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## A READER'S JOURNAL

### The Renewal of Education, GA#301 by Rudolf Steiner

14 Lectures in Basel, Switzerland, April 20 to  
May 16, 1920

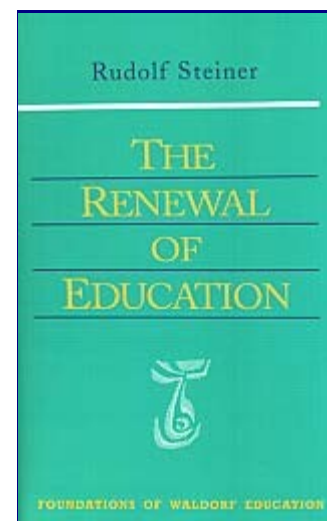
Foreword by Eugene Schwartz

Translated by Robert F. Lathe

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A Book Review by Bobby Matherne ©2018



The title of this book would be better re-stated as "The Refreshing of Education" as Steiner avers in Lecture 7, "I do not believe a *renewal* of education is necessary, since present educational principles contain many good things. I believe that primarily a *refreshing* of education is necessary." (Page 121, *italics added*)

In 1920, the educational advances by John Dewey and Maria Montessori came to prominence, while Steiner's work in education was just getting started. The insights people garnered from Steiner's spiritual science led them to ask him for help in many areas.

**[page 9] By 1920, a host of practical endeavors were undergoing transformation or renewal through Steiner's anthroposophical insights. Every profession or vocation requiring renewal compelled Steiner to provide new imaginations and inspirations for its practitioners so that they in turn could act with new intuitions as challenges arose.**

Examples of Steiner's contributions can be found in architecture, dance, sculpture, medicine, agriculture, worship, and education: each contribution leading to a renewal of the field. His contribution to education came after Emil Molte asked him to speak on the subject to the workers in his Waldorf-Astoria factory in Stuttgart. Afterwards, the workers wanted their children educated based on the methods Steiner had described, and the first Waldorf School was organized for the children of the factory workers. Steiner saw great value in Waldorf education; seeing that it helped to create the kind of adults to which he sought to bring his spiritual science. This led to his focusing the last six years of his life on helping teachers to bring the living spirit to classrooms which had waxed intensely materialistic, up until then.

Often when I mention Waldorf schools, people want to know how they are different from Montessori schools. In his Foreword, Eugene Schwartz helps us by contrasting the Dewey and Montessori approaches to education with the Steiner approach.

**[page 13] As we accompany Steiner on this journey, we can understand the appeal of Dewey's "Problem Approach" and the Montessori method — as well as their limitations. By emphasizing the education of the cognitive forces at any age, Dewey's methods can**

**heighten a child's sense of independence and wakefulness, while Montessori's stress on the will can strengthen the life of habit and inner discipline. In Steiner's terms, the "Problem Approach" would not be appropriate until adolescence, and using it exclusively from the kindergarten years on up could result in "accelerated adolescence," a premature wakefulness that would undercut the childlike wonder and playfulness that are the foundations of a healthy adulthood. When viewed from the vantage point of these lectures, the Montessori approach could be valid in the will-filled kindergarten years, but might hold the child back from the development of independent imaginative and creative forces as he or she matured. With her emphasis on the teacher's need to "hold back" and allow the child to discover things for herself, Montessori also weakens the strong bonds of feeling that can grow between a teacher and student.**

Dewey's system tends to create "little professors" who bubble over with information at a time when they would be better served by a sense of wonder and unanswered questions as they approach maturation. Montessori's system can disconnect the child from the authority model of the teacher at an essential stage of child development.

Some of these little professors can grow into adults who can spout from memory what they have learned. Steiner deemed people who could do this with tenets of his spiritual science as "immature". He saw absorbing spiritual science as digestion, just as when we eat a food and completely digest it, we forget about it as it becomes part of a new life within us. When asked about spiritual science, one does best to re-create an answer from one's understanding and not reel off a glib answer learned by rote(1). Steiner stresses this in the passage below:

**[page 15] To carry anthroposophical knowledge in one's memory is a sign of imperfection, for Anthroposophy must be a living spring which constantly renews itself within the soul. And this is the very mood in which one should face one's pupils. Therefore the real task of spiritual science is to revitalize the human soul in a similar way to that in which our digestion gives new life to the physical body every day. All memorized matter should disappear from the mind to make room for an actively receptive spirit. Allowing spiritual science to flow into one's sphere of ideation will fructify the art of education.**

Schwartz closes his brilliant Foreword with this comment which sets the eponymous theme of this book:

**[page 15] To Rudolf Steiner, the "renewal of education" can be brought about only by men and women who, with courage and initiative, will be willing to undertake their own renewal.**

Our modern culture has become progressively more materialistic and Steiner says on Page 21, "This materialistic attitude has not been visible in the same degree in every area, but it has had the most damaging effects upon education." Take a look at people who insist that we cannot find a connection between the soul and the body and use that as a justification for saying the soul does not exist. "How is the soul connected to the body?" they demand that we answer. It turns out to be a badly-formed question and therefore incapable of producing an answer.

**[page 23, 24] Nearly everyone who takes this question seriously undergoes a form of suffering, but they do not realize that the way the question is normally presented is simply not correct.**

A better question is how does the soul develop out of the body? And how as parents and educators can we perceive this happening in a developing child?

