The whole of the female organism is organized toward the cosmos through the astral body. Much of what are really cosmic mysteries is unveiled and revealed through the female constitution. The female astral body is more differentiated, essentially more richly structured, than that of the male. Men's astral bodies are less differentiated, less finely structured, coarser.**

Why do girls seem more mature? Their egos are strongly affected by their astral bodies. They seem more confident and capable than boys of the same age.

**[page 75] Girls between the ages of thirteen or fourteen and twenty or twenty-one develop in such a way that their egos are strongly influenced by what goes on in their astral bodies. We can see how the ego of a girl is, one could say, gradually absorbed by the astral body, with the result that during her twentieth and twenty-first years there is a strong counterpressure, a strong effort to come to grips with the ego.**

Boys have less penetration by their egos into their astral body, leading to a certain lack of confidence often masked by an overweening bravado. Steiner says on page 80, "It is a strange fact that in spite of the children's outer manifestations and behavior, everything they do is nothing other than a modified feeling of shame or embarrassment".[\(5\)](#)

**[page 75, 76] The process is essentially different in boys. Their astral bodies do not absorb their egos so strongly. Their egos are more concealed, are not as effective. The ego of the boy between the ages of thirteen or fourteen and twenty or twenty-one remains without the strong influence of the astral body. Because of this, because the ego**

**of the boy is not absorbed by the astral body and yet lacks independence, boys at this age are less forward than girls. Girls are freer at this age, more at ease in their outer confrontation with the world than are boys. We can notice in those boys especially endowed with these qualities a reserve, a withdrawal from life, the result of this special relation between astral body and ego.**

In the "Our Miss Brooks" radio and tv shows, Eve Arden played a teacher who always used humor in confronting teenage boys or even teenage-like adult suitors of her, both of which were embarrassed to reveal their inner feelings. Steiner would have loved Miss Brooks.

**[page 81] The worst thing a teacher can do at this time is to confront teenage boys without humor. The proper humor consists in showing an interest in what they are up to, yet making it clear to them that you, the teacher, do not take it too seriously.**

How many people today use gadgets whose internal operations they are completely blind to? A computer, a smart phone, a microwave oven, a LCD monitor, a TV set, a remote control, etc — few people understand them, or only one or two of them. This is a kind of blindness of soul and spirit which Steiner decried in his own time, and a hundred years later in our time it is even more prevalent.

**[page 85] Traveling in a car, plane, or bus, using an electrical gadget without understanding at least the underlying principles, means blindness of soul and spirit. Just as a blind person is moving through life without experiencing the effects of light, so do people move blindly through the cultural life, because they cannot see, did not have the opportunity to learn to see and understand, the objects around them This is a defect of spirit and soul. And the damages we see in our advanced civilization are the result of people's blindness in regard to their environment.**

In Lecture Six Steiner lays out the important task of the Waldorf School education: "to place human beings into the world". (Page 93) Rightly understood, he is talking about full human beings, not *papier mache* humans such as he says Swedish and German physical education programs create, not the *little professors* that precocious children become as they walk around spouting reams of facts about the world they have read or heard about, not *materialistic pedants* who are completely blind to the effects of the spiritual reality upon which their world is supported; no, not these, but *full human beings* in body, soul, and spirit who come to understand the world in terms of body, soul, and spirit, and consider education as a continuing journey, the real commencement of which begins when you graduate from formal education provided by external teachers.

**[page 93] Without this experience of our task, our Waldorf School will be no more than a phrase. We shall say all sorts of beautiful things about it, until the holes have become so large that we shall lose the ground under our feet. We must make it inwardly true, and we can do this only by getting ourselves to the stage at which we can have a thorough understanding of the teaching profession.**

We all remember the large periodic table of the elements from one or more of our school classrooms. Over a hundred elements! Know all of these elements and you will know how to make everything else by some combination of the elements. Probably no teacher made such a bold statement, but there was no need to: it was presumed by displaying all the elements on this chart, was it not? So, we can hardly withhold a chuckle when someone would dare say there are only *four* elements, right? What a ridiculous concept! Only the four elements of earth, fire, air, and water make up the world! Don't make me laugh. This, dear Readers, is our legacy of materialism as it has become infused into our culture, our science, our ethics, and every aspect of our life, up until now. It belittles the spiritual truths of the past and then claims to give me 100+ elements with which I can create anything, even a human being! Well, maybe not.

