

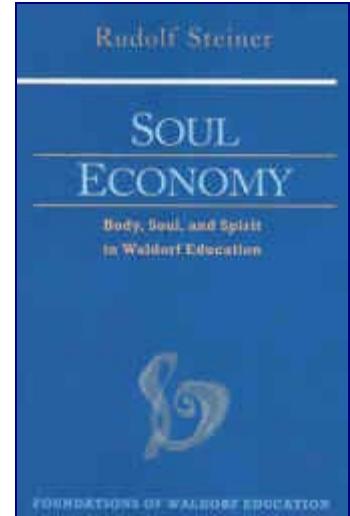
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### A READER'S JOURNAL

#### **Soul Economy — Body, Soul, and Spirit in Waldorf Education, GA# 303** by **Rudolf Steiner**

16 Lectures in Dornach, Dec, Jan 1921, 22  
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Translated by Roland Everett  
Published by SteinerBooks/NY in 2003  
A Book Review by Bobby Matherne ©2005



The answer to the question of what is "soul economy"  
requires the study of this entire book and the

assimilation of its content and meaning at a soul level. Steiner has given us, as he might give to students in a Waldorf School, the concept of soul economy *by the simplest means possible*, this book. He arranged *the maximum amount of material to be presented* to us in the simplest means. This should help each of us to *retain an overall view* of this subject, *not so much intellectually, but very much in our feeling life*. Now read the next passage and imagine the two or three hours of preparation Steiner spent for these lectures for every half-hour he spoke or every half-hour we will spend reading them.

**[page 118] The aim of Waldorf education is to arrange all of the teaching so that within the shortest possible time the maximum amount of material can be presented to students by the simplest means possible. This helps children retain an overall view of their subjects — not so much intellectually, but very much in their feeling life.**

**It is obvious that such a method makes tremendous demands on teachers. I am convinced that, if teachers apply this method (which I would call a form of teaching based on "soul economy"), they will have to spend at least two or three hours of concentrated preparation for each half hour they teach. And they must be willing to do this if they want to avoid harming their students.**

Unless one recognizes the recursive nature of teaching and learning, one gets nowhere fast. This recursive nature of teaching and learning, I describe in the apophthegm, [Thus a Teacher, So Also A Learner!](#). Note that this terse saying has no verb, and no direction to the action of teaching and learning. Does the Teacher do all the teaching and the Learner all the learning? It doesn't say, so it lets open the possibility that in true teaching, the Teacher must learn the subject, spending sometimes hours in preparation for a few minutes of contact time with the Learner. Especially in the early stages of contact with a new Learner, or with a new subject.

I recall an episode in Milton Erickson's early career at a Mental Health facility in Wisconsin. There was a patient, call him George, that everyone else had given up on. All George did was talk gibberish, the staff told Milton when he took over the man's case. Milton walked out to a bench where George was and sat down next to him. George began talking without stopping for an hour. Milton had his secretary transcribe George's word salad and studied it until he was able to improvise a word salad of his own. Next time Milton sat down next to George and introduced himself and George spewed out a continuous stream of word salad. Milton responded in kind with his equivalently long stream of world salad. When Milton

stopped, George gave him a funny look, and then spouted more word salad, and Milton did likewise. Next time they met, George went on for four hours, and Milton took over for four hours on his own, exactly matching George's output. The next session was two hours long for each man. The next only two sentences for each man, and then George said, "Talk sense, Doctor!" and Milton responded, "Certainly, I'll be glad to. What is your last name?" Now George, who, up until now had only spoken six words of sense, giving only his first name, responded with "O' Donovan, and it's about time somebody who knows how to talk asked. Over five years in this lousy joint ..." then he commenced with word salad. This was the breakthrough and soon George was released and never re-admitted ([1](#)).

While psychotherapists praise Erickson's work as a hypnotherapist, note that no hypnosis was involved in George's cure. What was involved was hours of preparation, transcribing the word salad, studying the patterns of the word salad, executing an improvised word salad, and matching the length of time George spent. And the response from George was that of every student at any level when the teacher comes down from their pedestal and meets the student where they live, "It's about time. . ." Milton Erickson was a great teacher in the mold of Rudolf Steiner and those Waldorf teachers who have modeled themselves after him. Teachers who are willing to spend hours of preparation to meet the needs of the individual student that doesn't seem to fit in with the rest of the class.

In Waldorf Schools, each subject is taught in one continuous block of four to six weeks and then the teacher moves on to another subject. Consider how this process works for the slow learners — they have time to concentrate their efforts and catch up with the rest of the class. In the one-hour-a-day subject presentation of public schools, the slow student simply gets lost and makes bad grades because they are unable to catch up with the rest of the class by the next class period.

**[page 119] Then begins our so-called main lesson, which lasts nearly two hours; in traditional schedules, these are often broken up into smaller periods. But the principle of soul economy in teaching makes it necessary to alter the conventional schedule. Thus, during the first two hours of the morning, students are taught the same subject in "block" periods, each lasting four to six weeks. It is left to the class teacher to introduce a short break during the main lesson, which is essential in the younger classes. In this way, subjects like geography or arithmetic are taught for four to six weeks at a time. After that, another main lesson subject is studied, again for a block period, rather than as shorter lessons given at regular intervals through the year.**

Waldorf education grew out of Rudolf Steiner's spiritual science or anthroposophy which strives for "knowledge, *sophy*, of the full human being, *anthropos*". When it came time to design a building to disseminate anthroposophy, Steiner designed a building which resembles a half-walnut shell. So it is appropriate that he use walnut as a metaphor as he described his approach to the design of the building now known as the [Goetheanum](#) (*gur-thee-ann'-um*), but it was in the White Hall of the original wooden one that these 1921 lectures took place.

**[page 6, 7] To avoid a sectarian or theoretical ideology, anthroposophy had to find its own architectural and artistic styles. As mentioned before, one may find this style unsatisfactory or even paradoxical, but the fact is, according to its real nature, anthroposophy simply had to create its own physical enclosure. Let me make a comparison that may appear trivial but may, nevertheless, clarify these thoughts. Think of a walnut and its kernel. It is obvious that both nut and shell were created by the same forces, since together they make a whole. If anthroposophy had been housed in an incongruous building, it would be as if a walnut kernel had been found in the shell of a different plant. Nature produces nut and shell, and they both speak the same language. Similarly, neither symbolism nor allegory was needed here; rather, it was necessary that anthroposophic impulses flow directly into artistic creativity. If thoughts are to be expressed in this building, they must have a suitable shell, from artistic and architectural points of view. This was not easy to do, however, because the sectarian tendency is**

**strong today, even among those looking for a broadening of religious ideals. But anthroposophy must not be influenced by people's sympathies or antipathies. It must remain true to its own principles, which are closely linked to the needs and yearnings of our times . . .**

The founding of the Waldorf Schools took place in a cigarette factory in Germany and that factory gave its name to the schools. I mention this for historical purposes because the fact of its being a cigarette factory is often glossed over in our time where cigarettes are in disrepute.