**[page 24, *italics added*] When we look at the developing child, we can understand how the soul develops out of the physical body. Those who have a sense of outer form see how**

**the child develops in such wonderful and mysterious ways. They can also see that when we follow the child's growth from day to day in the first weeks of life, and then from week to week, month to month, year to year throughout the child's life, that development speaks strongly to our sense of humanity. Those who watch this transformation and have a sense of how the soul is progressing must pose the question, "How is *what develops as the soul* connected with the physical body as we see it revealed externally?"**

To a scientist who denies the existence of a soul, this question is meaningless; to an educator dealing with growing children, this question is essential to forming useful teaching strategies.

**[page 24] Certain phenomena are simply not objectively observed by modern science; yet when we observe a child's first years of life, we see things that give us a new riddle each day. We need only to look. The child cuts its first baby teeth about the age of one or sometimes a little later; these baby teeth fall out and are replaced by the permanent teeth around the age of seven. But what do they really mean, these facts modern science describes in detail everywhere? What do they suggest about the development of the human being?**

Steiner suggests that our ability to retain memories is what develops in us as our second set of teeth are formed between birth and seven years old.

**[page 25, 26] We should also try to gain a genuine sense of what changes in the soul. Try remembering, and see how far back clear memories reach. Then think about how little we remember prior to the change of teeth; that is, how little people can collect concepts to retain in their memory before the change of teeth. We can thus conclude that the less the organism has to use those strong forces to create the adult teeth, the more a human being will be able to form its thoughts into firm pictures that can remain in the memory.**

Science has shown that our hippocampus is also undergoing development as our body grows from birth so that by age five, we reach full memory capability. Those strong forces working on new teeth as Steiner mentions are also apparently ramping up the functionality of our hippocampus so it can send live events to the cortex to be stored as cognitive memories. [\(2\)](#)

**[page 26] Can those forces that give rise to the teeth be in some way connected to the pictorial aspects of thinking? Isn't it as though the soul needs to give the child's body the use of certain bodily forces during the first seven years, until the change of teeth, so that the teeth can form? When they are complete, a metamorphosis occurs and the child transforms these forces so that they become forces for conceptualization in the soul.**

In Lecture Three, *Aspects of the Human Being*, Steiner reveals that there are three aspects to each of these four aspects of the full human being. First, the four:

**[page 38] I said that in spiritual science we speak of the physical human being, the etheric human being, the astral human being, and the I. Each of these aspects of human nature has three aspects of its own.**

In the physical body, the three aspects are the *nerve-sense*, the *rhythmic system*, and the *metabolism*. The first aspect is the nerve-sense system which is located the periphery of the human being and exhibits a high degree of independence and individuality, and is directly connected to human *thinking*.

**[page 39] Because modern people consider the whole human being as some nebulous unity, science cannot comprehend the fundamental independence of the nerve-sense human being.**

In the physical body, the second aspect is the rhythmic organism, which is directly connected with human *feeling*.

**[page 39] It is the part of our respiratory, circulatory, and lymphatic systems that is rhythmic. Everything that has rhythmic activity within the human being is part of the second system, which is relatively independent from the nerve-sense system. It is as though these two systems exist alongside one another, independently, yet in communication with one another. Modern science's vague concept of a unified human being does not exist.**

In the physical body, the third aspect is the metabolism or metabolic organism. It contains everything connected with human *willing*.

**[page 39, 40] If you look at the activities of these three aspects of the human being, the nerve-sense being, the human being that lives in certain rhythmic activities, and the human being who lives in the metabolism, you have everything that exists in human nature to the extent that it is an active organism. At the same time, you have an indication of three independent systems within the human organism. Modern science creates quite false concepts about these three independent systems when it states that the life of the soul is connected with the nerves. This is a habit of thought that has established itself since about the end of the eighteenth century.**

It is a tenet of modern physiology that humans have sense nerves and motor nerves. The sense nerves tell us something is there and the motor nerve allows us to make some movement happen. This is a fallacy according to Steiner. He says that we have only *sensory* nerves which report to us on the presence of objects in the world, one set of those objects comprises our limbs: our arms, legs, fingers, and toes. Just as we cannot move a rock outside of us unless we can sense its presence, so also we cannot move a finger unless we can sense its presence. Once we can sense its presence, we can will it to move, and only then. The same nerves which carry the sense of presence report on the movement of the finger when we will it to move.

Sometimes our maps of the territory turn into the territory itself. For example, when the telegraph arrived on the scene in Steiner's time, it provided scientists a ready model for what they called *motor* nerves. This model, a *cheap comparison* which Steiner calls erroneous, soon became entrenched as a reality to these materialistic scientists and their successors.

**[page 41, 42] The differentiation between sense and motor nerves is a most willing servant of materialism. It is a servant that could have arisen in materialistic science only because a cheap comparison could be found for it in modern times, namely, the telegraph. We telegraph from one station to another and then telegraph back. It is approximately a picture of the process of telegraphy that people use to describe how the sense and motor nerves communicate between the periphery and the central organ. Of course, this whole picture was possible only in an age like the nineteenth century, when telegraphy played such an important role. Had telegraphy not existed, perhaps people would not have formed that picture. Instead they might have developed a more natural view of the corresponding processes.**

If telegraphy is a misplaced metaphor, what is the connection between an act of willing and the metabolism? As long as a sense-nerve exists, the perception of the metabolic process will be received and motion will be possible, but if the sense-nerve is broken, no perception of the limb is possible and no movement can take place<sup>(3)</sup>. Steiner's father worked in a remote telegraphy station and as a young boy Steiner discovered science's error in presuming separate motor and sensory nerves.

