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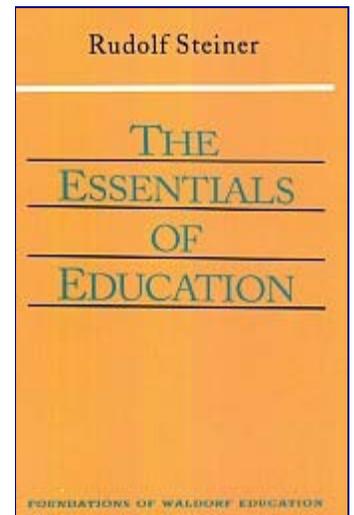
A READER'S JOURNAL

The Essentials of Education, GA#308 by Rudolf Steiner

5 Lectures in April, 1924 in Stuttgart, Germany
Introduction by Torin Finser
ARJ2 Chapter: Spiritual Science
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A Book Review by Bobby Matherne ©2016

**Delivered in April 1924 during an
educational conference, these five lectures**

are the last public lectures that Steiner gave in Germany. E. A. K. Stockmeyer writes:
**"Seventeen hundred people listened to him, and the prolonged, generous applause from
this great crowd at the end over every lecture was deeply moving; while at the end of the
last lecture the applause became an ovation that seemed as if it would never end." —**
from the back cover



Here's how Steiner begins Lecture One:

**[page 1] Dear friends! Our assignment for this educational conference is to answer the
question: What is the role of education and teaching to be for the future in terms of both
the individual and society?**

Nowhere in human endeavors is knowledge of the full human being more essential than in those entrusted with the care and education of our young and growing children. Adults seem to get along without such knowledge, but do they do the best for humanity if they lack such knowledge? If we consider only adult materialists, the answer is clear: they have been taught to see only the surface of things and that includes human beings. Skinner's "Behaviorism" was based on such a premise and found great favor about materialists, so far as I know. Should we consider how humans behave as more important than how they feel, live, or love? I think not. The science that has brought amazing achievements to human beings cannot be used to understand the full human being, rightly understood.

Steiner poses an important question, which we must all hold as an unanswered question, namely, "What is the essence of what lives within the limits of the human skin?" (My paraphrase) He replies thus:

**[page 2] Answers are so inadequate that people today haven't a clue about the ways that
external processes are actually transformed within the human being through breathing,
blood circulation, nutrition, and so on.**

And no where in human development is knowledge of these processes so important than in the once-in-a-lifetime stage of growth from birth to teeth change to puberty to adulthood at twenty-one. Ask yourself as a parent, "Do I want my children and grandchildren shaped into adulthood by teachers who do not understand the full human being?" If you come to understand the impact of this question, the answer will

become obvious to you as "No" and the solution will be likewise obvious, a Waldorf education as designed by Rudolf Steiner.

We are proud to claim our modern way of life is so much better than the earlier times, such as before the 15th century, and we have made great strides in technology of the inanimate world, but have lost an innate feeling for the human being in the process.

[page 2] In earlier times, people had a sense of inner empathy with the spirit and soul of other human beings, which gave them an intuitive impression of the souls inner experiences; it made sense that what one knew about the inner spirit and soul life would explain external physical manifestations. Now, we do just the opposite. People experiment with external aspects and processes very effectively, since all contemporary natural science is effective. The only thing that has been demonstrated, however, is that, given our modern views of life, we take seriously only what is sense-perceptible and what the intellect can comprehend with the help of the senses. Consequently, we have come to a point where we no longer have the capacity to really observe the inner human being; we are often content to observe its outer shell. We are further removed from the human being. Indeed, the very methods that have so eagerly illuminated life in the outer world — the working of nature — have robbed us of the most basic access between souls.

Observing the outer shell of the human being is to focus on what the ancients called *maya*. In addition to our natural scientists development of the microscope, which allows to see very tiny aspects of the human being, miniature *maya*, they have also developed what I would call the *mayascope* by which they look at only the full scale outer shell, the *body*, of the human being. What we need is our scientists of the current age to develop a *macroscope* through which they can view the full human being in body, soul, and spirit. The *macroscope* is an instrument which requires no complicated electronics and computers; it exists within the only *thing* capable of creating electronics and computers, a *human being*. Using tools only found in a human being, a teacher can truly educate pupils by viewing them through a macroscope, connecting with each pupil as a unique spirit with a unique soul in a unique human body, and foster the growth of body, soul, and spirit of the pupil.

[page 2, 3] Our wonderfully productive civilization has brought us very close to certain natural phenomena, but it has also driven us away from the human being. It should be obvious that the aspect of our culture most harmed by this situation is education — everything related to human development and teaching children.

As a wood sculptor I have shaped various woods, bald cypress, oak, orangewood, mahogany, and black walnut, and over the years I learned about the toughness of oak, and butter-like nature of black walnut. As a father I have helped shape my children, and none of my wood sculpture tools were of any help to me there. Natural scientists who attempt to use their materialistic tools on children will inevitably fail, but few will understand that the very use of such tools led to their failure, so far as I can imagine.

[page 3] Once we can understand those we are to shape, we will be able to educate and teach, just as painters must understand the nature and quality of colors before they can paint, and sculptors must first understand their materials before they can create, and so on. If this is true of the arts that deal with physical materials, isn't it all the more true of an art that works with the noblest of all materials, the material that only the human being can work with — human life, the human being and human development?

Like the Greeks were able to sculpt lifeless human figures in marble, educators and or teachers must learn to sculpt living humans in body, soul, and spirit using all their own body, soul, and spirit as a human being, being "careful", as Steiner says on page 3, "to avoid any imbalance".

When a teacher is in the presence of a child, the most important communication often flows back and forth from *soul to soul*, without any words. The words, the lesson plan, is often a way to get the teacher

and student into the right place so that this *wordless* communication can take place. In 1976, I had an insight that teaching and learning flowed in both directions, from the teacher to the student *and* from the student to the teacher. I wrote this insight using a terse sentence without any verbs to communicate this two-way process that is so often overlooked and rarely taught(1).

Thus a Teacher; So Also a Learner.

While this process of two-way communication may be overlooked when it is present (because it works so well), it is definitely noticed in its absence. Why? Because, when the teacher is closed to learning from the students, the two-way flow between soul-of-teacher and soul-of-student is shut off, turned into a one-way flow from the teacher to student. Faced with this one-way flow, the students get boisterous and feisty, or sullen and quiet. Attention is lost from the room, and usually it's only the students who notice it: they feel bored. When the teacher responds by trying harder to get their point across to the students, usually by more discipline, the situation gets worse and eventually one child is selected to visit the principal's office. Then the rest of the class gets quiet again, for a time.