**[page 9] Our friend Emil Molt (who at the time was running the Waldorf-Astoria Cigarette Factory in Stuttgart) offered his services for such an effort by establishing the Waldorf school for his workers' children, and I was asked to help direct the school.**

Steiner never has a bad word to say about science, always acknowledging its contribution to humanity in the field which it has chosen: external observation, experimentation, and interpretation. And yet, when science is applied to shaping the methods of educating children, the one-sided focus on intellectuality can harm our most precious resource: our children.

**[page 15, 16] Nevertheless, the instrument of the soul used for experiments in chemistry or physics represents the most intellectual part of the human entity. Thus the picture of the world that people make for themselves is still the result of the intellect. . . . Now something very remarkable can be seen; on the one hand, what people consider the most valuable asset, the most important feature of our modern civilization — intellectuality — has, on the other hand, become doubtful in relation to raising and educating children. This is especially true among those who are seriously concerned with education. Although one can see that humanity has made tremendous strides through the development of intellectuality, when we look at contemporary education, we also find that, if children are being educated only in an intellectual way, their inborn capacities and human potential become seriously impaired and wither away.**

Steiner asks us, "What value do people place on their lives after immersion in a natural scientific and intellectualistic attitude toward the soul?" (Page 19) He answers that science and intellect allows us to make sense of lifeless matter. This is well and good, but when we attempt to extend the same methods that are so successful with lifeless matter into the study of living organisms, we are much less successful. For one thing, we lose sight of the human and divine beings as part of evolution and can project only a heat death for all humanity on Earth in the end. This is the "natural" result of the scientific approach.

**[page 21] A hypothetical concept of the end of the cosmos is bound to follow the laws of physics. In this context, we encounter the so-called second fundamental law of thermodynamics. According to this theory, all living forces are mutually transformable. However, if they are transformed into heat, or if heat is transformed into living forces, the outcome is always an excess of heat. The final result for all earthly processes would therefore be a complete transformation of all living forces into heat. This destruction through heat would produce a desert world, containing no forces but differences of temperature. Such a theory conjures up a picture of a huge graveyard in which all human achievements lie buried — all intellectual, moral, and religious ideals and impulses. If we place human beings between a cosmic beginning from which we have been excluded and a cosmic end in which again we have no place, all human ideals and achievements become nothing but vague illusions. Thus, an intellectual, natural scientific philosophy reduces the reality of human existence to a mere illusion.**

Can you see that this is what the majority of educational institutions at all levels in our world are teaching our children today? We are teaching them untruth in the name of science, but the presence of the untruth lies beneath their consciousness for many years if not their entire lifetime. The result is evident — we can

find it wherever we find human-made destruction in the world today.

**[page 21, 22] And, against the background of this negative disposition of soul, we try to educate our children, True, we also give them religious meaning, but here we are faced above all with division. For if we introduce religious ideas alongside scientific ideas of life, which is bound to affect our soul attitude, we enter the realm of untruth. And untruth extracts a toll beyond what the intellect can perceive, because it is active through its own inner power. Untruth, even when it remains concealed in the realm of the unconscious, assumes a destructive power over life.**

Is there an alternative? Steiner's spiritual science provides one by allowing us to recognize the materialistic worldview as a historical fact, while developing a deeper feeling for the living world in which we are immersed. This feeling will enliven our souls as we return to the realm of truth — it will provide the constructive forces we need in the world today.

**[page 24, 25] Today it is not enough just to think about the world; we must think about the world so that our thinking gradually becomes a general feeling for the world, because out of such feelings impulses for reform and progress grow. It is the aim of anthroposophy to present a way of knowing the world that does not remain abstract but enlivens the entire human being and becomes the proper basis for educational principles and methods.**

Steiner was speaking in 1921, only a few years after the Russian revolution, but he could already recognize the disastrous results in human costs of this revolution, how it would spread, and how it was fostered by the very kinds of materialistic ideas that are still taught in our schools and universities eighty-five years later.

**[page 26] Today, this attitude has invaded the practical areas of most of the educated world. People are groaning under the results of what has happened. Nevertheless, humankind is not prepared to recognize that the events in Russia today, which will spread into many other countries, are the natural result of the sort of teaching given at schools and universities. There one educates and while the people in one part of the earth lack the courage to recognize the dire consequences of their teaching, in the other part, these consequences ruthlessly push through to their extremes. We will not be able to stop this wheel from running away unless we understand clearly, especially in this domain, and place the laws of causality in their proper context. Then we shall realize that the human being is placed into a reality that will leave him no room for maneuvering as long as he tries to comprehend the world by means of the intellect only. We will see that intellectuality, as an instrument, does not have the power of understanding realities.**

As an example of how intellectuality can produce the opposite of what it claims will happen, Steiner gives us the example of the gold standard.

**[page 29] Discriminating and intelligent experts — and those of real practical experience — proved that, if we accepted the gold standard, we would also have free trade, that the latter was the consequence of the former. But look at what really happened; in most countries that adopted the gold standard, unbearable import tariffs were introduced, which means that instead of allowing trade to flow freely it was restricted. Life presented just the opposite of what had been predicted by our clever intellectuals. One must be clear that intellectuality is alien to reality; it makes the human being into a big head.**

Likely the argument was then made that the gold standard was part of the problem or at least that adopting it caused no discernible help and that became an argument for those who wanted to do away with the gold standard entirely. What has always amazed me about Steiner is that he argues from reality, from actual observation, not from arguments based on other's various theories or maps of the world. He goes directly

to the world and exhorts us to do the same in deciding whether we accept the tenets of his spiritual science or not. He based the tenets of Waldorf education on the knowledge of the human being, not on some theory that he tried to promulgate. The title of the first three chapters (lectures) is "Education Based on Knowledge of the Human Being." Steiner's knowledge is based on suprasensory knowledge he obtained about the human being using the procedures of natural science without *limiting himself to the sensory realm*. Rightly understood, anthroposophy is an extension which transcends the very limits that natural science accepts by convention. It is a convention, almost a fiat, which prevents science from accessing the knowledge of the human being since science restricts itself to dead or nonliving matter as its very premise.

**[page 37] Anthroposophy has the courage to say that, with the ordinary established naturalistic approach, it is impossible to attain suprasensory knowledge. At the same time, however, it must ask, Is there any way that, when applied with the strict discipline of natural science, will enable us to enter suprasensory worlds? We cannot accept the notion that crossing the threshold into the supernatural world marks the limit of scientific investigation. It is the goal of anthroposophy to open a path into the suprasensory, using means equally as exact as those used by ordinary science to penetrate the sensory realm. In this way, anthroposophy merely continues along the path of modern science. Anthroposophy does not intend to rebel against present achievements, but it endeavors to bring something that is needed today and something contemporary life cannot provide from its own resources.**

"Modern intellectual thinking," Steiner says, "which is striving for absolute lucidity, is nevertheless prone to drift into the dark unconscious and instinctive domains." (Page 38) Ancient religions were never based on faith — this was an innovation of more recent times and a consequence of our fall into materialistic thinking since 1453 A.D. — they were based on direct insight into the suprasensory spiritual world because suprasensory perception was a common ability among ancient peoples.