**[page 99, 100] We don't just *think* that the world consists of one hundred elements. We**

**carry this *feeling* into everything we do during the day — even when we wash and dry our hands. The fact that it is possible for our head to have such an inhuman world conception while we wash ourselves — thinking in this way impresses a definite quality into our feelings. And then — when we can think and feel in this way, when there is no room for the human being in such a world conception — when we then confront the fifteen-year-old girls and boys with this thinking and feeling, it should come as no surprise that we cannot reach them, that we don't know what to do with our feeling and thinking.**

This is the world concept we are taught in universities and with this knowledge we are fit to teach in universities and not much else. When I graduated from college in Physics, I knew a lot about a lot of things, but I didn't know enough about life: what it was to be a living human being in the world. I'm still searching for answers to that question, and there are no college courses that can help me. My large Physics Handbook is a handbook of death, not a handbook of life.

**[page 100] With this world conception we can lecture in universities and colleges, teaching what we believe to be right, but we cannot live with it. The graduates of our universities then become teachers who have no idea of their connection with the young. This is the terrible abyss that has opened up before us.**

This is an abyss that *cannot* be filled by the 100-plus elements of our so-called modern science, but can be filled by the *four elements* of the Greeks. Indeed, thanks to our being skewed by the abstract concepts of today's science, we have lost our intimate connection to the real world, the world Greeks connected with using their four elements.

**[page 101] Yes, the Greeks would have considered our talk about the elements nonsensical. What did they say? They believed not that the structure of the world consists of some one hundred elements but that four elements — earth, air, fire, and water — are interacting in it. Our academics, our professors, the leaders of our culture and education will tell us: "This is a childish world conception. We left it behind and no longer bother with it." Someone who has begun to think a little will tell us: "Oh well, we too are working with these things. Today we call them aggregate conditions — solid, gaseous, liquid. We see warmth differently from the naive way the Greeks did. Yes, we have them all, but we have developed them correctly. Of course, we admire the Greeks for their knowledge." This is a benevolent, patronizing, condescending attitude: "We are fortunate in having progressed so far, in having discovered all these elements, whereas the ancients used to practice all sorts of animism and talked of earth, air, fire, and water."**

There they go again: academics *discussing* things they have *no knowledge* of, not even aware that this knowledge was once common to all humans but has now been lost to them. They are wrong.

**[page 101, 102] But these leaders are wrong. There is a deeper meaning to the conception of the Greeks. When the Greeks spoke of earth, air, fire, and water, they did not look at them as we do today.**

They thought of fire as being warm and dry, of air as being warm and damp, of water as being cold and damp, and earth as being cold and dry. These are elements that any human could experience, and they did not need a Physics Handbook to look them up.

**[page 103] Think about it. People are growing up, are told that the world consists of one hundred or so elements — iodine, sulfur, selenium, tellurium, and so forth — all whirling into each other. This affects our feelings, to the extent that we, as human beings, are removed from the process. The elements are there, and we are not part of any of them.**

Think of the vast abyss that exists between the ancient Greeks and us, between the world of elements we are now taught about as reality and the abyss we feel between those 100-plus elements and our human selves. Is there another way to be a modern human?

**[page 103] One could have the justified idea of being a part of the other way of looking at the world, of looking at the four elements — earth, air, fire, and water — in the ancient Greek way: earth as cold and dry, air as warm and damp, fire as warm and dry, water as cold and damp. When one imagines these qualities and makes them live in oneself, they grip one — qualitatively. One becomes permeated by them, they take hold of the limbs; they take hold of us. Such ideas that reach as far as into the limbs make us into beings different from beings for whom the ideas affect the limbs only after death. The corpses in the graves may well feel in line with the one hundred or so elements that combine according to chemical laws. But such a concept does not do anything for the life of human beings. By contrast, in having this idea of the four elements, we perceive ourselves in our etheric bodies.**

What Steiner offers us in his spiritual science, his anthroposophy — the science of the full human being, is a chance to be connected with the reality of our world in an intimate way again. We do not need to lose our university-taught knowledge which is so useful for dealing with dead things, but our children are living beings and we need to help them learn about living things, especially their own human bodies consisting of body, soul, and spirit. They do not need to learn about the etheric body, for example, but they need teachers who can recognize the effects of the etheric and astral bodies on the children's human bodies and foster a harmony of these living bodies during the educational process. We need a living education that reaches to our limbs, not a dead one that gets stuck in our head, in the intellect.