What a teacher needs, Steiner says, is a knowledge with "soft edges" not the hard edges of an academic discipline.

[page 5] Let's start with this knowledge of the human being; it is knowledge with "soft edges." It lacks sharp contours to the extent that it is not pointed directly at any one person. Rather, over the course of the educational relationship it glides, as it were, weaving here and there between what happens in the teacher's soul and in the child's sou. In certain ways, it is difficult to be very sure of what is happening, since it is all very subtle. When we teach, something is present that flows like a stream, constantly changing. It is necessary to develop a vision that allows us to seize anything that is developing between human beings in this intimate way.

Steiner wrote in detail about the four temperaments: *melancholic*, *phlegmatic*, *sanguine*, and *choleric* as characteristics of pupils in [The Spiritual Ground of Education](#). Here in Lecture One, he explains how the particular temperament of a teacher is important and how to control it.

Steiner says in several places that a baby tastes with its entire body; here he connects with how the child at an early age absorbs everything in the way we move around them, whether we move with a relaxed soul and spirit, or stormily, with heavy soul and spirit. (Page 8) These behaviors by early melancholic caregivers plant a seed into the child's body which appears later in the mature adult of forty-five or so as arthritis, gout, or poor digestion. (Page 9) When a phlegmatic teacher without proper temperament training leads a classroom, the flow from the students to the teacher is cut off. They want to reach the teacher, but the phlegmatic teacher is like, "Whatever", and basically unreachable. Children with unmodulated phlegmatic teachers mature into adults with depression and various nervous disorders. Are we living through a spate of phlegmatic teachers? Steiner explains it thus:

[page 10] We are speaking of the historical period of the nineteenth century when materialism arose. The materialistic worldview turns away from the human being, and develops a monstrous indifference in the teacher toward the most intimate movements of the souls of those being educated.

With a skewed melancholic temperament, a teacher will produce diseases of the heart decades later in their students. Heart trouble was prevalent in the early part of the twentieth century, was it not? With medical scientific improvements of care, heart disease is more treatable and less likely to cause deaths today in the nascent twenty-first century, but what if we discover that the root cause of heart disease is uncontrolled and not properly educated melancholic teachers in our education system?

[page 11] Teachers should not educate with only childhood in mind. And doctors should look beyond the specific onset of disease to a particular age, with a capacity to observe

human life as one connected whole. In this way, people can see that many cases of heart trouble between forty and forty-five began with the whole mood generated by the uncontrolled melancholic temperament of a teacher.

The essential thing is what happens between the teacher and student even before any teaching is attempted, in other words, the temperaments of the teacher and the students are there. People cannot just teach something they learned to someone else; it's not that simple. It takes two to tango; one to lead, one to follow, and the roles of leader and follower can switch without anyone noticing. That is teaching and learning, properly understood.

[page 13] People frequently fail to notice that there is an inner attitude of temperament, character, and so on, behind everything a teacher brings to teaching, regardless of self-education, formal training, or assimilated knowledge. Here, too, a real knowledge of the human being leads more deeply into human nature itself.

In *The Karate Kid*, Mr. Myagi teaches a young American boy in unorthodox ways, showing him how to wax the car, to paint the fence, etc, using methods modern teachers would consider horrible. Yet his teaching was effective. Why? Mr. Myagi did not lecture in *content*, he showed the boy in *process*, then left him alone to discover the meaning. Imitation is the root of very deep learning. Mr. Myagi had the boy imitate his movements, filling in a crucial piece of learning that the kid had missed his first life period before teeth change. It was a crash course for the kid who went on to become a champion.

[page 14] As far as this life period is concerned, if a civilization never spoke of education and in its elementary, primitive way simply educated, it would have a much healthier outlook than ours. This was true of the ancient Eastern regions, which had no education in our sense of the word. There the adult's body, soul, and spirit was allowed to affect the child so that the child could take this adult as a guide, moving a muscle when the teacher moved a muscle and blinking when the teacher blinked. The teacher was trained to do this in a way that enabled the child to imitate. Such a teacher was not as the Western "pedagogue," but the Eastern *data* (Sanskrit word for 'the giver'). A certain instinctive quality was behind this.

Steiner mentions the appearance of new teeth about age 7 in many places in his education lecture. It is not the new teeth that are so important, but the deeper changes in the growing human that they signal. In our age, most people want some proof of these deep invisible changes, and the teeth change gives Steiner an external change they can witness and accept as proof. He wants us to realize that our mode of acceptance of proof only through our sense perception developed after the fourteenth century. If we disdain the way of knowledge of the people in the Middle Ages, it is only because we know nothing about how they perceived the world. We project the darkness of our own perception when we speak of these people as living in the *Dark Ages*. Steiner has us envision how people in the future will look back at our time in which we only accept sensory data as proof.

[page 18 *italics added*] During the ages before the fourteenth century, humans perceived the world of the senses, and also comprehended with the intellect. The intelligence of the medieval monastic schools is too often underestimated. The inner intelligence and conceptual faculty was much more highly developed than the modern and chaotic conceptual faculty, which is really driven by, and limited to, natural phenomena; anyone who is objective and impartial can observe this. *In those days, anything that the intellect and senses perceived in the universe required validation from the divine, spiritual realm.* The fact that sense revelation had to be sanctioned by divine revelation was not merely an abstract principle; it was a common, very human feeling and observation. A manifestation in the world of the senses could be considered valid only when knowledge of it could be proven and demonstrated in terms of the divine, spiritual world.

Since the fourteenth century, our mode of understanding and proof has changed, so that only evidence of our senses is accepted as proof, up until now. Even statements about spiritual realities are rejected unless some materialistic proof is provided. Only what is matter-based matters; spirit-based matters do no matter. Notice the presence of the word *matter* in the previous sentence? About something which we deem meaningful, we say, "It matters", do we not? How can spirit have a chance in such a world as ours where only matter matters? If we wish to discuss the world in a balanced way, shouldn't we have a neutral word to replace the one-sided word *matter*?

[page 18, 19] Why does everyone ask for a demonstration of matters that are really related to spirit? People ask you to make an experiment or sense observation that provides proof.