**[page 38] Only in subsequent ages was knowledge confined to what is sense perceptible, and suprasensory knowledge was, consequently, relegated to the religious realm. And so, the illusion came about that anything pertaining to metaphysical existence had to be a matter of faith. Yet, as long as religions rested on suprasensory knowledge, this knowledge bestowed great power, affecting even physical human nature.**

Where can we find in civilization the power to affect our human nature previously possessed by religion? The answer may surprise you.

**[page 38] Modern civilization cannot generate this kind of moral strength for people today. When religion becomes only a matter of faith, it loses power, and it can no longer work down into our physical constitution. Although this is felt instinctively, its importance is unrecognized. This instinctive feeling and the search for revitalizing forces have found an outlet that has become a distinctive feature of our civilization; it is a part of all that we call sports.**

Steiner, as he did with natural science, does not belittle sports, but sees their positive aspects and strives rather to describe a reality for us upon which we can base our knowledge of the human being.

**[page 39] Nevertheless, it must be said that sports will assume a completely different position in human life in the future, whereas today it is a substitute for religious experience. Such a statement may well seem paradoxical, but truth, today, is paradoxical, because modern civilization has drifted into so many crosscurrents.**

The next negative aspect of intellectualistic thinking is that its emphasis on logic destroys the soul. Children are like "little savages" — they "in a certain sense, go through the various stages that humankind has passed through, from the days of primitive humanity up to our present civilization."(page 39) This can

be seen as an extension of "ontogeny recapitulating phylogeny" after one's birth (2). Steiner makes the valid point that if savages (primitive peoples) do *not* apply logic in their daily lives, why should educators expect the children in their care to do so? Instead educators with their intellectualistic thinking have only a "day logic" because they do not consider the reality of hours spent in sleep.

**[page 41] You may object by saying that natural science has closely examined the human sleeping state as well, and indeed there exist many interesting theories about the nature of sleep and of dreams. But these premises were made by people while awake, not by investigators who were able to enter the domains of sleep. If people who are interested in education think in rational and logical ways and in terms of what is practical and useful in life, and if, on the other hand, they feel pulled in the direction of Rousseau's call to nature, they will become victims of strange contradictions. What they really do is pass on to children all that seems of value to themselves as adults. They try to graft onto the child something that is alien to the child's nature.**

One of the aspects of communication which intellectual thinkers seem to ignore is the tonality with which they speak. I first became aware of this while studying with Richard Bandler, the NLP pioneer. In a 1981 hypnosis seminar he told us of a dramatic demonstration he did in a previous seminar which proved that the intellectual thinkers in his audiences were mostly oblivious to tonality. He gave his usual anchoring demonstration in which he elicited a grimace on the test subject's face, touched a spot on the subject's right arm to anchor it. Then he elicited a smile and touched a spot on the left arm to anchor it. Later he touched the spot on the right arm and a smile came on the subject's face instead of the expected grimace. Everyone in the audience gasped! Bandler had actually used tonal anchors in his speech, and had touched slightly different spots on the two arms each time. A half-tone higher in Bandler's voice had marked the smile and a half-tone lower had marked the grimace. No one in the audience was aware of Bandler's use of tonal anchors so they were perplexed that the subject's response to triggering the anchors was opposite of what they had expected. They asked Bandler how that was possible, and Bandler answered enigmatically, but truthfully, "Sometimes anchors get reversed. It must have been *something in the air*." Bandler pointed to a man from the New York NLP group and said, "He was in that seminar and he knows now what happened." I turned to look at the face of the man he identified and his face was red as a beet! Obviously he just discovered how Bandler had "reversed the anchors." Slight tonal changes would be much more obvious to Britishers for whom slight variances in tonality mark entire classes of people, but Americans are not apt to notice those tonal shifts.

I suspect that most teachers, especially the intellectualistic ones, are as unconscious of the nature of their own or other's tonality as were the members of Bandler's seminars above. Steiner tells us that the way we are raised determines whether we develop a soothing tonality as mature adults or not. Thus it is important that the teachers should develop a sense of reverence and respect in the children in their charge.

**[page 49] As we grows older, we may have the opportunity to observe old people. We may discover that some of them have the gift of bringing soul comfort to those who need it. Often it is not what they have to say that acts as balm on a suffering soul, but just the tone of voice or the way they speak. If now you follow this old person's life back to childhood, you find that, as a child, that individual was full of reverence and respect for adults. Naturally, this attitude of reverence will disappear in later life, but only on the surface. Deep down, it will gradually transform, only to reemerge later as the gift of bringing solace and elevation to suffering and troubled minds.**

How does a child respond to something alien to their nature being foisted upon them? (See page 41 passage above.) Pretty much the way the child would respond to some alien food such as broccoli or spinach for most children: YUCK!! They feel free to express that immediately and vocally, but they are less likely to complain to their parents about the alien stuff the school system is trying to stuff into them. If, e. g., the child were to exclaim, "Mrs. Smith is trying to cram algebra down my throat!" — it is the rare parent who knows how to respond or to fix the situation, and most children know already whether or not

such a complaint would be useful.

Children are not just small adults, their digestive system operates differently for one thing. And some of the ways of operating as children may actually extend into adulthood as the case of the girl and dog in this next passage illustrates.

**[page 55, 56] Children take in outer impressions as if they were edible substances, but adults leave their digestion to itself, and this alone makes them adults under normal circumstances. But there are cases where certain vegetative and organic forces, which are properly at work during childhood, continue to work in an adult, affecting the psyche as well. In this case, other abnormal symptoms are also liable to occur. An example will make this clear. Imagine, for example, a girl who comes to love a dog that has made a deep impression on her nature. If she has carried childishness into later life, this tenderness will work right into the metabolism. Organic processes that correspond to her feelings of affection will be established. In this situation, digestive processes occur not only after eating or as the result of normal physical activities, but certain areas within the digestive system will develop a habit of secreting and regenerating substances in response to the strong emotions evoked by the love for the animal. The dog will become indispensable to the well-being of her vegetative system. And what happens if the dog dies? The connection in outer life is broken; the organic processes continue by force of inertia, but they are no longer satisfied. Her feelings miss something they had gotten used to, and inner troubles and strange disturbances may follow. A friend may suggest getting a new dog to restore the previous state of health, since the inner organic processes would again find satisfaction through external experiences.**

Read now the conclusion to the three part lectures on "Education Based on Knowledge of the Human Being":

**[page 65] To achieve a worldview that reaches beyond the barriers of the sensory world, human beings must preserve the freshness of experience proper to youth; the clarity of thought and the freedom of judgment proper to the central period of life; and the power of loving devotion toward life that can reach perfection in old age. All these qualities are a necessary preparation for the proper development of *imagination, inspiration, and intuition* (3).**

A brief review of these three *processes* is appropriate. First thing is to note that when they are encountered in Steiner's writings, the names will either be italicized (as in the above passage) or capitalized to distinguish them from the normal meanings of imagination, inspiration, and intuition.