**[page 104] Head knowledge has no meaning for the inner life. This is the reason for our impotence in relating to the young at the important time in their lives when they are supposed to connect the spirit and soul to the physical/corporeal, to bring them into a reciprocal relationship. What indeed are today's adults to do with the young who wish to relate spirit and soul to the physical, to the life around them?**

One answer is to give them a Waldorf education, which Steiner designed specifically to create adults who would accept the easy truths of his anthroposophy because they will have been taught as a child both the material and the spiritual realities of the world.

**[page 104] This is the situation we shall take as our starting point in tomorrow's talk, when we shall further acquaint ourselves with this problem. My intention today has been to evoke in you the feeling that as soon as we are supposed to find a way to the hearts of children at a definite and important time in their lives, we are dealing with the important issue of a world conception.**

When I was planting flowers back in the 1960s, I bought a soil analysis kit. Biggest waste of time and money I ever spent! But it was indicative of the approach to plants fostered by the 100-plus elements school of thought of so-called modern day scientists.

**[page 110] The Greeks, on the other hand, even though they did not express it concisely, said: "When a plant grows, the cold and dry qualities of the earth are working from below upward. Once the plant has emerged from the earth, when it grows leaves and blossoms with their beautiful colors, we see all this as the effect of water and air, in the way we imagine their qualities; and permeating all of it is the effect of fire. Everywhere in the environment there is this interaction, this intermingling of warm and dry, cold and damp, warm and damp, and all of it, all this qualitative interweaving and interwhirling of dry, cold, damp, and warm across the surface of the earth affects the plant life."**

Not only did the Greeks see plant life this way, but felt these elements operating within themselves. Any

modern scientist who can suspend this disdain for the four elements can do likewise.

**[page 110] We just have to see this. If we do, and then if we look away from the plants to the human being, to the way the etheric body is active within the human being, we shall there see something that is similar to plant life. When we look at the total life of the plant, we are inwardly stirred and stimulated, let me say, to participate in this life of the plant, in this objective life. The Greeks felt this. Outside, they said, "everything is blossoming, thriving, growing, and ever changing. All this is also working in me." The activity of the Greeks own etheric body, imagined in this way, was not beyond experience. The Greek reflected: "I am no stranger to what constitutes the etheric body in me. Certainly, I cannot see it. But by looking at everything that is growing around me, I experience these activities also within me."**

A so-called modern scientist would ridicule, would lambast such a Greek with words like this, "Your ideas are nonsensical, childish ones! We have left them behind, and discovered not four, but some hundred plus elements — hydrogen, oxygen, chlorine, bromine, iodine, and so on." (Page 110) If we gave a Greek such an argument in favor of our view of elements:

**[page 111] The Greek would have responded by saying: "I have no quarrel with this, there is no harm in it. But it is no more than a specialized, detailed study of my understanding of the cold and dry qualities of the earth. You have not got beyond the knowledge of the cold and dry properties of the earth. You know nothing of water, fire, and air. You haven't got the faintest idea of what goes on in the world of plants, of the etheric life in yourself. You cannot even speak about the plants, because your knowledge of the elements cannot give you any idea of life, of what is working in the life of plants."**

The Greek would also add this, "The things I know about the earth, that it is dry and cold, that it affects plant growth, this you specialize for me. To learn about the details is interesting. But you have no knowledge of the totality of life; you merely know a quarter of it." (Page 119) That is the truth of the matter! And I winced when I wrote *matter* in the previous sentence, because *matter*, also known as the element *earth*, represents a *dead* world, yet *matter* is all that our so-called modern science knows about the *living breathing* world in which we full humans have our being, up until now.

With my academic infusion of details into the dead world of matter came an existential challenge as Hamlet phrased it well, "To be, or not to be." How could life have a meaning if we die into non-existence?" I was beginning already in my twenties to think as Steiner says at the beginning of Lecture Eight:

**[page 120] Life must have a meaning! This is a deeply seated conviction for the human being. And we have to reckon with this "Life must have a meaning, a purpose!"**

For me, seeking for an answer to my unanswered question about the meaning of life, I was led to consider life as a *puzzle* with an *enigma* at each end. What happens *before* we are born and *after* we die? In my search for answers to these two questions, I frequented occult bookstores and read many famous works. Each time I went to this one store, I noticed thin volumes by a writer named Rudolf Steiner. I bought several and read them, but, while everything he said made sense, I kept feeling I wasn't getting the full meaning of his words.