This is what people want, because they have lost faith in the reality of the human being's inner activity; they have lost faith in the possibility that intuitions can emerge from the human being when looking at ordinary life, at sensory appearances and the intellect. Humanity has really weakened inwardly, and is no longer conscious of the firm foundation of an inner, creative life. This has had a deep influence on all areas of practical life, and most of all on education.

Even the phrase Steiner uses above, "firm foundation", is a matter-based expression, which he uses to reach his audience. Our inner, creative life can only appear when one accepts the equal validity of matter and spirit in every human being. The firm foundation can only exist when a human being has one foot on matter and another on spirit. No matter how we say it we sound strange because so many of our metaphors in this age are matter-bound metaphors. And all this communicates to our children unless they are taught by people who have a balanced view of matter and spirit as two realities.

On Earth matter falls to the ground, but in outer space the Earth does not fall because all heavenly bodies support each other. Someone who thinks matter is all that matters can never teach in a Waldorf School until they truly understand how spiritual truths support each other.

[page 19] When we speak of the material nature of plants, animals, minerals, or human beings, we must prove our statements through experiment and sense observation. This kind of proof suggests that an object must be supported. In the free realm of the spirit, however, truths support one another. The only validation required is their mutual support. Thus, in representing spiritual reality, every idea must be placed clearly within the whole, just as Earth or any other heavenly body moves freely in cosmic space. Truths must support one another.

The above passage highlights how difficult it is for a newcomer to achieve understanding of Rudolf Steiner's work. Each lecture requires a knowledge of all the other lectures. Studying these lectures involves a lot of work, no less than the work required to achieve a Ph. D. in any modern field of endeavor. If one does this work, reward is not some degree to hang on the wall or initials to add behind one's title; no, the reward shows through an ability to come to grips with whatever subject Steiner discusses and make practical use of it. Emil Molt and the others who founded the Waldorf School system possessed this ability and their schools prosper a hundred years later⁽²⁾. They had a capacity to conceive the spiritual and to teach it to other teachers who could pass it along to growing human beings.

[page 19, 20] Anyone who tries to understand the spiritual realm must first examine truths coming from other directions, and how they support the one truth through the free activity of their "gravitational force" of proof, as it were. In this way, that single truth is kept free in the cosmos, just as a heavenly body is supported freely in the cosmos by the countering forces of gravity. A capacity to conceive of the spiritual in this way must become an essential inner quality of human beings; otherwise, though we may be able to understand and educate the soul aspect, we will be unable to understand and educate the spirit that also lives and moves in the human being.

To educate a child properly we must understand from whence the body, soul, and spirit of the newly-born human being originates. Yes, the body and genetic structure originates from the baby's parents. We have sensory-based data which proves that to us, but what about the soul and spirit?

[page 20] When human beings enter the physical world of sensation, their physical body is provided by the parents and ancestors. Even natural science knows this, although such discoveries will become complete only in the remote future. Spiritual science teaches that is only one aspect of the human being; the other part unites with what arises from the father and mother; it descends as a spirit soul being from the realm of spirit and soul.

In the time between a previous death and a new birth this soul and spirit has had a long series of experiences preparing itself for a new life on Earth. The essence of the soul and spirit hover around the newborn, loosely connected to its physical body, and living more outside than inside the body until teeth change, making the child like a sense organ.

[page 21] The surrounding impressions ripple, echo and sound through the whole organism because the child is not so inwardly bound up with its body as is the case in later life, but lives in the environment with its freer spiritual and soul nature. Hence the child is receptive to all the impressions coming from the environment.

Through heredity we are each given at birth a model upon which our spirit and soul forces work to create a second human organism by the time of teeth change. Like the teeth, the first human organism was formed completely from its mother's nutritional processes, but at birth and separation from the mother, nutritional processes from outside the mother begin to filter in and from these the new teeth and new human organism is formed(3). During this period the child surrenders to the environment all its blood circulation, breathing, and nutritional processes, all of these praying as if in a religious experience. And the teacher is like the priest presiding over this religious process.

[page 24] The position of the teacher becomes a kind of priestly office, a ritual performed at the altar of universal human life — not with a sacrificial victim to be led to death, but with the offering of human nature itself, to be awakened to life. Our task is to ferry into earthly life the aspect of the child that came from the divine spiritual world. This, with the child's own forces, forms a second organism from the being that came to us from the divine spiritual life.

In my early life I watched five younger siblings during their first periods of childhood. As a young adult in my twenties I watched my four children during their first period of childhood. As a mature adult, I have now watched 21 grandchildren and four great-grandsons grow through this period, and all with a sense of awe and amazement as if God were shining out of them. No sacrifice on my part was too great to help them through this stage. If they needed feeding, I fed them; if they were soiled, I wiped their soiled bottoms, and affixed a clean diaper on them; if they were colicky, I would hold and rock them until they fell asleep. Nothing ever gave me a warmer feeling in my heart than to be near to and hold in my arms a newborn baby. Now I understand why: the soul and spirit of the baby was merging with mine, and we held a wordless soul-to-soul communication. This process cannot be explained, but must be experienced to be truly understood.

[page 24] Few things have a more wonderful effect on the human heart than seeing inner spirit and soul elements released day to day, week to week, month to month, year to year, during the first period of childhood. We see how, beginning with chaotic limb movements, the glance filled with rapture by the outer, the play of expressions that do not yet seem to belong to the child, something develops and impresses itself on the surface of the human form that arises from the center of the human being, where the divine spiritual being is unfolding in its descent from pre-earthly life.

To become a teacher is not to follow some set of rules, but to embrace a method that flows from within yourself as a spring, greeting each child as an sojourner recently returned to Earth to experience life anew, nurtured by its own experiences in the spiritual world before birth, and ready to receive the love and thoughtfulness of its parents, caregivers, and teachers.

[page 25, paraphrased for clarity] This must be our attitude to the growing human being; it is essential to any educational method. Without this fundamental attitude, without this priestly element in the teacher, education cannot be continued. Therefore the methods of education must turn away from the intellectual element and return to the domain of soul and feelings, to move toward what flows from human nature as a whole, not just from the head. If we look at the child without preconceptions, the child's own nature will teach us to read these things.