With *imagination* we are talking about the *process* occurring in dreams, but not the *content* of the dreams, and this process is lifted into consciousness by the will power, whereas dreams lie in the unconscious. We become aware that we are seeing images we have made and this awareness keeps us safe from hallucinations as we achieve a state of soul and spirit freed from the physical organism. The one place where everyone can experience *imagination* is during a near-death experience when it is known that one's life passes before one's eyes. This tableau of one's life can be reached consciously through the specific soul and spiritual exercises Steiner gives in various places in his writings as noted in [footnote 3](#) for the page 65 passage.

**[page 69] If now, through continued spiritual training, you have reached the stage where you can suppress previous imaginations of your own creation, and if in the ensuing stage of emptied consciousness you are able to experience real soul and spiritual content, the first thing that comes to meet you is a tableau sort of image of your earthly life, approximately from birth until the present. You will be unable to see your physical body in that picture, because it vanishes when you reach body free perception. And there**

**before you, ready to meet your soul, is everything you have experienced, everything that belongs to your stream of memory, which normally remains unconscious, with only individual images occasionally arising. It confronts you as an entity, as a kind of time organism full of its own inner movement.**

The second process, *inspiration*, gets its name because as our soul and spiritual being are filled with *inspirational* cognition the way our physical body is filled with oxygen. Our concept of "flashes of inspiration" gives us insight into the timeless nature of *inspiration* when it comes to us.

**[page 71] In order to develop this higher cognition, another faculty is necessary: presence of mind. It is this faculty that enables us to act spontaneously during any given life situation. In order not to miss the right moment, we may have to act without waiting until we have time to assess an issue properly. We should really use these moments in life to practice swift and decisive action, learning to quickly grasp the moment, because whatever comes through inspiration passes in a flash. As soon as it appears, it has already vanished. One must be able to catch such fleeting moments with the utmost attentiveness.**

In the Table below I have arranged the various forms of knowledge to illustrate the nature of four basic processes of knowing, one sensory and three *suprasensory*, together with the shadow forms as they appear to us in ordinary life.

Shadow Forms	Knowledge
Science	Sensory
Art	<i>Imagination</i>
Moral	<i>Inspiration</i>
Religion	<i>Intuition</i>

**[page 74] If you want to arrange these levels of higher knowledge in a more or less systematic order, we can say, first of all, that in ordinary life we have knowledge of the material world, which we could call naturalistic knowledge. Then we come to knowledge gained through imagination, which has a kind of artistic nature. The next step is knowledge attained through inspiration, which is, in essence, a moral one. Finally we reach knowledge through intuition, which is like religious experiences, but only in the sense just described.**

Steiner gives us an example of how understanding the relationship between the suprasensory aspect of the human being and physical existence can help a teacher understand how to deal with a child in a learning situation. Suppose the teacher notices a child in the class becoming pale. What should the teacher do? Trained in recognizing that the pallor is a result of excessive memory content, the teacher might assign the child a task which involves some artistic activity [\(4\)](#). This is the kind of perception and flexibility Waldorf teachers are trained in. One can hardly expect this of most public schools where teachers are driven by

administrative rules.

**[page 78] If a science of education establishes fixed and abstract rules, it affects teachers as though they were constantly stepping on their own feet while trying to walk; it robs them of all creative spontaneity. When teachers always have to wonder how to apply the rules prescribed by educational science, they lose all ingenuity and their proper pedagogical instincts. On the other hand, the educational principles based on spiritual science have the opposite effect. They do not allow inborn pedagogical sense to wither away but enliven and strengthen the teacher's whole personality. At least, this is the intention of the practical educational principles that spring from anthroposophy.**

Driven by abstract rules, teachers in our public schools will likely neither note nor take corrective action simply because a slight pallor appears on one's student's face. The result of such lack of corrective action on a timely basis can be found in so many students today who are anxious to get away from school as quickly as possible at the end of every day, and especially at the end of the school year. Elsewhere [See page 129 passage below.] Steiner described a case where an early Waldorf teacher detained a student after school to do their math work as a punishment. The rest of the class asked the teacher if they could also stay over to do their math work. This illustrates how, in a school run by attentive and responsive teachers, detentions to do school work are not seen as punishment but as fun.

**[page 79] If this pallor, caused by the overburdening of the student's memory, is not recognized in time, a perceptive teacher will notice a further change in the child — this time psychological — as an anxiety complex develops. Again, this symptom may not be conspicuous and might be detected only by teachers for whom intense observation has become second nature. And, finally, overtaxing a student's memory can eventually have the effect of retarding the child's growth forces; even physical growth can be affected.**

In his two lectures on "Health and Illness" Steiner focuses on how education can contribute to the health of our children or detract from it, depending on how perceptive or well-trained the teachers are in recognizing that, "There are as many kinds of health and illness as there are people in the world." Problems arise when teachers are imbued with a materialistic attitude and lose a view of the mystery of life.

**[page 83, 84] People today adopt a materialistic attitude, because for them spirit has become too attenuated and distant; as a result, when people observe the human inner life, it no longer has any sense of reality. The very individuals who live with the most abstract thoughts have become the most materialistic people during our cultural epoch. Contemporary thinking — and thinking is a spiritual activity — turns people into materialists. On the other hand, those who are relatively untouched by today's scientific thinking, people whose minds turn more toward outer material events, are the ones who sense some of the mystery behind external processes. Scientific thinking today leaves little room for life's mysteries. Its thoughts are thin and transparent and, for the most part, terribly precise; consequently, they are not grounded in the realities of life. The material processes of nature, on the other hand, are full of mysteries. They need more than the clarity of intellectual thoughts, since they can evoke a sense of wonder, in which our feelings also become engaged.**

Teachers learn theories and attempt to apply them in practice. They would do better to recognize that a theory is a mask of our ignorance on a subject. Steiner has often said that "discussion begins when knowledge ceases." His statement on page 86 represents a slight re-statement of the same principle, "In general, theories are formed to explain what is no longer experienced in practice."

Instead of or in addition to theories, let teachers learn to practice education as an art, Steiner tells us:

[page 86, 87] The attitude of mind expressed so far will be helpful to those who wish to practice education as an art. It will enable you to acquire a concrete image of the manifold members (5) of the human being instead of having to work with some vague notion of human oneness. An image of the human being as an organic whole will emerge, but in it you can see how the various members work together in harmony. Such a picture inevitably leads to what I have indicated in my book *Riddles of the Soul*: the discovery of the three fundamental human aspects, each different from the others in both functions and character. Externally, the head as an organization appears very different from, say, the organism of the limbs and metabolic system. I link these two latter systems together, because the metabolism shows its real nature in the activity of a person's limbs. In morphological terms, we can see the digestive system as a kind of continuation (though perhaps only inwardly) of a person in movement. There is an intimate relationship between the limbs and the digestive systems. For instance, the metabolism is more lively when the limbs are active.