**[page 42] I began to study nerves as a very young man, and it was very earthshaking for me when I noticed that this theory served materialism. It did this by transforming what**

**is a direct influence of the will upon the metabolism into something merely physical, into an imagined physical strand of nerves carrying the will impulse from the central organ to the periphery of the human being to the muscles. People simply imposed material processes upon the human organism.**

**In an act of will, there is in truth a direct connection between the will impulse of the soul and some process in the metabolism. The nerve exists only to transmit the *perception* of this process.**

Here's the curious part: the nerve also transmits a perception of a circulation change when a feeling occurs.

**[page 42, 43] All feeling is directly connected with the rhythmic processes. Again, the nerves exist only to directly perceive what occurs between the feeling in the soul and the rhythmic processes in the organism.**

Now Steiner gives us a brief summary of the three aspects of the physical human being in thinking, feeling, and willing.

**[page 43] Today I wanted only to give some indication of what is shown by an objective observation of the human organism as consisting of three aspects: namely, that the nerve-sense organism is related to the imaginative, thinking life of the soul. We have the rhythmic organism, which relates to the feeling life of the soul, and finally, the metabolic organism, which, in its broadest sense, is related to the willing life in the soul.**

Why is it that some people feel a wall exists between them and other people? Perhaps they have introjected materialism to such an extreme that they experience an unbreachable wall between them and others(4).

**[page 45] I am convinced that the incorrect hypotheses about sense and motor nerves that modern science has incorporated as a servant of materialism (and incorporated more strongly than we may think) have already taken over human thinking. In the next, or perhaps the following generation, it will become the general attitude. I am convinced that this materialistic theory about the nerves has already become the general mentality and that what we find today as theory in physiology or psychology has entered so deeply into our thinking that this attitude actually separates people. If you have the feeling — and many people do — that when we meet another human being, we make only sense impressions upon that person, and the other person upon us; that the other person is a closed entity with its own feeling life, separate from us; and that this person's feelings can be transmitted only through her own nerves, we create a wall of separation between people.**

How can we help people breach this wall and bring people together as vibrant, living human beings again? We can give them insight into their existence as thinking, feeling, and willing human beings. This is a perspective that Steiner shared with us so eloquently.

**[page 46] The perspective that connects the life of the nerves with our ability to creatively picture our thoughts, that connects our living circulation and respiration with feeling, and connects our entire metabolism with willing, will bring people together again once it becomes the general attitude, once it finally becomes actual experience.**

When we learn that meanings fly from soul to soul on the wings of words, we will dissolve the wall that materialism has built up between people, up until now.

Having covered the three aspects of the physical body in thinking, feeling, and willing, Steiner now moves along to the three aspects of the etheric body which contains our soul life. These three aspects are

sympathies and antipathies and a combination of the two together.

**[page 47] To understand the life of our soul in a living way, it is better not to begin with thinking, feeling, and willing. If we instead concentrate on something that permeates our entire soul life, we can recognize it as a primary characteristic of our living soul. We can see that the soul lives alternately in sympathies and antipathies, in loves and hates. Normally we do not notice how the soul swings between loves and hates, between sympathies and antipathies. We do not notice it because we do not properly evaluate certain processes of the soul.**

Whenever we make a judgment we experience it through sympathy if it is a positive judgment and through antipathy if a negative judgment. In between we experience a third state when having to choose between the two conditions of sympathy and antipathy.

**[page 48] The accuracy of the judgment is not based upon sympathy or antipathy; rather the accuracy is experienced through sympathy or antipathy. We could also say that a third situation lies clearly between sympathy and antipathy. That is the situation when someone has to choose between the two. In our souls, we do not merely have sympathy and antipathy; we also clearly have alternation between the two, which is also a positive state. Though this is not as clearly differentiated as in the physical body, since we are dealing with a process and not with clearly defined organs, we can divide our soul life into sympathies, antipathies, and something in between.**

Steiner has developed a distinction for us between the physical and the soul aspects of our human being.

**[page 48] The physical consists of the nerve-sense processes, the circulatory processes, and the metabolism. The soul aspect of the human being consists of experiencing antipathy, sympathy, and the alternation between those two.**

What are the spiritual aspects of our human being? They are waking, sleeping, and dreaming.

**[page 48, 49] The spiritual aspect of the human being also exists in three parts. When we want to understand the human being spiritually, we must in the first place take note of waking experience, which we all know as a state of spiritual life and which is a part of us from waking until sleeping. Another spiritual state, sleeping life, exists from the time we fall asleep until we awaken. Finally, we have a third state between those two, which we encounter at the moment of awakening, namely, dream life. Waking, dreaming, and sleeping are the three aspects of spiritual life.**

We can now understand that in *thinking* our waking spirit is active, in *feeling* our dreaming spirit is active, and in *willing* our dreamless sleeping spirit is active. About *willing*: when you raise your arm, you have no awareness of what happens, only a perception that your arm is raised. You may think "I want to raise my arm" and notice that it raises, but all that goes into its raising you remain completely unaware of, as if you were in a dreamless sleep during its raising.