From age 21, my way of parenting came from the domain of soul and feelings, the very feelings I experienced flowing from my mother and my dozens of aunts to me and their other babies as I grew up. As a young parent each child's individual soul and spirit flowed into and led me to provide what it needed. Feelings were what mattered to me when I was raising my children, with an occasional help from mothers and aunts. I was not a perfect parent, but an effective one. As I look back now, I studied all about matter as a physicist in college, but nothing about matter helped me raise children! What did matter was feelings, and feelings are definitely not matter! They were the living processes of soul and spirit in a human being, processes that used to matter more than matter did, just a handful of centuries ago.

[page 26, italics added] People can no longer feel or perceive in a way that was possible before the fourteenth century. In those days, people observed *matters of the spirit* in an imbalanced way, just as people now observe the things of nature. But the human race had to pass through a stage in which it could add the observation of purely natural elements to an earlier human devotion to the world of spirit and soul that excluded nature. This materializing process, or swing downward, was necessary; but we must realize that, in order that civilized humanity not be turned into a wasteland in our time, there must be a new turn, a turning toward spirit and soul.

The above material inspired me to write this following poem, which I hope you will find to be as inspiring as it is humorous. I think it was Steiner's phrase "matters of the spirit" that set me off. He uses the word "matter" which refers to purely materialistic things and applies it as a metaphor to refer a purely spiritual process. Something is the matter with that usage, isn't it? We still use matter that way today, both as a noun and a verb. If we wish to say that something is meaningful or important, we say it *matters*, don't we? If that something important is purely spiritual, we still say it *matters*. To Steiner spirit *matters*. It seems to me we need a word to replace the ubiquitous verb *matter* when we talk of spiritual *matters*. There's that word again! Something is the *matter*, but what?

What's the Matter?

**Before the fourteenth century
Spirit mattered more than Matter.**

**Since the fourteenth century
Matter has mattered more than Spirit.**

What's the Matter?

**As beings of Spirit and Matter
Doesn't Spirit matter as much as Matter?**

Maybe both Spirit and Matter matter.

That's the Spirit!

Indeed, that is the spirit which must fill Waldorf education, a recognition that spirit matters, that spirit reigns as important as any physical stuff (*matter*). In a book of lectures devoted to the essential aspects of education, an understanding of the equal importance of spirit and matter is truly essential.

[page 26] . The awareness of this fact is the essence of all endeavors such as that of Waldorf school education, which is rooted in what a deeper observation of human evolution reveals as necessary for our time. We must find our way back to the spirit and soul; for this we must first clearly recognize how we removed ourselves from them in the first place. There are many today who have no such understanding and, therefore, view anything that attempts to lead us back to the spirit as, well, not really the point, shall we say.

All of this talk about how matter is an over-used and wrongly-used word led me brainstorm up a word to replace the verb *matter* as in "is important" or "has meaning." A word that includes both *material* and *spiritual* meanings, and also find a word which can replace the noun *matter*.

Matterstream

**Our main stream culture
has been a matter stream culture, up until now.**

Matter has been what matters!

**But matter (condensed energy) is dead
if it is non-animate, non-living, non-moving.**

**Dead matter does not matter,
only living matter matters.**

**Let our matter-stream culture
become a pulse-stream culture from now on.**

**A culture in which living matter moves,
A culture in which living matter pulsates,
A culture in which living matter is in constant motion,
in the microcosm and macrosocsm.**

What matters is what pulsates.

If some *thing* pulsates, it matters.

What pulsates is what matters.

So let's agree to begin saying:

What is important is what pulsates.

What has meaning is what pulsates.

What has meaning pulsates.

**Pulsation as in
matter and spirit**

in a cosmic dance.

Perhaps we can:

**Replace the noun *matter* with *pulsation*
and the verb *matter* with *pulsate*.**

Does this pulsate for you?

Can you feel the pulsation of our culture?

Shall we live in a Pulse Stream Culture from now on?

People today think that if we smile at a child, it recognizes the smile and interprets it as a sign that we like them. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is the feeling within us that pulsates with the child; that feeling may create a smile on our face, but how our face looks does not pulsate within the child, only the feeling inside of us. If we say something loud out of concern for the child, the child feels the concern and the loudness of our voice is ignored, only the feeling of concern pulsates within the child. Our knowledge of what really happens inside of children is as dark as our knowledge of the so-called Dark Ages, up until now.

[page 28] Children are aware, whenever we do something in their environment, of the thoughts behind a hand-gesture or facial expression. Children intuit them: they do not, obviously, interpret facial features, since what operates instead is a much more powerful inner connection between the child and adult than will exist later between adults. Consequently, we must never allow ourselves to feel or think anything around children that should not be allowed to ripple(4) on within the child. The rule of thumb for all relationships in early education must be this: Whether in perception, feeling, or thought, whatever we do around children must be done in such a way that it may be allowed to continue vibrating their souls.

Whatever pulsates within the child will later, decades later in their forties and fifties, act as a predisposition to health or illness. Waldorf education educates not only the soul and spirit, but also the body, rightly understood.

[page 28] Consequently, we can say that if Waldorf schools educate out of spirit and soul, it is not because we choose to work in an unbalanced way with only the soul and spirit; rather, it is because we know that this is how we physically educate the inner being in the highest sense of the word. The physical being exists with the envelope of the skin.

Who would think of children before 7 as being religious and from 7 to 14 as being artistic? This is the natural way of growth, rightly understood.

[page 29] Our initial approach to life had a religious quality in that we related to nature as naturally religious beings, surrendered to the world. In this second stage, however, we are no longer obligated to merely accept passively everything coming from our environment, allowing it to vibrate in us physically; rather, we transform it creatively into images. Between the change of teeth and puberty, children are artists, though in a childish way, just as in the first phase of life, children were *homo religiosus* — naturally religious beings.

And yet our culture today is driven by and for the intellect, not by and for our artistic natures. Teachers have to digest a lot of natural science in modern textbooks, but cannot share these cold abstract thoughts and descriptions with their students. They must find a way to share this material in an artistic fashion so that their students between 7 and 14 may be able to assimilate them, to even enjoy science, instead of hating it as so many adults today report of their grade school years.

Instead taking their students along with them into a plunge into cold intellectualism, the teachers must read the material, learn, then forget it while teaching, and let their thoughts about the natural world communicate from soul to soul with their students.

[page 30] Whatever lives in our thoughts about nature must fly on the wings of artistic inspiration and transform into images. They must arise in the soul of the child.