If we look at the head, limbs, and chest Steiner tells us we can find a progression from the skull's hard-outside/soft-inside form to the extremities hard-inside/soft-outside forms. The chest represents an intermediate form with hard-outside ribs covering soft-inside heart, liver, kidney, spleen, etc., as well as soft-outside abdominal muscles and hard-inside spinal column.

My natural inclination as a trained physicist is to organize data into diagrams and tables, and thus I was chagrined to find excessive use of table and schematic layouts are unbearable to some people and their very use can cause someone's legs to twitch from an impulse to flee from such maddening presentations. From my early study of theosophy, however, I did notice that their excessive use of tables had a negative affect on my interest in the subject.

[page 90] In the early days of our anthroposophic endeavors, when we were still operating within theosophical groups (permit me to mention this), we were faced again and again with all sorts of diagrams, generously equipped with plenty of data. Everything seemed to fit into elaborate, neat schematic ladders, high enough for anyone to climb to the highest regions of existence. Some members seemed to view such diagrammatic ladders as a kind of spiritual gym equipment, with which they hoped to reach Olympic heights; everything was neatly enclosed in boxes. These things made one's limbs twitch convulsively. They were hardly bearable for those who knew that, to get hold of our constantly mobile human nature in a suprasensory way, we must keep our ideas flexible and alive. Fixed habits of thinking made us want to flee. What matters is that, in our quest for real knowledge of the human being, we must keep our thinking and ideation flexible, and then we can advance yet another step.

Children are in some ways wiser than adults. Children carry images of spiritual beings from their nighttime dreams into their daytime consciousness and absorb the wisdom unconsciously from the experiences. Adults carry images from their daytime consciousness into their nighttime dreams. Children in a classroom retain some of this cosmic wisdom and react negatively when they do not find it in their teacher. Here is a place to recall *Thus a Teacher, So Also A Learner!* The teacher can learn from the child as well as the child learning from the teacher.

[page 95] Teachers are conscious of their own wisdom, and from this point of view, they certainly are superior. But this kind of wisdom is not as full and sublime as that of the child. If we put into words what happens when a young child, pervaded by wisdom, meets the teacher, who has lost this primordial wisdom, the following image might emerge. The abstract knowledge that is typical of our times, and with which teachers have been closely linked for so many years of life, tends to make them into somewhat dry and pedantic adults. In some cases, their demeanor and outer appearance reveal these traits. Children, on the other hand, have retained the freshness and sprightliness that

### **spring from spiritual wisdom.**

It is no wonder that children are often bemused by the actions of pedantic teachers. Their little bodies are filled with a flow of cosmic wisdom from which their teachers' own dry, abstract thought processes have completely cut them off. An example of such wisdom can be found in the movie "Peggy Sue Got Married" when she returns in time from a middle-aged housewife to a student in high school. She tells her algebra teacher with arrogance and assurance, "I can guarantee you I will *never* need algebra as an adult!" And yet it is the presence of this cosmic wisdom flowing from their charges that unconsciously lead people to become teachers.

**[page 96, 97] Though teachers will never admit this consciously, an inner yearning arises for the vital forces of wisdom that bless children. If psychoanalysts of the human soul were more aware of spiritual realities than is usually the case, they would quickly discover the important role that children's fresh, vital growth and other human forces play in a teacher's subconscious. These are some of the invisible elements that pervade the classroom. And if you are able to look a little behind the scenes, you will find that children turn away from the teacher because of a certain disenchantment. They dimly sense an unspoken question: In this adult, who is my teacher, what became of all that flows through me? But in teachers, on the other hand, a subconscious longing begins to stir. Like vampires, they want to prey on these young souls. If you look a little closer, in many cases you can see how strongly this vampire-like urge works beneath an otherwise orderly appearance. Here lies the origin of various tendencies toward ill health in young children. One only needs to look with open eyes at the psychological disposition of some teachers to see how such tendencies can result from life in the classroom.**

Another aspect of education has to do with recess. We must allow children time away from their desks to move around in order to balance the two polar opposite systems of the head and limbs (metabolism). Again this must be done in the right way to avoid resentment arising in children. How do we create the balance without fostering the resentment of returning to class work right after some vigorous exercise during which all abstracts thoughts learned in the previous lesson had fled and been replaced by the cosmic wisdom carried over from their nighttime dreams? One answer is the Waldorf educational approach which provides one continuous block of four to six weeks devoted to a single subject, with classes in the morning and movement activities in the afternoon before dismissal.

**[page 100] So much for the importance of teachers getting to know the fundamentals that govern health and illness in human beings. Here it must be emphasized again that, to avoid becoming trapped by external criteria and fixed concepts, you must learn to recognize the ever-changing processes of human nature, which always tend toward either health or illness. Teachers will encounter these things in their classes, and they must learn to deal with them correctly. We will go into more detail when we focus on the changing stages of the child and the growing human being.**

One might wonder if Waldorf schools teach karma — I expect the answer is no, but the teachers use their own knowledge of karma to further the education of children. Our very life of freedom requires us entering an earthly body and "when we enter other worlds, we can take with us only the degree of freedom we have attained here on earth." Thus prepared, teachers will ask themselves, "What must I do to enable this child to develop the fullest consciousness of human freedom at maturity?" Understanding karma means understanding that each person has a destiny. Karma is the Eastern term which describes our human need to balance in this lifetime the deeds of our previous lifetime. "Destiny" is our closest Western equivalent to the Eastern concept of karma. (Page 102)

Does the concept of karma seem *outré* and strange to you? Perhaps you met a person in your life like the man in the story Steiner gives us in the next passage. Several people come to mind in my life which fit this pattern. It seems to me as if some guiding hand is on the steering wheel of my life which helps me to

make good decisions, decisions which I make freely, sometimes without understanding why, but inevitably they lead me to places and people who prove to be important in my life.

**[page 103] Let us imagine that, later in life, a man meets a person he has known before, and that this person has a profound influence on the life of this man. Perhaps such people might even begin a partnership for life. At first it may seem to them as if their meeting were simply chance. But when they look back over the years of their lives — even with no knowledge of spiritual science — this man may well discover the strange fact that, during the years before this meeting, he had unconsciously taken numerous steps that eventually led to this other person. Though at first it appeared to be mere chance, hindsight revealed an inherent pattern and underlying plan. Looking back over his life, Goethe's old friend Nobel spoke these meaningful words from the depths of his soul: "If, in later years, we survey our early life, everything seems to fall into a definite pattern; everything fits together." Since our will is woven into all our actions, we can see everywhere how destiny confronts us in the events of life. One could quote many others who, through observing ordinary life, reached the same conclusion. When we look at life's external events, we find confirmation of the hidden truths of karma.**

Since understanding karma in one's own life requires looking back on one's life from later years, those who haven't reached the age of about fifty should withhold judgment about the existence of karma to avoid eating their words when they reach their later years. Steiner said in some lecture I read that the average age of maturity in ancient India was about 55 and that age of maturity has moved down in age, passing 33 at the time of Christ Jesus, and hovering about 27 years old in our time. He described what he meant by 'age of maturity' — he was referring to the age at which one *stops* learning, *stops* becoming wiser, *unless* one takes extraordinary steps to continue learning. The practical effect of this age of maturity is that the ancient Hindus who reached fifty-five were assured of being wiser than the ones of only, say, 27, or even 47 years old, no matter if they studied or not. Consider now that our world is being run by people not much over 27 years of age. As someone said, "In America, a 17-year-old high school graduate is barely competent to flip hamburgers in a fast-food joint, and yet, a mere ten years later, they are running the world." But more importantly consider that the wisdom of policemen, judges, engineers, doctors, lawyers, elected representatives, teachers, mothers, fathers, and everyone else do not automatically get wiser just because they have aged past 27 years old. But those 55 years old today do have one advantage: they are in their later years and have a chance to review the important people in their life and notice the patterns which represent their karmic destiny being played out.