What is the task of the heart? Is it merely a pump as doctors believe to be the case? Is it a pump at all? It pulses, of course, but does it drive the blood to circulate or does the circulation of the blood drive the heart to pulsate? Note that during fetal development there is clear evidence of blood circulation while the heart is still being formed. This is an inconvenient truth which flies in the face of the materialistic view of the heart as a pump, is it not?

**[page 63] You need learn only a little embryology to learn that the heart slowly develops in the organs of the blood circulatory system, in the system of vessels. You can see that the heart is not there first, with the circulatory system developing from it, but that the circulatory system develops slowly, with the heart as the final result. You can see**

**directly from embryology that the situation is just as I have described it.**

The task of the heart in the post-birth human being is that of a hydraulic ram designed to create vortices in the chambers of the heart for enriching the venal blood with oxygen from the lungs and nutrients from the digestive system before sending it out via arteries to the body.

The spleen is another important organ which is mostly misunderstood by doctors today who think it is unimportant because it can be removed surgically with little ill effects.

**[page 64] In the English language, which in comparison to the languages of Central Europe is still at an early stage of development, the word *spleen*, as an emotional state, has something to do with the soul. However, *spleen* also refers to an organ, and for good reason, since the *spleen* of the soul has much to do with the *spleen* organ.**

The spleen is a spiritual control center for the human body, which remains operational even if the spleen organ is removed. I mentioned once to a friend who was a surgeon the benefits of an internal spleen massage and before I could explain how that happened during a nap after a meal, I could see his hands moving as if they were inside a body massaging a physical spleen. No, I said, the peristalsis of digestion creates a gentle internal spleen massage.

**[page 64] Materialism has nearly lost an understanding of the physical organs, particularly those of the human being. How can we work with a human being if we are not in a position to understand what the human being is physically? We must first understand that the human being is built up piece by piece out of the spirit-soul, so that there is nothing physical that is not a revelation of the spirit-soul.**

The forces which create the child's second teeth by age seven also activate the child's ability to imitate what goes on around the child. This is a physical process which reveals a spirit-soul functioning at work.

**[page 66] These are the forces active in the child's motive for imitation. Imagine what it means when you grasp that not only intellectually, but when with the entirety of your being, with your soul, when you have a universal, human understanding of it. It means that when I do something in front of a child who is not yet seven years old, not only do I do it for myself, but my doing also enters the child's doing. My deeds do not exist for me alone.**

Everything you do in front of a child, your very innermost thoughts, are communicated to the child. The child will absorb your attitude and years later will reflect that attitude to you, often causing you great consternation, especially during their teenage years. As a parent, teacher, and caregiver to a young child, you do best to understand how important your charge is when you are in their presence.

**[page 66] I am not alone with my deeds, with my willing, with my feeling. I am not alone with my thinking; there are intangibles that also have an effect. There is a difference in whether I live alongside a child with a good attitude and allow the child to grow up alongside of me, or whether I do it with a poor attitude. These intangibles have an effect but they are not yet recognized. If we do not honor the connection between the spirit-soul and individual physical human organs, then we do not honor what exists between human beings as a real force, the spirit-soul itself.**

There is a difference between a person who carries knowledge around as dry, memorized facts to be shared and someone who exudes a sense of warmth and enthusiasm for the knowledge they share with children. The latter type of person is the true teacher who can reach into the souls of their students.

**[page 67] If we are active in every fiber of our soul, and identify ourselves with that knowledge, then the love for what we carry in our souls is just as much a means of**

**communication as demonstrations and language. An education made fruitful through spiritual science enables us to understand the importance of this kind of intangibility.**

Rightly understood, love flies from soul to soul on the wings of human words, and a teacher who understands and lives in this reality is a true treasure indeed for their students.

Abstract thoughts are mere empty words for children, and teachers who use such thoughts build up a wall between them and their students, a wall such as represented dramatically in the Pink Floyd movie, "The Wall."

**[page 69] The content of thoughts is essentially very abstract. As teachers, we cannot approach the developing human being through these thoughts. In a certain sense, there is an impenetrable wall between us. That wall exists in social life and brings us many social problems. It also exists in areas such as teaching and education. Through the scientific materialism that has taken over all our thinking and, to an extent, our feeling, everything we have to say about the soul or spirit has slowly become empty words. We cannot work out of empty words. We can find no relationship to other adults through empty words, nor can we find a relationship to children through them.**

When we spout remembered words and phrases we are spewing empty words which will bounce off of the child's ears. In spiritual science, the kind of science which fills Waldorf teachers, we forget the spiritual content and re-create it anew in the present moment, enlivening what would else be mere empty words. This is how teachers can sculpt human souls: they treat their content as new clay and strive to remold it each day for each class so the students will feel the content being molded within their souls.

**[page 72] In a way, the core of spiritual science is that you actually forget the spiritual content you have learned and at each moment renew it by creating it again within yourself. You have not really understood spiritual science if you understand it as something you need to remember. . . . I prepared the teachers of the Waldorf School so that, in a certain sense, they entered school each morning with a virgin soul, so that they would always be confronted with something new, with new riddles. The ability to forget, which is only the other side of comprehending, is what draws people to spiritual science. It is the result of continual spiritual-scientific learning.**

Some people reject any spiritual-scientific learning outright, accepting only the prevalent view based on materialistic teachings. The only way to break down this wall of resistance is for them to begin to grasp the reality of the living spirit by observing its results when it is applied.