There are two things that should definitely be avoided, and the first is *definitions!* Sharply outlined ideas such as we adults fit into definitions will cause more harm than good if we share them with children during the first or second phase of life up to puberty. Admittedly, this is easier for the teacher, but such 15-year-old ideas do not fit into an 8-year-old mind any more that 15-year-old feet would fit in an 8-year-olds shoes. Writing is filled with abstract shapes and teachers do best to approach the forming of each letter with an example of something living, like the shape of a fish shown as the form of the script letter "f". Learning the alphabet through living imagery foster healthy breathing, whereas skipping imagery by intense intellectuality in learning writing leads to shallow breathing and possible respiration diseases such as asthma as an adult.

The second thing to be avoided is a dictatorial attitude by the teacher. This creates a weakening of the child's metabolic system and will lead to chronic digestive problems in later life. If this seems all arbitrary and complicated to you, dear Reader, it will begin to make sense, to pulsate within you as you understand more of how the human being evolves along with the cosmos within which we find ourselves.

[page 34] Thus, from week to week, month to month, year to year, a true knowledge of the human being will help us read the developing being like a book that tells us what needs to be done in the teaching. The curriculum must reproduce what we read in the evolutionary process of the human being. Specific ways that we can do this will be addressed in coming lectures.

When I first encountered words written in Greek they appeared in footnoted passages of Carl Jung's books, and no translations were provided. The best I could do was to spell out the words, to transliterate the Greek spelling into English spelling. Soon I recognized the letter Phi sounded like the English sound of *ph* or *f* like in "phone". I could recognize words like *pharmacon* for the first time. But reading the meaning of the passage was beyond me. Steiner makes the point that our modern natural science has only reached this same primitive level of *spelling* in its knowledge of our human nature. It can spell a bit, but not understand the underlying reality of the words and sentences it spells out. Surely many of you Good Readers will be upset by this judgment of our sciences which, rightly understood, are moving backwards in understanding human reality. Steiner explains.

[page 36] We must answer: Until the fourteenth or fifteenth century, human beings were unable to "spell out" nature. They saw natural phenomena and received instinctive, intuitive impressions, primarily from other human beings. They did not get as far as describing organs, but their culture was spiritual and sensible, and they had an instinctive impression of the human being as a totality.

Later on, humans began to learn the alphabet of human nature while forgetting their instinctive knowledge. We have come to the situation today where we place a higher value on reading the letters of human nature than the instinctive knowledge which could read and make sense of full sentences of human nature.

[page 37] Of course, anatomists today think they know more about the heart and liver than those of earlier times. Nevertheless, people then had a picture of the heart and liver, and their perception included a spiritual element.

One of the most spiritual organs of the human body is the spleen; it is so spiritual that it continues to function if the physical organ is removed. As a result the spleen is deemed mostly useless by modern

physicians who can only read its "letters" and can not read its importance as a central regulator of bodily functions. I was discussing the process of an internal spleen massage with a brain surgeon at a club breakfast once, and I noticed his hands making an unusual gesture of cutting. He was imagining slicing open the abdomen and massaging the physical spleen directly with his hands! I smiled because I was referring to the internal massage that happens during digestion when the pulsing of the intestines rub against the spleen. This process happens, for example, during a nap taken after a full meal and is beneficial to the spleen and to the entire body. A gentle massage of spleen area by a masseuse will also be a benefit to the spleen.

The instinctive reading of human nature, an old perceptual mode, was involuntary and not conscious as we require of our modern science of human nature. Being involuntary means humans of earlier times had no moral freedom because they involuntarily followed the dictates of spiritual beings. With our immersion into materialism, we were able to free ourselves from the dictates of spiritual beings, and with that freedom came the possibility of amoral behavior. We arrived at the stage that morality requires a conscious decision from now on. We can consider that in the teens of the previous millennium, the 13th, 14th, and 15th centuries humans rebelled from the dictates of the spiritual world, much as teenagers of today rebel against the parental authorities who claim to know what's best for them. Humankind must find its way back to a morality without coercion if we are to move into our adulthood. The lessons Steiner has for teachers is a lesson for all of us at whatever age we are.

[page 38] None of this could have happened while the old perceptual mode persisted. Human beings had to be liberated for a while from the spirit working involuntarily within them so that they could freely assume that spirit itself. An unbiased observation of the activity of spiritual culture leads one to say: It is of primary importance that educators develop full awareness of the process of human evolution on Earth. Whereas there used to be an unconscious bond between teacher and student — which was true of ancient times — they must now develop a conscious bond. This is not possible if culture arises from mere spelling, which is the way of all science and human cognition today. Such a conscious relationship can arise only if we learn to progress consciously from spelling to reading. In other words, in the same way we grasp the letters in a book but get something very different from what the letters say, so we must also get from human nature something that modern natural science cannot express by itself; it is acquired only when we understand the statements of natural science as though they were letters of an alphabet, and thus we learn to read the human being.

We do not have a higher mode of understanding than humans did before the fourteenth century; they had unconsciously and instinctively what we must learn to develop consciously and volitionally.

[page 39] We are forced to use radical expressions to describe the relationship that people today have with one another and with the world. This relationship is completely misunderstood. The belief is that human beings really have something higher today than was available before the fourteenth century; but this is not true. We must develop to the degree that we learn to manipulate consciously, freely, and deliberately what we have, just as in earlier times we gained our concepts of human nature through instinctive intuition. This development in modern culture should pass through teacher training education like a magic breath and become a habit of the soul in the teachers, since only it can place the teachers at the center of that horizon of worldview, which they should perceive and survey.

Teachers must learn to know the insides of human nature, to be able to read it, not just spell it, as they were likely taught in colleges.

[page 40] When this is the situation, every experience of a teacher's development will be more than lifeless pedagogical rules; they will not need to ponder the application of one

rule or another to a child standing in front of them, which would be fundamentally wrong.

A teacher must always hold this one unanswered question when confronted by a child, "What must I do with this child?" Not what do the rules tell me to do? No, what must I do as a full human being with this child who has awakened my human nature and inspired me to respond fully to its needs? To that end, I must learn to read a child like I read a book, learn the relationships between the letters and how letters form words, and words, sentences. That is the relationship that must exist between teacher and pupils.

[page 40] Teachers will not place too much nor too little value on the material development of the bodily nature; they will adopt the appropriate attitude toward bodily nature and then learn to apply what physiology and experimental psychology have to say about children. Most of all, they will be able to rise from a perception of details to a complete understanding of the growing human being.