Then I discovered Owen Barfield and read all of his works. When he talked about Steiner's works with respect, I knew it was time for me to delve more deeply into Steiner. I had bought and read about ten of these small books of Steiner lectures, but these, as I later discovered, were written for people who already knew his basic works and thus the lectures made minimal sense to me. When the Internet bloomed into existence, my first question for the world was, "Who is Rudolf Steiner and what of his works should I read first?"

I met thereby a group of Steiner aficionados who advised me to read, [An Outline of Occult Science](#), [Theosophy](#), [Knowledge of Higher Worlds](#), [Philosophy of Freedom](#), and other works, all of which I quickly acquired and read. Soon an answer to my two questions rose in me, "We live as immortal spirits who dip in and out of serial lives in the physical world." We live serial lives to learn and grow as moral beings so that we may be accepted into the spiritual world when our Earth is no longer here. That was a *meaning of life* which gave purpose to my existence, and I doubt I would have found it but for Rudolf Steiner, a true prophet in the twentieth century. He wrote as if he were writing specifically to me, a physicist, without using obscure polysyllabic Oriental words, writing out of his own deep experience of the spiritual realities which he shared.

When I learned that he devoted the last six years of his life to educating children, I decided that I should study the twenty-five works of his on Waldorf education(6), absorb their contents, and share them with others. I realized that he knew that the long-term existence of his spiritual science of the full human being, *anthroposophy*, depended on reaching children who will grow into adults as full human beings via Waldorf school education.

But what does our so-called modern scientists seek? To create human life in a test tube by analyzing and synthesizing the chemicals of organic chemistry. To create artificial intelligence in soul-less machines, which these scientists claim will exceed the capability of human beings(7).

**[page 122] The science of this age sees the chemical, the physical world, how the elements, enumerated in chemistry, analyze and synthesize; it discovers, in progressing to the sphere of life — but working with it in a synthetic and analytic way — processes that correspond identically with those in the human corpse. Such a science, applying the same process that can be observed during the natural decomposing of the corpse, finds the same elements in the living organism: carbon, oxygen, nitrogen, and the rest. And it discovers these elements living in the form we know as albumen. The scientists now try to discover how the carbon, nitrogen, hydrogen, and oxygen in the albumen can be synthesized in a living way. And they hope to discover one day how these elements — C, N, H, and O — develop a definite structure by virtue of being together in albumen.**

A hundred years after Steiner wrote these words, with all our knowledge of DNA, they have never found a way to create human life forms, only modify them, exactly as Steiner predicted.

**[page 123] Natural science will never comprehend the nature of albumen as long as it endeavors to find in the organic molecule a structure that is simply more complicated than that which occurs in the inorganic molecule. Today's chemistry and physiology are mainly concerned with discovering the structure of atoms in different bodies, atoms which assume ever more complex forms, culminating in that of the albumen. The molecule of albumen does not tend toward greater complexity, however, but toward the dissolution of mineral structure, so that extraterrestrial — and nor terrestrial — forces can influence it.**

By extraterrestrial, he does not meant some alien forces, but instead very familiar cosmic forces out of which our terrestrial bodies were formed.

**[page 124, italics added] Our thinking is here confused by modern science. We are led to a thinking that is — in its most important aspects — in no way connected to reality. Our modern knowledge of the properties of albumen prevents us from raising our thoughts to the reality that something enters the human being that does not come from heredity but via the detour from the cosmos. *Today's idea of albumen leaves no room for the concept of the pre-existence of the human being.***

We cannot expect any help from universities in understanding the nature of living human beings, nor in understanding the pre-existence of human beings. Universities are as closed to these ideas as any guild in

the Middle Ages was to progress. The guilds are gone today (except in the form of unionized labor), but their closed thinking processes remain in universities.

**[page 124, 125] Our universities are the last remnants of the guilds. And since those concerned with these things have no longer any knowledge, any feeling about this development, they enlist the help of show business, especially during such highlights as graduation ceremonies — caps, gowns, and so forth. It is important to see behind these things.**

What is one to do if one wishes to become a true human being?

**[page 125] One who today wishes to educate and teach must find other ways in which to become a true human being; one must acquire new ideas of the basic principles. Then one will arrive at the correct understanding of the nature of imitation during early childhood.**

Here Steiner homes in on what teachers need to know about children who arrive in the world imitating everything they see about them.