**[page 85] Those unwilling to develop the feeling I spoke of at the end of the last lecture will not immediately recognize how such an understanding of the human being can arise in any way other than that which is currently acceptable. It can, however, arise when we comprehend the entire developing human being, that is, the body, the soul, and the spirit, in terms of lively movement. By comprehending the living human being in movement, by placing ourselves in human nature, we can create within ourselves an understanding that is not dead but alive. This understanding is most appropriate if we are to avoid clinging to external materialistic perspectives or falling prey to illusions and fantasy. What I have presented here can be very fruitful, but only when we use it directly, because its primary characteristics first become apparent through direct use.**

What is most amazing is the change which comes upon teachers who convert themselves from people who feed dead information to children into people who read living information from children. This a possibility which becomes a reality for Waldorf school teachers.

**[page 87] Those who develop this possibility within themselves, who configure their spirit in this way, make themselves alive in a different way in regard to developing children,**



**even in large numbers. They gain the capacity of reading the curriculum from the nature of the developing child.**

If you have doubts about this possibility, you will not find the answers in this review nor will you find it in any Steiner lecture — you will only find it by close-up observation of Waldorf education in action and in its results in producing whole human beings, not just intellectually over-stimulated human beings.

The difference can be as simple as teaching writing first and reading only afterward. This may create roars of disapproval from parents who boast about their three-year-olds being able to read. Such a skewed approach is one way we populate the next generation with intellectually over-stimulated adults instead of balanced human beings.

**[page 89] If, as is done today, we teach conventionalized writing to children, it can affect only the intellect. For that reason, we should not actually begin with learning to write, but with an artistic comprehension of those forms that are then expressed through writing or printing.**

Drawing and work with flowing paints allows the child's intellect to evolve as a consequence of its entire humanity, not just its thinking capability.

**[page 90] If we allow children to enjoy this artistically taught instruction in drawing, aside from the fact that it also leads to writing, we will see how they need to move their fingers or perhaps the entire arm in a certain way that begins not simply from thinking, but from a kind of dexterity. Thereby the I begins to allow the intellect to develop as a consequence of the entire human being. The less we train the intellect and the more we work with the entire human being so that the dexterity of the intellect arises out of the movements of the limbs, the better it is.**

Individualized teaching in large classes is possible if the teacher shares a *living* knowledge with the children. This is a point often missed in the claim that the smaller the class the better; rather, the more living knowledge presented, the better.

**[page 96] It does not seem to me to be so bad if classes are very large as long as they are healthy and well ventilated. What we might call individualization occurs of itself if the teacher's work arises out of a living comprehension of human nature and the nature of the world. In that case, the teacher is so interesting for the students that they become individualized by themselves. They will become individualized and do it actively. You do not need to work with each individual student, which is a kind of passive individualization. It is important that you always attempt to work with the entire class, and that a living contact with the teacher is present. When you have shaped your own soul to comprehend life, life will speak to those who wish to receive it.**

What is the importance of ensouled learning? For one thing, ensouled learning works within us while we are asleep, whereas abstract concepts and definitions do not. If you wish to create little professors who will grow into stilted adults, give them abstractions and definitions to memorize, which they will be able to spout out later at will. If you wish to create balanced human beings, give them images which will awaken their feelings, as these feelings will work on the child every night as they sleep. A good unanswered question<sup>(5)</sup> placed in a child's mind is better than a dozen definitions. It is not without significance that people say about some important decision, "Let me sleep on it." Surely something must grow into understanding during one's sleep and dreams.

**[page 101, 102] There is continual activity in the content of the soul during the period from falling asleep until awakening, and what occurs there can be studied only with the help of spiritual-scientific research. Through such research, it is apparent that we take into our soul only what we receive pictorially, that is, only what awakens corresponding**

**feelings. Everything we receive as mere abstract concepts — things we learn as unpictured, unmovable concepts — does not work within us during the period of sleep. It does not directly enter our souls.**

One of the soul experiences of children comes from musical instruction. In Waldorf schools this experience is extended by a kind of physical exercise Steiner originated called *eurythmy*. From a teaching perspective, he says one should think of eurythmy as "ensouled gymnastics." It is a combination of physical education, dance, and artistic expression which ensouls itself within children. It has a complicated definition, but only adults need the definition, not children. They simply enjoy the graceful movements which contrast with the muscle-pumping exertion from usual gym exercises. In effect during eurythmy, the human being becomes a moving larynx.

**[page 104] In the end, eurythmy is such, when you understand it, that you can read it in just the same way as you can read words and sentences. If I may use a Goethean expression, eurythmy developed through a sense-perceptible and supersensible observation of the tendencies in the movement of the larynx, gums, and lips, and then applying the Goethean principle of metamorphosis to transfer the movement of those organs to the entire human being. Goethe's view was that an entire plant is only a more complicated leaf. What I mean here is that everything that a human being does in movement according to her will is a reflection not of the actual movements, but of the tendencies of those movements found in the organs of speech, so that the entire human being becomes a lively, moving larynx.**

A good friend of mine studied long years of eurythmy, and I can pick up eurythmic movements of his body at various points when he talks.