Understanding the Fourfold Human Being

Steiner says we must have an inner musical perception in order to experience the astral human being. I have played several musical instruments, sang in a Barbershop Chorus, and studied acoustics in advanced physics, yet I admit lacking an inner perception of thirds and fifths or hear the difference between a major and minor chord. That makes me unable to experience the formative effect of the astral body in the human being. I hold as unanswered question how the difference between a minor and major third are found in the radius and ulna of the lower arm.

I know that when I rotate my fist the radius connected to my thumb rotates around the ulna , but have no idea how this is related to major and minor except the ulna is necessarily longer than the radius. I know the tonic is the center of the chord and what the second and third are. Somehow chords are formed of major and minor thirds.

If a chord is formed with a major third below a minor third, it is called a major chord; if a chord is formed with a minor third below a major third, it is called a minor chord. Thus, the longer ulna with the shorter radius on top of it represents a major chord and the reversed position with the ulna on top represents a minor chord. This is how I interpret, with my scant knowledge of music theory as a physicist, what Steiner says in the passage below:

[page 46] The astral body is not natural history, natural science, or physics; it is music. This is true to the extent that, in the forming activity within the human organism, it is possible to trace how the astral body has a musical formative effect in the human being. This formative activity flows from the center between the shoulder blades, first into the tonic of the scale; as it flows on into the second, it builds the upper arm, and into the third, the lower arm. When we come to the third we arrive at the difference between major and minor; we find two bones in the lower arm — not just one — the radius and ulna, which represent minor and major. One who studies the outer human organization, insofar as it depends on the astral body, must approach physiology not as a physicist, but as a musician.

Here are the four parts of the full human being, the physical body, the etheric body, the astral body, and the I as described by Steiner in a way which is outside of the nine dots of the academic disciplines. We must rise from abstract principles to formative qualities to understand our etheric body. We must hear cosmic music expressing itself in our astral body. We must come to know the genius of speech as it works in forming words and ideas to comprehend the I. (Page 48 summary).

Steiner sums it all up this way:

[page 49] What we must become aware of may be expressed this way: First, we come to

know the physical body in an abstract, logical sense. Then we turn to the sculptural formative activity with intuitive cognition and begin to understand the etheric body. Third, as a physiologist, one becomes a musician and views the human being the way one would look at a musical instrument — an organ or violin — where one sees music realized. Thus, we understand the astral human being. And when we come to know the genius of speech as it works creatively in words — not merely connecting it with words through the external memory — we gain knowledge of the human I-being.

Out of the primal Chaos came the Word is how Steiner suggests we understand the beginning words of the [Gospel of John](#). From this Word came the I which inhabits and enlivens each of us, rightly understood.

In Lecture 4, Steiner reworks our 3R's as follows: 'Riting, Reading, and 'Rithmetic as he suggest that reading is an unbalanced activity if it is taught before writing. Writing itself should flow from artistic pursuits like painting and drawing so that children can learn to write about their deepest experiences. Only then should reading be taught.

[page 53] When children have reached a certain level of development, they can speak and then write what they have said. This is when it becomes appropriate to teach reading. Reading is easy to teach once writing has been somewhat developed. After children have begun work within their own being — in the nervous system and limbs, in the substance of their writing and reading, and in their inner participation in producing reading material — only then are they ready for one-sided activity. Then, without any danger to their development as human beings, the head can become active, and what they first learned by writing is turned into reading.

On pages 55 through 57 Steiner gives a tutorial on Goethe's understanding of the growth of plants through a cycle of expansion and contraction. Steiner develops this cycle further by showing it is the influence of the Sun which fosters the expansion and the influence of the Moon which fosters the contraction of the plant. Sun forces cause leaves to develop in expansive waves to the top of the plant, then Moon forces cause a contraction into a seed from which a new plant can growth. Always Sun-expansion, Moon-contraction. If this sounds weird to you, perhaps a bit of proof would be welcome. Easter provides a proof of the connection of the Sun and Moon's effect on plants. In 2016 Easter was very late, falling on March 27. As a result our blackberry bushes fruited almost a whole month later than usual, in May instead of April. The plants are aware of the Sun and the Moon. Our Easter lilies often bloom close to Easter, but this year our last lily was still blooming on June 23. The ancients knew of this relationship.

[page 58] Ancient, instinctive wisdom was conscious of such things, and what follows offers proof of this. In the plant life that buds from the Earth in spring, people saw a cosmic reflection of the relationship between Sun forces and Moon forces. Thus, spring was celebrated with the Easter festival, whose date was determined by the relationship between Sun and Moon. The Easter festival occurs on the first Sunday after the spring full moon. The time of the Easter festival is therefore determined in reference to the cosmos — the relationship between Sun and Moon. What people of those ancient times might have implied was this: When we see plants budding in spring, we are faced with the enigma of why they appear sometimes earlier and sometimes later. The fact that the time of the spring full moon plays an essential role in all these processes of budding and sprouting allows us to get to the heart of this riddle.

My brother David was a fisherman *par excellence* — when he wasn't working, he went fishing. He drove past cows in a pasture on his way fishing and over a decade or so he noticed a pattern: if the cows were standing, the fish were biting; if the cows were sitting down the fish were not biting. Cows eat only when standing and rest when sitting. Apparently the cows and fishes are both affected by the forces of the Sun and Moon.

[page 60] We must return again to a living cognition, just as we still see the aftereffects in such things as the determination of Easter time. But such insight into the cosmos must result from consciously developed knowledge — not from the instinctive knowledge of earlier ages.

As part of this consciously developed knowledge, I propose that we create a new word to replace the verb *matter* to express this living cognition, namely *pulsate*. Definitions are dead concepts, as dead as the noun *matter* is. If a teacher presents the growth of plants in living pictures, it will appeal to their entire body and the effect will be obvious.

[page 61] You will quickly see the animation in children as they grasp something presented to them pictorially. They will not answer with a concept that merely comes from the lips — one that cannot be really formed yet — but they will tell a story using their arms and hands and all kinds of body language.

In other words, the children will *pulsate* with an excitement that reveals that true education is taking place in a classroom. Part of the excitement is the presence of unanswered questions created in the children by the teacher's living pictures. The teacher does not need to explain away every aspect of the pictures, they can instead seed questions in the children which will grow into answers as ripe fruit may appear on trees decades after their seeds were planted.