**[page 125] During the time in the spiritual world, before conception, the child's soul accepts everything from its spiritual surroundings as a matter of course. After birth the child continues this activity that the soul became used to in the spiritual world. In the child's imitating we can see that this habit from before birth has not been lost; it has only taken a different turn. Before conception the child was concerned with development from within; now the world outside is confronted.**

Children arrive with a sense of truth from the spiritual world and it is the teacher's job to foster that sense and not hinder it in any way.

**[page 125, 126] During these early years, the child develops a sense for the true and, connecting to the world in this way, arrives at the conviction: "Everything around me is as true as the things I so clearly perceived in the spiritual world." The child develops the sense for the true before beginning school. We still observe the last phases of this conviction when the child enters school, and we must receive the child's sense for the true in the right way. Otherwise we blunt it instead of developing it further.**

Our modern way of writing is so abstract that we blunt the child's development if we ask it to copy a letter of the alphabet like an "X" or a "Q" for example. Allowing children to draw flowing forms from which the abstract letters of the alphabet can be recognized helps them enormously. Singing and eurythmy are also helpful. Eurythmy allows the child to write into the world with their entire body instead of scribbling some abstract form on a piece of paper.

**[page 127] When we let children do eurythmy, what are we actually doing then? Instead of giving them sticks of crayon with which to write an "A" or an "E" — an activity with which they have a purely cognitive connection — we let the children write into the world, through their own human form, what constitutes the content of language. The human being is not directed to abstract symbols but allowed to write into the world what can be inscribed through his or her organism. We thus allow the human being to continue the activity of prenatal life.**

We accept children from the spiritual world as babies and in the earliest education, must let what the child brought from the spiritual world show itself, and stifle our expectations of what the child should or should not do. Teachers in Waldorf schools have a delicate task of dealing with the expectations of parents for their child, expectations which will often sin against their child's spirit.

**[page 128] Children whose writing and reading activities are balanced by something else will grow into full human beings. We have to be gentle with today's grown-ups, who have been influenced by modern culture. We must not shock them; that would not help our cause at all. But we must, tactfully and gently, find a way to convince them that if their child cannot yet read and write fluently at the age of nine, this does not constitute a sin against the child's holy spirit.**

A dramatic change takes place in a child around the age of nine to ten: it begins to see itself as an "I", an individual. Steiner compares a child this age to a monkey which will play with a mirror but go away unaffected by the experience, whereas the child will be affected by the same activity.

**[page 129, 130] The immediate sense impression of the reflected picture fascinates the monkey, but the experience does not metamorphose into anything. As soon as the mirror is taken away, the monkey forgets the whole thing; the experience certainly does not produce vanity.**

**But a child at the characterized age looking at his or her reflection would be tempted to transform his or her previous way of feeling, to become vain and coquettish. This is the difference between the monkey, satisfied with just seeing itself in the mirror, and the child. Regarding the monkey, the experience does not permanently affect its feeling and will. But for the nine-and-one-half-year-old child, the experience of seeing himself or herself in the mirror produces lasting impressions, influences his or her character in a certain way.**

We could make an experiment to confirm this, but experiments done with living humans can change them forever and are best avoided. If we wanted to perform experiments to determine the moment of death, this would not be allowed, but in the realm of psychology, experiments are allowed, up until now. This is a point lost on the well-meaning psychologists and pedagogical experts who experiment with human subjects.

**[page 130] In order to get answers, we must decide on killing somebody every year, in order to discover the secrets of life at the moment of death. Such scientific experiments are not yet permitted in the physical, sense-perceptible world. But in the realm of soul and spirit, we have progressed to the point that experiments are allowed which paralyze the unhappy victims, paralyze them for life — experiments that ought to be avoided.**

This prohibition should include all pedagogical experiments which include human beings. Frederick the Great wanted to determine which language a child would speak if allowed to grow without hearing any language. His experiment's results should serve as a wake-up call to pedagogical experimenters everywhere: all the babies included in his experiment died! They could not survive without the human contact they had been artificially deprived of.

Children in Waldorf schools are taught to see meaning and beauty in their lives. In other school systems, there may be little beauty and all their experiences of meaning pass into their head and body and not into their consciousness. What is the result of such materialistically-based teaching?