**[page 105] We need only recall that speaking is simply a localization of the entire activity of a human being. In speaking, the activities of thinking and will come together. In encountering one another, they also become an activity of feeling. The intellectual activity, which in our civilized language is very abstract, is left out in eurythmy so that everything flows out of the human will. Thus the will is what is actually utilized in eurythmy.**

The lack of intellectual content in eurythmy often leads newcomers to ask, "What does this mean?" Isadora Duncan gave the perfect answer to that question about dance movements when she said, "If I could tell you, I wouldn't have to dance it." Eurythmy can be thought of as *willing* and *feeling* without *thinking*.

Teaching grammar is one of a teacher's toughest jobs and one fraught with far-flung consequences for society. I recall continuous corrections when I was in grade school of my classmates who used expressions like "Sam and me went to the store." The teacher would burst out with the correction, "Sam and I" and the child would cower under the teacher's admonition. What has been the result some 50 years later? Adults who get paid to talk on News and Sports stations use the following erroneous grammatical structure, "He said it to Sam and I." This is a prime example of bad pedagogical process propagating itself into the future generations. What's a teacher to do with children who speak in dialects with bad grammar? Steiner recommends using the way the child speaks and encouraging interaction with children who speak without dialect.

**[page 112] There is a way of teaching language by using the way the child already speaks and supporting the instruction through a living interaction between those children who speak a more cultivated language and those who speak a dialect. In this way you can allow them to measure themselves against each other, not in some abstract way, but using feeling to guide a word, a sentence, in dialect into another.**

Something as simple as learning to create a vertical line and then an arc before being asked to write the

capital letter P can create a felt experience of the spiritual residing in the physical. Let children grow into adults without this felt experience and they will create and introject all kinds of abstract theories of mind-body parallelism. We can perceive now how the spirit has become separated from the body through such abstractions which began in childhood by forcing writing before felt experience of the components of writing.

**[page 115] Just think of all such bridges we have seen in modern times that were to be formed between the spirit-soul and the physical body, beginning with the views of Descartes, psychophysical parallelism, and so forth. All these theories have essentially been born out of an incapacity to view the human being as a whole. People do not see how the physical is formed out of the spiritual and how the spiritual is revealed simultaneously in the physical body. We need only to understand how the one has been separated from the other through abstractions. Thus certain things have been totally misunderstood in modern times, even though they are understandable when we recognize the harmony between the physical and the psychological.**

Some teachers are very serious and some are light-hearted (lacking a very serious nature). Steiner asks which is better and equates that to the question of is it better to inhale or exhale. The answer is obvious: a balance of inhaling and exhaling is essential. So, too, is a balance of gravity and levity in teaching. No one who is depressed enjoys humor, do they? To be depressed is have our self completely contained, which means our soul-spirit is imprisoned within our skin. To enjoy humor is to have our soul-spirit take flight from our body. The text acronym ROTFL says it rightly, we are "Rolling on the Floor Laughing", not literally on the floor but metaphorically. It is our soul-spirit which is out rolling on the floor when we "get carried away" laughing. Seriousness, levity, gravity, humor, etc., represent the inhaling and exhaling of spirit which is essential for a balance in our lives.

**[page 125, 126] Just as there is a strict rhythm in the human being according to which there are on the average eighteen breaths taken in a minute, the entirety of human life is based upon rhythm. One part of that rhythm is the interplay between humor and seriousness. Humor is based upon people getting away from themselves in a certain way. With humor, we move onto the path toward dreaming. Although we remain completely conscious, moving toward humor is the beginning of the path to dreaming. This loss of self is expressed through smiling or laughing. In these acts, the spirit-soul — or what we in spiritual science call the I and the astral body — moves out in a certain way from the physical and the etheric, although people still remain in control. Through humor, people expand in their soul and spirit aspects.**

How is a teacher able to mix humor in front of a classroom of children? The answer is hard work. Hard work on creating a lesson plan so that the teacher can share the material without appearing to work hard because the material will seem to just float out into the classroom effortlessly. When someone, like a well-prepared teacher, is having fun, the opportunity for humor arises spontaneously.

**[page 127] If I come into a classroom at three in the afternoon to present something to the children and if I have schooled myself in the material in the same way I have learned to school myself in spiritual science, the material will be something through which I no longer need to take the external world into account. My own attitudes will disappear. The material itself will provide me with humor and seriousness at the right times, and things will just go by themselves.**

If a teacher is too serious, the children will act up to add some humor. My only C grade in conduct came in the second grade and my mother was so upset at me that I found other ways to amuse myself in class thereafter. As best I can recall, that teacher was way too serious and my classmates, unlike my mother, appreciated my lightening up their classroom. I have since come to see that conduct grades for students can be understood as conduct grades for the teacher.

When I first read Steiner's "Outline of Occult Science", I wrote a half-page review on it. Several years later as I read and absorbed much more of his spiritual science, I re-read the book and my review of topped 120 pages. Clearly I received only dry straw from my first reading and very nutritious sustenance from my second, experiencing the book as a complex orchestral score for the evolution of the cosmos and the human being.

**[page 129, 130] As I mentioned before, we cannot take up spiritual science as though we were sitting in the theater and watching a film. We can only take it up when we are inwardly active. As I said before, you should read my book [An Outline of Occult Science](#), but if you read it without any inner experience and take what I say there simply as a guide for your own thoughts, then the entirety of spiritual science will be just like straw. For that reason, spiritual science is for many people simply straw. If, however, you read it so that it is like an orchestral score that you first only understand when you have drawn all the details out of yourself, then, through drawing that out of yourself, you will develop those forces that otherwise remain hidden in human nature.**

Steiner in his Waldorf lectures often speaks about the age of 9 being an important change point in a child's life. This next passage summarizes what changes at the age of 9 in child and why it is important.