**[page 103] Anyone in charge of young children — especially those who work in children's homes — who is aware of the activity of destiny, must ask, Have I been specifically chosen for the important task of guiding and educating these children? And other questions follow: What must I do to eliminate as far as possible my personal self, so I can leave those in my care unburdened by my subjective nature? How do I act so I do not interfere with a child's destiny? And, above all, How can I best educate a child toward human freedom?**

A teacher who does not understand the dramatic changes which happen in a child's life at first teeth change will not understand how vulnerable young children are and how deeply a teacher can affect the child's entire life. (Page 103) When children lose their baby teeth, they are losing a physical part of their mother's body which was created while they gestated in her womb. We humans replace all of the cells of our body every seven years, and the replacement of the baby teeth is the first time we formed *our own teeth* in a body separated from our mother. The forming of our own teeth as well as the other demands of growth during our first seven years requires significant soul and spirit forces to be devoted to growth and nourishment. Forces which are released for the child to develop a relationship with the world. And the teacher is one of the significant people in a seven-year-old child's life.

How can we best observe those hidden soul and spirit forces active during the period from birth to seven

years old? We can observe how they show up when they are released at age seven and affect the child during the next seven years in its relationship to the world. And we must get out of the way of these soul and spirit forces in action between birth and seven.

**[page 105] This means that until the seventh year, the impressions coming from the outer world directly affect their physical constitution — the lungs, stomach, liver, and other organs. In children at this age, the soul has not yet become free of the physical organization, where it is still actively engaged. Because of this, all of the impressions they receive from us through our general conduct have a decisive effect on their future constitution of health or illness.**

Anyone who comes to Waldorf education and expects to be given a cookbook on how to be a teacher is likely to be sorely disappointed. Or even if one expects to learn some educational principles. Sure, there are educational principles, but it is the individual teacher's application of these principles that is important. And that application requires that a teacher have a knowledge of the full human being, a knowledge which is the eponomic purpose of anthroposophy.

**[page 105] What really matters in education are the mood and soul attitude that teachers carry in their hearts toward the human being. We cannot truly serve the art of education unless we approach the growing human being with real insight. One could even say that teachers are free to approach subjects in their own individual ways, since, in any event, they must prepare their subject material according to what they have learned from life. The important thing is that teachers each carry within themselves a true picture of the human being; if this picture is present to their inner eyes, they will do the right thing, although outwardly each teacher may act in very different ways.**

To understand the full human being requires a knowledge of how the four bodies which comprise it, one physical and three supersensible or "subtle," come into prominence. The physical body becomes an independent being when it separates from its mother at birth. The change of teeth around seven years old marks the birth of the etheric body as an independent entity. The astral body becomes active at the time of puberty, and the Ego body, the "I", of the human being at the so-called age of majority, twenty-one years old. Each birth of a subtle body is marked by dramatic changes in the soul and spirit and require that a teacher be aware of the changes and adjust their approach to students as they change.

**[page 106] During the previous lecture I pointed out that a suprasensory contemplation of the human being will reveal to us — apart from the physical body — another, finer body that we call the ether body, or body of formative forces. This ether body provides not just the forces that sustain nourishment and growth; it is also the source of memory faculties and the ability to create mental images and ideas. It does not become an independent entity until the change of teeth, and its birth is similar to the way the physical body is born from one's mother. This means that, until the change of teeth, the forces of the ether body work entirely in the processes of a child's organic growth, whereas after that time — while still remaining active in this realm to a great extent — those forces partially withdraw from those activities. The released forces of the ether body then begin to work in the soul realm of mental images and memory, as well as in many other nuances of a child's soul life.**

Anyone who's been a parent knows how headstrong a child of two years old can be — they are labeled the "Terrible Twos." Steiner shows us how the etheric body frees itself from the head in the first 2.5 years, then from the chest region in the next 2.5 years, and from the limbs in the final 2 years.

**[page 107] Thus we see three phases in the gradual withdrawal of ether forces. And we clearly recognize how, while the ether body is still connected with the head region, a child rejects any intentional influence coming from outside.**

There was a famous case of a horse who could answer all sorts of questions by tapping his foot. "Klüge Hans" or "Clever John" would be given all sorts of mathematic problems and he would tap out the answer correctly every time. He was investigated by scientists all over the world to uncover what was obviously a fraud, but they found no clues as to how the answer was conveyed to Hans. Finally, they did an experiment in which they asked Hans a question that *no one in the room* knew the answer to, and Hans was stumped. What they discovered was that, out of the awareness of everyone in the room, someone was communicating to Hans when to stop tapping his foot when he reached correct answer. Steiner lived during the time when the experiments with horses of this type were in progress and observed what he called "the close relationship" of Mr. von Osten with his clever horse in Berlin. What's important about this close relationship is that it is the type of connection between a child and its mother and others during its first 2.5 years. During this time in the child's life, the only type of education, Steiner avers, should be "self-education" of the child's caregivers.

**[page 110] During the first two and a half years, children have a similar rapport with the mother or with others they are closely connected with as long as their attitude and conduct make this possible. Then children become perfect mimics and imitators. This imposes a moral duty on adults to be worthy of such imitation, which is far less comfortable than exerting one's will on children. Children take in all that we do, such as the ways we act and move. They are equally susceptible to our feelings and thoughts. They imitate us, and even if this is not outwardly noticeable, they nevertheless do this by developing tendencies for imitation that, through their organic soul forces, they press down into the physical organism. Therefore, education during these first two and a half years should be confined to the self-education of the adults in charge, who should think, feel, and act in a way that, when perceived by children, will cause them no harm. Fundamentally, the stage of imitation continues until the change of teeth, and thus children will be strongly influenced by their environment later on as well.**

One of the most frustrating experiences for most caregivers is how to deal with a child when it cries. It should comfort them to know that the habit of crying will pass away and the intense forces that went into the crying will later appear as intensely moral forces — if the caregivers are moral themselves. Like with the clever horses, communication between caregivers and small children happens even if only the thought is present in the caregiver, so any immoral thoughts in the caregivers during a baby's intense crying will appear later as intensely immoral forces.