**[page 131, 132] People move about in life without being able to connect with it, without discovering anything in it. This is the characteristic of our time. People do not observe anything meaningful in life, because they did not learn as children to see the beautiful in it. All they are to discover are things that in the driest possible sense somehow increase their knowledge. But they cannot find the hidden, mysterious beauty that is present everywhere, and the real connection to life dies away.**

In Waldorf schools, the important changes to children at the ages of 9 to 10 are respected and encouraged by teachers.



**[page 132] We prepare the children for this process by getting them at the age of nine and ten to the point that they can look at the world in wonder, astonishment, and admiration. If we make their sense of beauty more conscious, we prepare the children for the time at and after puberty in such a way that they learn to love correctly, that they develop love in the right way. Love is not limited to sex; sex is merely a special aspect of love. Love is something that extends to everything, is the innermost impetus for action. We ought to do what we love to do. Duty is to merge with love; we should like what we are dutybound to do. And this love develops in the right way only if we go along with the child's inner development. We must, therefore, pay attention to the correct cultivation of the sense of beauty throughout the elementary school years. The sense of truth the children have brought with them; the sense of beauty we have to develop in the way I have described.**

With the advent of puberty, students become sensitive to the judgments of their teachers, recognizing their teachers' failings. The teacher can no longer represent the ideal for their students as they did in earlier grades. We teachers, Steiner says, must change.

**[page 135] We must consciously expose ourselves to this change, must be aware of the students' criticism of their teachers' unwarranted behavior. They become especially sensitive at this age to their teachers' attitudes. If, however, our interest in the students is honest and not egotistical, we shall educate and teach with exactly these possibilities of their feelings in mind. And this will result in a free relationship between us and them.**

Rightly understood, it is the teachers who refuse to change whom students openly hate and learn nothing from. The teachers who in the Teacher's Lounge who complain the most about their bad students are revealing themselves as being unable to change, unable to develop a good relationship with their near-adult students. Those teachers who do change will foster a healthy growth of their students into adulthood.

**[page 135] The effect will be the students' healthy growth into the *true* that was given to them by the spiritual world as a kind of inheritance, so that they can merge with, grow together with, the *beautiful* in the right way, so that they can learn the *good* in the world of the senses, the good they are to develop and bring to expression during their lives. It is really a sin to talk about the true, the beautiful, and the good in abstractions, without showing concretely their relation to the various ages.**

Steiner ends this series of lectures calling for everyone present to be conscious of a living cloud filled with soul and spirit and to feel that living spirits are called to their aid when they speak this prayer at the beginning of each school year:

**[page 136] We resolve to do our work by letting flow into it what from the spiritual world wishes to become human being in us, by way of the soul and spirit as well as of the corporeal-physical organization.**

If you have read many of Steiner's lectures on Waldorf education and were disappointed in finding little help for your job teaching high school children, this is the series of lectures for you to study in depth. The unique requirements for teaching children of the upper grades of 8 to 12 are laid out carefully in these lectures. If you are a Waldorf teacher, chances are you have received children who have been prepared through earlier years of Waldorf education to deal with you in truth, goodness, and beauty, all of which will make your job a pleasure. But you must be ready to be challenged by adolescents who will question what you do, who will call you on your shortcomings, and who will stretch you to your limit as a human being. It is all in a day's work for a teacher.

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----- *Footnotes* -----

**Footnote 1.**

See my Essay on the Live Lecturer here: <http://www.doyletics.com/arj/tandlrw.shtml>.

[Return to text directly before Footnote 1.](#)

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**Footnote 2.**

In a dramatic demonstration of the importance of feet in coming to a conclusion, a song by Nancy Sinatra warns a lover, "these feet are made for walking, and one of these days these feet are gonna walk all over you."

[Return to text directly before Footnote 2.](#)

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**Footnote 3.**

See my two reviews which elaborate on the "wings of words" process: [Waldorf Education and Anthroposophy 1](#) and [Towards Imagination](#).

[Return to text directly before Footnote 3.](#)

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**Footnote 4.**

See Matherne's Rule [#10](#).

[Return to text directly before Footnote 4.](#)

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**Footnote 5.**

This type of over-compensation in teenage boys is well-portrayed in the movie, *Grease*.

[Return to text directly before Footnote 5.](#)

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**Footnote 6.**

See these works listed below or at this link:  
<http://www.doyletics.com/arj/waldorfeducation.html>.

[Return to text directly before Footnote 6.](#)

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**Footnote 7.**

Question: how can materialistic scientists claim to create something that exceeds the capabilities of something they have yet to fully understand?

[Return to text directly before Footnote 7.](#)

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