**[page 135] We can therefore say that until the age of nine children want to develop under authority, but their desire to imitate is still present as well. At nine, the desire to imitate disappears, but the desire for authority remains. At about the age of twelve, while still under the guidance of authority, another important desire, namely, to reason independently, begins to develop. If we use independent reasoning too much before the age of twelve, we will actually ruin the child's soul and bodily forces. In a certain sense, we deaden human experiencing with reason.**

My grandparents spoke Cajun French until English was forced upon their children about a hundred years ago. I never learned to converse in Cajun, but I absorbed a lot of words and intonation of the local dialect, and can relate to what Steiner says about dialect.

**[page 151] The children speak in dialect, and they speak in such a way that the dialects have developed in them under the influence of the instinct for imitation. If we have a talent for observing such things, we can recognize that those children who speak in dialect have a much more intimate relationship to language than those children who do not speak in dialect.**

A few days ago, while I was reading Lecture 9, "Dialect and Standard Language", I was re-writing a joke someone had sent me in Standard Language into the Cajun dialect. The content of the joke was the same, but as I read my Cajun version out loud, I noticed its impact was greater than the original joke. There was more emotion than in the bland original version, and in a joke, less *thinking* and more emotion — more *feeling* and *willing* — makes the joke more fun to tell and to listen to. "Ah guarantee!" as famed Cajun humorist Justin Wilson liked to say.

**[page 151] We certainly cannot overlook the fact that the intimate relationship that children who speak in dialect have to their languages exists because the dialect as such, in its words and sentences, has been formed out of a much more intense feeling and willing than standard language, which is based more upon thinking or upon a thinking derived primarily from feeling. In any event, emotion is much less present in standard language when a child learns standard language originally than it is in dialect. The same is also true in regard to the will impulse.**

What happens when the musical element invades a language? There is no better example to be found than in the unique singing style of New Orleanian Louis Armstrong. For him the lyrics of a song were like

notes on his trumpet and vice versa. His singing morphed into music and his music morphed into lyrics, all filled with intense feeling and willing of at times indescribable beauty that one can marvel at and enjoy. As a child Louie roamed the streets of New Orleans' and on a New Year's Eve, he fired a gun in the air in celebration and was arrested and brought to a Waif's Home where the headmaster put a trumpet in his hands and said to him, "Everyone here plays an instrument." Louie brought the rhythm of the streets into his horn and into his singing. The street was Louie's authority.

**[page 152] As very small children, we attempt to imitate, though unconsciously, in our language what we perceive through the senses. It is especially clear in language how the musical and sculptural elements work in two diverging directions. If we educate children more according to the musical element, which in school is expressed primarily through a feeling for authority, we will destroy what exists in the child as a sculptural desire. The musical element of language develops under the influence of authority such that the child continuously has an instinct or a desire to speak, even in the details of the tones, in the same way that a person who is felt to be an authority speaks. A conformity to the authority's musical element is, whether we want to believe that it is right or wrong, simply there because of the nature of the child. If you have a talent for observing such things, you will quickly notice how the musical element of the child's language conforms to that of the person educating the child.**

Louie developed musically and the language he spoke lost its hard structural element and gained an expressiveness that was heavily imitated by musicians who studied his style, such as Bing Crosby who once joked in song with Louie, "Don't dig dat kind o'crooning, son." The joke was that Bing was imitating Louie's style as he sang those words. To *dig* means in dialect to make something a part of yourself.

**[page 152] A one-sided development of the musical element in language destroys language's sculptural element. When people only follow the musical element, they are forced more and more to make language an inner experience, to follow their feelings in a certain way by recreating the tone, the intonation, and particularly the nuances of the vowels to conform to those of the people whom they perceive as authorities.**

Steiner urges teachers to use the dialect spoken by children in class as a means of helping the other children to learn how language enlivens and re-creates an activity of the world in speech. The closeness of gesture and word brings to mind how the Fonz in the sitcom "Happy Days" said his famous "Aaay! with his arms pulled back and spread in a thumbs-up pose — it was his ultimate approval of what a friend had just done or said.

**[page 155] Learning to speak is at first the enlivening of an activity whose substantiation occurs only afterwards. This is something that, when we look at dialect, we can certainly take into account. You can attempt to feel that by having a child say something and then trying to feel that within yourself. The words in dialect are such that they are extremely close to what lives in the gesture that accompanies the word in dialect.**

In a nutshell, Steiner tells us it is important to teach using dialect as it provides a means of encouraging an inner sense of style when speaking.

**[page 159] If we use dialect in order to develop the natural human instinct for language while using standard language in order to awaken an inner feeling for style, we can achieve what is necessary in teaching language.**

Steiner's approach in many areas of pedagogy is from unity to parts. We see this in arithmetic where addition is taught by subtraction, i.e., taking away from ten apples various combinations of apples such as 5, 3, 2, all of which adds up to ten. And multiplication is taught by division, e.g., where twelve apples are divided into three groups of four each, or six groups of two each, leading the child to understand how 3 times 4 equals 12 and 6 times 2 = 12. I remember the most hated arithmetic exercise was long division,

and I wonder now if we had learned division before multiplication if any division would have been disliked.