**[page 111] Although the inherent forces in the behavior of intense crying remain with the child, the habit of crying will gradually pass. Such forces are very intense. If we influence the child correctly by setting the proper example and acting morally, the forces behind a baby's crying will reveal themselves as intensely moral forces in later life. A strong morality later in adult life is an expression of those same forces that lived in the intense crying of a young child. On the other hand, if those close to a child have an immoral attitude — even if only in thoughts — these forces will reappear later as intensely immoral forces.**

When I became a grandfather for the first time, I insisted on being called "Grandpa" to avoid having some child-given name applied to me as Paca or Gampa or any number of abominations I have heard. Invariably when I ask where the name comes from, I'll hear, "Oh, that's what Junior called his grandfather before he could talk well, so we gave him that name." I have also tried to talk to my children using my adult English and avoid baby talk, but without knowing any good reason to do so. I accepted the words they were able to say at the time, knowing intuitively that they would pronounce them correctly as they got older.

**[page 111, 112] And we must be careful not to harm the development of children while they are learning to speak. This easily happens when we make them say words we choose; this, too, is an imposition of our will on the child. It is best to speak naturally in**

**front of children (as long as we speak in a moral way) so that they have opportunities to hear us. In this way, children find their own way into language.**

Around people who talked baby talk to their small children, I have always felt squeamish — is if something wrong were going wrong, but I didn't understand what was wrong, up until now. Now I discover from Steiner such baby talk leads to weak digestion, which none of my siblings or children have ever had.

[page 112] Now you can appreciate the real point of what has been said so far — that we must not be tempted by a false kind of instinct to make baby talk for the child's benefit. This is not an instinct but something we may have acquired through misguided customs. Nurses or others dealing with young children should never speak to them in an artificial or childish way. We really do a great wrong when we change our normal way of speaking to "suit" a child, for children always want to imitate us as we really are, not as we pretend to be. They reject anything that approaches them as an expression of another person's will, such as childish and naive baby talk. Children have to put up with it, but they have a deep inner resentment toward such an approach. The effects of such well-intended folly is so far-reaching that it may come to light in later years as a weakened digestion. When an older person is diagnosed as having a weak digestion, it might be nothing but the result of the wrong approach by an over-zealous but misguided nurse during that person's early childhood.

Another no-no is for caregivers to force their will upon a child by getting them to memorize things. The consequence may be rheumatism during their advanced years.

[page 113] Children continue to live by imitation, and therefore we should not attempt to make them remember things we choose. At this stage it is best to leave the evolving forces of memory alone, allowing children to remember whatever they please. We should never give them memory exercises of any kind, otherwise, through ignorance, we might be responsible for consequences we can see only when viewing the entire course of human life. Sometimes we meet people who, around the age of forty or later, complain of shooting pains or rheumatism. This may certainly have various causes, but if we carry our research far enough, we may find that the rheumatism was caused by a premature overloading of the memory during early childhood.

The next aspect for caregivers to be aware of is what I call the "beautiful doll" syndrome. Everyone has seen young girls with their bed full of beautifully dressed dolls which look like they've never been played with. One suspects the mom is the one who really likes the dolls. Such a mom is unaware of the damage she is doing to her daughter by crippling her creative instincts which would otherwise flourish if the beautiful dolls were replaced by simple sock dolls with button eyes.

[page 114, 115] Imagine two nurses who are looking after a child between two and a half and five years of age. One of them — she may be very fond of the little girl in her charge — gives her a "beautiful" doll, one that has not only painted cheeks and real hair but eyes that close and a moveable head. I believe there are dolls that can even speak. Well, she gives this doll to the little girl, but since it is finished in every detail, there is nothing left for the child's imagination to create, and her yearning for creative flexibility remains unsatisfied. It is as if its forces of imagination were put into a straitjacket. The other nurse, who has a little more understanding for the inner needs of the child, takes an old piece of cloth that is of no use for anything else. She winds a thread around its upper end until something resembling a head appears. She may even ask the little girl to paint two black dots on the face or perhaps more, for the eyes, nose, and mouth. Now, because the child's imagination is stimulated, because she can create instead of having to put up with fixed and finished forms, the child experiences a far more lively and intimate response

**than she does toward the so-called beautiful doll. Toys, as much as possible, should leave the power of fantasy free in children. And since intellect is not the same as fantasy or imagination, the activity of assembling many parts is really not in harmony with the type of fantasy that is characteristic of children at this age.**

Steiner gives one of the best definitions of evil that I've found, "a good out of its time." If we are not to do harm or evil to our children, we must avoid giving them something at a time of their lives when it is not appropriate to their development as full human beings. Writing and reading is good for children, but presenting it to them before the age of seven is too soon. One should not be surprised to find children in Waldorf schools who do not read and write before the age of eight.

**[page 116] Children should not enter elementary school before their seventh year. I was always glad to hear, therefore (and I don't mind if you consider this uncivilized), that the children of some anthroposophists had no knowledge of writing and reading, even at the age of eight. Accomplishments that come with forces that are available later on should never be forced into an earlier stage, unless we are prepared to ruin the physical organism.**

It should be clear by now to you, dear Readers, that Rudolf Steiner considered that his "anthropos-sophy" or "full-human-being-knowledge" was something he wished to have taught to the parents and caregivers of children, not to children themselves. He urged that the proper care, rearing, and education of children be done by adults who understand the full human being.

**[page 122] Please understand that a Waldorf school — or any school that might spring from the anthroposophic movement — would never wish to teach anthroposophy as it exists today. I would consider this the worst thing we could do. Anthroposophy in its present form is a subject for adults and, as you can see from the color of their hair, often quite mature adults. Consequently, spiritual science is presented through literature and word of mouth in a form appropriate only to adults. I should consider the presentation to students of anything from my books Theosophy or How to Know Higher Worlds the worst possible use of this material; it simply must not happen. If we taught such material, which is totally unsuitable for schoolchildren (forgive a somewhat trivial expression used in German), we would make them want "to jump out of their skin."**

When one looks at children through the lens of the full-human-being, one cannot imagine teaching them without "constantly changing classroom situations that arise from the immediate responses of one's students." But are not most of our public school teachers taught to teach this way?

**[page 124] Are they not trained to decide ahead of time what they will teach? This often gives me the impression that children are not considered at all during educational deliberations. Such an attitude is like turning students into papier-mâché masks as they enter school, so that teachers can deal with masks instead of real children.**

There are no books full of "principles of Waldorf education" Steiner tells us. It would be a mistake to promulgate abstract educational principles for Waldorf teachers.

**[page 125] The result of such a misguided approach would be that our graduates would be unable to find their way into life. It is too easy to criticize life today. Most people meet unpleasant aspects of life every day and we are easily tempted to make clever suggestions about how to put the world in order. But it completely inappropriate to educate children so that, when they leave school to enter life, they can only criticize the senselessness of what they find. However imperfect life may be according to abstract reason, we must nevertheless be able to play our full part in it. Waldorf students — who have probably been treated more as individuals than is usually the case — have to be sent out into life; otherwise, having a Waldorf school makes no sense at all. Students must not become**

**estranged from contemporary life to the extent that they can only criticize what they meet outside.**

It seems to me that many college professors create students who are only able to criticize the world they find outside of the walls of their classroom. That seems to be why many of their students become professors in turn — to avoid dealing with the unsatisfactory world outside of the college.