[page 62] Pedagogy must be alive. It involves more than just applying oneself; it must come to flower from the very life situations of education. And it can do this when it grows from the teachers' living experience of their own being in the cosmos.

Watch now as Conductor Steiner steps up the center of the orchestra and taps his baton to call us to attention. He is presenting the Human Being Symphony to us Good Readers. Hold onto your seats, you and I are becoming the students as Herr Steiner is presenting living pictures to us of our own humanity in the form of a symphony with the *Fourfold Human Being* as an orchestra playing the *bull*, *lion*, *eagle*, and *angel* sections in harmony.

[page 62, 63] The bull represents an unbalanced development of the lowest forces of human nature. Picture the forces in the human metabolic-limb system without any balancing forces in the head and rhythmic systems; forces in the head and rhythmic systems; in other words, imagine an unbalanced and prevailing development of the metabolic-limb system. Here we have a one-sided formation that presents itself to us as the bull. We can thus imagine that if this bull nature were toned down by the human head organization, it would develop into something like the human being.

Next comes the lion section of our symphony orchestra. The lion has a shortened abdominal structure which allows to eat large chunks of meat at a time without chewing it and requires it to sit still while digestion takes place, during which it displays its noble lion's head and mane.

[page 63] If the central rhythmic system is developed in an unbalanced way — for example, through a contraction of the abdominal system or a stunting of the head system — we can picture it as lion nature.

But there is one section in which the head is over-developed and produces a bird or eagle nature which is like a flying head.

[page 63] If, however, there is one-sided development of the head organism in such a way that the forces otherwise existing in the inner part of the head push out into "feathers," we get a bird, or eagle nature.

Something is needed to pull these three diverse sections together in the Human Symphony and that is the

angel section.

[page 63] If we imagine forces that enable these three qualities to harmonize as a unity that can manifest by adding the angelic fourth, we get a synthesis of the three — the human being.

You may recognize these forms of Bull, Lion, Eagle, and Angel as associated with the writers of the four Gospels: [Luke](#), [Mark](#), [John](#), and [Matthew](#). This is another indication of the four sections of the Human Symphony which must play in harmony to make a complete human being. Steiner says on page 63, "These things were alive in the instinctive wisdom of ancient times." We can see them as still alive today in church art everywhere, if we but look with understanding of their meaning.

[page 64] Thus, when we determine humankind's relationship to the animal kingdom through observation, we find the relationship between the astral body and the outer world. We must apply a musical understanding to the astral body. I gaze into the human being, and out toward the myriad animal forms. Its as if we were to take a symphony where all the tones sound together in a wonderful, harmonious, and melodious whole and, over the course of time, separated each tone from the others and juxtaposed them.

As we look out into the animal world, we have the single tones. As we look into the human astral body and what it builds in the physical and etheric bodies, we have the symphony. If we go beyond an intellectual view of the world and have enough cognitive freedom to rise to artistic knowledge, we develop an inner reverence, permeated with religious fervor, for the invisible being — the marvelous world composer — who first arranged the tones in the various animal forms, and then created the human being as a symphony of the phenomena of animal nature.

These are the living realities which must pulsate in a teacher who wishes to enliven their students rather than bore them silly.

[page 65] A teacher comes into the class with the fullness of this abundance, and when dealing with children, it's as though they found before them a voice for the world mysteries pulsating and streaming through the teacher, as though merely an instrument through which the world speaks to the child. There is then a real inner, enlivening quality in the method of instruction, not just superficial pedantry. Enthusiasm must not be artificially produced, but blossom like a flower from the teacher's relationship to the world; this is the important thing.

Through the living pictures of the 0-7 age and the musical symphony absorbed in the 7-14 age, the intellect can develop as the astral body becomes free at puberty. Compare this process of teaching to that of the bank deposit metaphor where a teacher deems its job is to place knowledge into its students. It just doesn't work effectively that way.

[page 65] The human intellect does not absorb anything of what we force on it intellectually from outside; before the intellect can receive anything, it must first develop within the individual in a different way.

We must take hold of our astral body which beats in synchrony with the etheric body's forming work. When these two harmonize the young adult can begin to understand what was perceived earlier and find an inner freedom which is the most precious gift any human can receive. I remember when that moment came for me at the age of 18. I bought a book in a college bookstore of Ralph Waldo Emerson's Complete Essays and later in my dorm room, I read his amazing essay on "Self-Reliance" — it changed my life forever.

[page 66] The most important thing for which we can prepare a child is the experience of

freedom, at the right moment in life, through the understanding of one's own being. True freedom is an inward experience and is developed only when the human being is viewed in this way. As a teacher, I must say that I cannot pass on freedom to another human being — each must experience it individually. Nevertheless, I must plant something within the person — something *intact* because I have left it untouched — to which that person's own intact being feels attracted and into which it may become immersed.

My parents were high school graduates and not intellectuals, so they allowed me to grow through puberty without trying to stuff me with intellectuality and high-faluting ideas. I said I wanted to go to college, the first in my generation to do so, and they said, "Good, but we can't support you in college, you'll have to do it by yourself." They placed no expectations on me against which I could rebel. In place of paying for my college education, they gave me the most precious gift of all, *freedom*.

My parents were competent in many areas, parenting, farming, hunting, fishing, building, sewing, etc. They were no klutzes. All their skills flowed seamlessly into me and from me into my own children. Steiner gives an example of how a klutz operates — they teach intellectual concepts to children who have yet to reach puberty.

[page 67] If I educate intellectually before puberty — if I offer abstract concepts or ready-made, sharply outlined observations instead of growing, living pictures — I am violating the human being and crudely handling the I within. [RJM: In other words, being a klutz.]

If my parents were alive today, I could say to them the very words with which Steiner on page 67 closes Lecture Four, "You have accomplished something with me; my freedom has been left whole. You have made it possible for me to grant myself my own freedom at the right moment in life. You have done something that enables me to stand before you now, shaping myself as a human being from my individuality, which you left reverently untouched." Thank you Buster and Annette. Thank you Steiner. Amen.