Following the unity first, Waldorf schools start with complete sentences. I recall the first book we had was "Dick and Jane" in 1940s elementary schools. "See the dog Spot.", "See Spot run." and so on. Short, but complete sentences. As we grew up, we ridiculed the silly stories about Dick and Jane and their dog Spot, but we learned to read from complete sentences. Beginning to read with complete sentences helps the child express its need to analyze and defuses a tendency to materialism. On Page 171 Steiner says, "Materialism is encouraged by a failure to satisfy our desire for analysis."

**[page 171] For this reason in the Waldorf School we always teach beginning not with letters, but with complete sentences. We analyze the sentence into words and the words into letters and then the letters into vowels. In this way we come to a proper inner understanding as the child grasps the meaning of what a sentence or word is. We awaken the child's consciousness by analyzing sentences and words.**

Steiner's unity to parts method as applied to arithmetic prevents children from being confronted with the horrible and dreaded equals sign at the end of an equation, such as  $5+3+2=?$  A better way is leading the children to finding the components of 10, such 5, 3, 2. Using this method one begins with the answer and is never confronted by the dreaded equals sign.

**[page 175] When teaching addition, we should not simply expect answers to the question of what is the sum of so and so much. Instead we should expect answers to the question of how a sum can be separated in various ways. In contrast, the question with regard to subtraction is, from what number do we need to remove five in order to have the result be eight? In general, we need to pose all these kinds of questions in the opposite way to which they are posed in synthetic thinking when interacting with external world.**

**Here we can place the teaching of arithmetic in parallel with teaching language, where we begin with the whole and then go on to the individual letters.**

The point of using dialect when teaching is to help children understand that there are genuine experiences in words. (Page 180) Mark Twain brought dialect into his Tom Sawyer stories in a lively fashion that was interesting and charming. The famous German writer Goethe did likewise.

**[page 181] Goethe introduced much dialect into language. It is always good to enliven written language with dialect because it enables words to be felt in a warmer, more lively way. . . . When teaching language, we have a certain responsibility to use it also as a training for ethics in life. Nevertheless there needs to be some feeling; it should not be done simply according to convention. We move further and further away from what is alive in language if we say, as is done in the Western European languages, that one or another turn of phrase is incorrect and that only one particular way of saying things is allowed.**

Children from teeth change to puberty need authority figures they trust. If we eschew being an authority figure during this age period, we are demanding a capacity for reason to appear too early. This causes the physical body to take over the reasoning capability and results in problems in later life. Many movies were made based on this theme about juvenile delinquents and even adult delinquents. James Cagney movies in which he played the bad guy, often in prison gave examples of adult delinquents, and movies like *Blackboard Jungle*, *The Wild One*, and *Rebel Without A Cause* portrayed the younger delinquents whose reasoning capability was unsteady, temperamental, and caused serious problems.

**[page 184] The physical body is drawn in with all its natural characteristics, with its temperament, its blood characteristics, and everything that gives rise to sympathy and antipathy within it, with everything that provides it with no objectivity. In other words,**

**if a child between the ages of seven and fourteen is supposed to reason independently, the child reasons out of that part of human nature which we later can no longer rid ourselves of if we are not careful to see that it is cared for in a natural way, namely, through authority, during the elementary school period. If we allow children to reason too early, it will be the physical body that reasons throughout life. We then remain unsteady in our reasoning, as it depends upon our temperament and all kinds of other things in the physical body.**

Clearly the best approach is to accept your authority role with children until they have reached the age of puberty, at which time their soul (astral body) is prepared to be guided towards freedom.

The renewal of education should be considered as a refreshing of education, an approach to education which brings living processes of the teacher in place of frozen definitions and rote memorization. In this lecture cycle we learn of the three aspects of each of the four aspects of being human and learn in depth that education is not just about thinking, but includes feeling and willing in equal order. We learn that art is an essential part of education and how to begin with flowing paints with which children can learn to create curves and learn of colors as they mix together. We learn about the processes of learning in the three stages of childhood: from birth to teeth change, from teeth change to puberty, and from puberty to adulthood, and how teachers best deal with each period. We learn about the life of the soul in sympathy, antipathy, and in-between. We learn about the life of the spirit in waking, dreaming, and dreamless sleep. All of this information we digest and forget about when we face children in the classroom. We look upon the children as a riddle not as some malleable clay to be molded into a human being by us. We offer them questions more than answers. Knowing they arrive in our classroom wanting living experiences more than answers, we do not stuff them full of facts, but instead instill in them questions which will only be answered much later in life as they bloom into adults and middle age.

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

**Footnote 1.**

A glib answer produces no soul-to-soul communication while a recreated answer does. The process of creating an answer from one's digested knowledge provides a direct soul-to-soul communication. See my essay on this subject in [Teaching and Learning](#).

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

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**Footnote 2.**

This the basis of the [science](#) of doyletics which details how physical body states (doyles) are converted into cognitive or declarative memories beginning around the age of five.

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

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**Footnote 3.**

In his famous book, [A Leg to Stand On](#), Oliver Sacks, a neurologist, reports his disbelief in even having a leg after the nerves to it were damaged by a falling accident.

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

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**Footnote 4.**

Perhaps the most powerful artistic representation of the metaphoric wall which exists between students and teachers can be found the Pink Floyd's movie, *The Wall*.

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**Footnote 5.**

[What is the Power of an Unanswered Question?](#) is one of Matherne's Rules.

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

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