Steiner was not concerned with details of Waldorf pedagogy in these lectures, but wished to "describe the spirit of this method as a whole." (Page 68) He sought out teachers who would be "soul-artists" — who would show an abundance of enthusiasm; teachers who read children and adjust their methods to what they needed. Overall, he knew that "Children develop in the right way in their growth to adulthood only when education is *lived with* children and not forced upon them." (Page 69)

During the child's first period of life (0-7) moralizing doesn't matter. The child is still so spiritual that rules about conduct won't fit into its soul. Our actions as parents and caregivers will be mimicked by the child, but not understood. In the second period (7-14) rules will be mostly ignored, but parents' and teacher's "gestures and way of speaking will enter the child along with any truth, beauty, and goodness as revealed in the heart." (Page 70) Whenever Steiner says "teacher" we can include also parents, caregivers, and playmates in the child's home environment.

[page 71] Children do not ask intellectually with words, but deep in their hearts. "May I do this?" or "May I do that?" They will be answered, "Yes, you may," if the teacher does it. "Should I leave this undone?" "Yes, because my teacher shows that it may be left undone."

This is how children experience the world through the teacher — the world as goodness or evil, as beauty or ugliness, and as truth or falsehood. This relationship to the teacher — the activity of the hidden forces between the child's heart and that of the teacher — is the most important aspect of the teaching method; the conditions for life in education are contained in this.

We as parents and teachers must consider ourselves more as alarm clocks than as postmen. We must

awaken beliefs in our children, not load them full of beliefs like a postman stuffs junk mail into our mailboxes. If we do this rightly, Steiner says, "We become awakeners, not stuffers of the souls of children." (Page 72)

The German philosopher Kant saw duty as all-important to human beings, telling us that duty was action *sans* volition. We did it because we were told to it. Schiller and Goethe both took umbrage at Kant's concept of duty. Goethe said, "Duty — that is, where people love what they tell themselves to do." Steiner said, "It was a great moment when morality was purged of Kant's influence and made human again through Schiller and Goethe." (Page 73)

If ever there was a rule which prevented children from holding unanswered questions(5), it was the one called "visual instruction" in Steiner's time. Children will hold onto mysteries which appear in the course of their instruction, will hold them as unanswered questions until some bright day, an answer will appear to them in later life. One time at the age of 9, I was checking out books from my library, and the librarian looked carefully through one of the books as if to decide whether I should be allowed to take home this book. For me, it was a story in words and drawings about a cartoon character named Spiro and his adventures through the inside a human body. She let me take out the book. Only some twenty years later did I realize that Spiro was a syphilis bug and the words I couldn't understand at the time described the course of a bout with the disease. At age 30 or so, I all at once understood why the disease leads to blindness because I had seen in that book Spiro come out of the human eye at one point in the story. The spiral point of his tail was how he bored into the human skin to enter the blood stream.

[page 76] There are those who limit themselves to a triviality often known as "visual instruction." They entrench themselves behind the rule — as obvious as it is foolish — that children should be shown only what they can comprehend, and they fall into absurdities that could drive a person crazy. This principle must be replaced by that deeper principle that helps us to understand what it means for the vitality of a person when at the age of forty, a sudden realization occurs: For the first time I can understand what that respected authority thought and accomplished earlier. I absorbed it because, to me, that individual embodied truth, goodness, and beauty. Now I have the opportunity to draw from the depths what I heard in those days.

Steiner tells us that "a true teacher must always keep in view all of life." My librarian was a true teacher because she allowed me to read something that I clearly was not ready for at the time, but which stayed with me powerfully all of my life.

[page 76, 77] A teacher must, for example, be able to see the wonderful element that is present in many older people, whose very presence brings a kind of blessing without much in the way of words; a kind of blessing is contained in every gesture. This is a characteristic of many people who stand at the threshold of death. From where does this come? Such individuals have this quality because, during childhood, they developed devotion naturally. Such reverence and devotion during childhood later becomes the capacity to bless. We may say that at the end of earthly life, people cannot stretch out their hands in blessing if they have not learned to fold them in prayer during childhood. The capacity for blessing when one grows old and comes near the threshold of death originates with folding ones hands in prayer with reverent, childhood devotion.

Only living processes such as those of a teacher can shape souls of human beings. Since the age of materialism began, however, we have been acting as blacksmiths hammering at matter to shape it to our ends. But a blacksmith cannot hammer on spirits to shape them, so there have been casualties along the way, namely our spirit, our human I.

[page 79] This is primarily due to the fact that — while we have hammered away at perception of matter and at activity in matter — spirit has been shattered, and with it

the I. <

If we place limits on knowledge, as is common, saying that we cannot enter the realm of spirit, this implies only that we cannot enter the human realm. To limit knowledge means that we remove the human being from the world as far as knowing is concerned.

When we reach a state where we connect the human I to matter, then only matter matters, and we begin to treat human beings like zombies. This opens the door to all kinds of moral abuses such as voluntary abortions, euthanasia, and suicides. What causes this?

[page 79] . . . matter oppresses people. Matter confines each person within the bodily nature, and each individual thus becomes more or less isolated in soul. Unless we find other human beings in spirit, we become isolated souls, since human beings cannot, in fact, be found in the body.

What's the solution? Humans need to find that spirit matters and matter spirits.

[page 79, 80] Souls who are isolated in individual bodies pass one another by, whereas souls who awaken the spirit within to find spirit itself also find themselves, as human being, in communication with other human beings. Real community will blossom from the present chaos only when people find the spirit — when, living together in spirit, they find each other.

Our eye is open to the world and can reflect the entire world in itself. But is there any living organism that can reflect the entire cosmos in itself? Yes, the human being is that organism. The human being was formed out of the entire cosmos in body, soul, and spirit and can reflect the whole cosmos in itself. This is not a reflection as in a mirror; this is an inner reality. "Thus," Steiner concludes, "in the process of education, the world becomes human, and the human being discovers the world in the self." (Page 81) If you are alive today, you can participate in the process of educating your own self and if a teacher, educating your own excitement about being an integral part of the cosmos to your students.

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

Footnote 1.

See my [Teaching and Learning in the Classroom](#) essay.

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

Footnote 2.

Peel away the facade of a critic of the Waldorf School system, and you will find a person who has done little work to understand Steiner, only enough work to criticize him, which in this materialistic age requires little work.

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

Footnote 3.

Note that in seven years all the atoms in our human body are replaced with new ones.

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

Footnote 4.

Steiner uses the word *ripple* as we might say *pulsate*.

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

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**Footnote 5.**

What is the power of an unanswered question? This is one of my basic rules, which is as open-ended as the 'visual instruction' rule Steiner's time was close ended.

Read more here: <http://www.doyletics.com/mrules.shtml#mrn25>

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

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