Imagine a school having a planning meeting and needing all the staff of the school present during a school day. What do they commonly do? Give the children the day off or send them home. Now imagine the same event happening in a Waldorf school and the teachers simply send the children back to their classrooms! As the principal said, “We’ll send them back to their classrooms. They have now reached a stage where we can leave them unattended without bad consequences. They won’t disturb us.” Were they silent in their classrooms? No, but they otherwise were well-behaved till the teachers returned.

**[page 128, 129] Admittedly, this peace was somewhat ephemeral; overly sensitive ears might have been offended, but that did not matter. Children who disturb overly sensitive ears are usually not overly disciplined. At any rate, the effects of imponderables in the Waldorf school became apparent in the children's good behavior under these unusual circumstances.**

How do teachers deal with children who do not pay attention and avoid their work in class? They punish them, maybe give them detention in which they stay after class to do their work. Early on, a teacher in the Waldorf school found the usual methods of punishment had interesting side-affects [\(6\)](#).

**[page 129] He had tried to discover the effects of certain forms of punishment on his students. His students had experienced our kind of discipline for some time, and among them there were a few notorious rascals. These little good-for-nothings (as such students are called in Germany) had done very poor work, and they were to be punished according to usual school discipline and given detention. They were told to stay after lessons to do their arithmetic properly. However, when this punishment was announced in class, the other students protested that they, too, wanted to stay and do extra arithmetic because it is so much fun. So you see, the concept of punishment had gone through a complete transformation; it had become something the whole class enjoyed. Such things rarely happen if teachers try to make them happen directly, but they become the natural consequences of the right approach.**

It might be said that the soft-heart trumps the hard-ass approach in teaching any day. The key is whether the teacher evokes sympathy or antipathy. When teachers create antipathy in their students they are sowing in them the seeds of nervousness later in life, which is a bitter almond to replace the desired sweet plum of education.

**[page 130] There are plenty of abstract principles around these days. I am not being sarcastic when I call them clever and ingenious; their merits can be argued. But even when slovenly and indolent teachers enter the classroom, if they nevertheless radiate warmth and affection for their students, they may give their students more for later life than would a highly principled teacher whose personality evokes antipathy.**

If etheric body acts as a sculptor during the first seven years of a child's life as its forces are directing to the building up of the physical body, during the next seven years between teeth change and puberty, the etheric body acts as a musical director who specializes in beat and rhythm. This is the age when youngsters want a drum set, like parades with marching bands, and their inner musicians begin to awaken.

In a workshop I attended with Jean Houston, she told a story of talking to a young boy who had been labeled as unable to understand arithmetic. She asked him to add 4 and 7 and he stared blankly and said

nothing. Then she slapped the table 4 times and then 7 times and said, "How much is that?" "Eleven" the kid promptly responded. He was a child who lived in rhythm and the school system had been ignoring him because its abstract educational principles did not have anything about rhythm as a means of teaching. The school had this beautiful violin they had been neglecting. A neglect which will ruin the violin.

**[page 137] Previously, the child's inborn activities were like those of a sculptor, but now an inner musician begins to work, albeit beyond the child's consciousness. It is essential for teachers to realize that, when a child enters class one, they are dealing with a natural, though unconscious, musician. One must meet these inner needs of children, demanding a somewhat similar treatment, metaphorically, to that of a new violin responding to a violinist, adapting itself to the musician's characteristic pattern of sound waves. Through ill treatment, a violin may be ruined for ever. But in the case of the living human organism, it is possible to plant principles that are harmful to growth, which increase and develop until they eventually ruin a person's entire life.**

While the children of ages 7 to 9 are attracted to rhythm and beat and respond to it directly, children from the ages of 9 to 12 develop an understanding of beat and melody as well.

**[page 139] On completion of the ninth year and up to the twelfth year, children develop an understanding of rhythm and beat and what belongs to melody as such. They no longer have the same urge to reproduce inwardly everything in this realm, but now they begin to perceive it as something outside. Whereas, earlier on, children experienced rhythm and beat unconsciously, they now develop a conscious perception and understanding of it. This continues until the twelfth year, not just with music, but everything coming to meet them from outside.**

When they pass their twelfth year, their developing sense of abstractness coincides with a hardening of the tendons which connect their muscles to their bones.

**[page 139, 140] Whereas previously all movement was oriented more toward the muscles themselves, now it is oriented toward the tendons. Everything that occurs in the realm of soul and spirit affects the physical realm. This inclusion of the life of the tendons, as the link between muscle and bone, is the external, physical sign that a child is sailing out of a feeling approach to rhythm and beat into what belongs to the realm of logic, which is devoid of rhythm and beat. This sort of discovery is an offshoot of a real knowledge of the human being and should be used as a guide for the art of education.**

In the ages of 7 to 10, the child should be introduced to the alphabet as a prelude to writing. Steiner has emphasized in several places that writing is best taught first and then reading. In Chapter 9, he describes the preferred approach to writing which involves converting movement (via their inner musician) or forms (via their inner sculptor) into letters of the alphabet. It might involve the child running around the floor and converting the movement into the letter O or converting the form of a fish into the script letter F or saying over and over the "washing waves of water" and converting the undulations of sound into the script letter W.

**[page 144] We try to show parents that the children in our school learn to write at the appropriate age and in a far more humane way than if they had to absorb material that is essentially alien to their nature — alien because it represents the product of a long cultural evolution.**

**[page 148] The first step is to introduce writing artistically and imaginatively and then to let children read what they have written. The last step, since modern life requires it, would be to help children read from printed texts.**

In the area of numbers, I note that Steiner recommends teaching numbers by dividing. This seems to make

great sense because the way I was taught arithmetic was first addition, then subtraction, then multiplication, then division. As a result I found myself and others in my classroom having trouble with division because it was the hardest. Learning numbers this way would seem to make division simple because one would begin learning numbers by division in the very beginning!

**[page 149, 150]** Instead of offering, say, three apples, then four more, and finally another two, and asking the child to add them all together, we begin by offering a whole pile of apples, or whatever is convenient. This would begin the whole operation. Then one calls on two more children and says to the first, "Here you have a pile of apples. Give some to the other two children and keep some for yourself, but each of you must end up with the same number of apples." In this way you help children comprehend the idea of sharing by three. We begin with the total amount and lead to the principle of division. Following this method, children will respond and comprehend this process naturally. According to our picture of the human being, and in order to attune ourselves to the children's nature, we do not begin by adding but by dividing and subtracting. Then, retracing our steps and reversing the first two processes, we are led to multiplication and addition. Moving from the whole to the part, we follow the original experience of number, which was one of analyzing, or division, and not the contemporary method of synthesizing, or putting things together by adding.

It brings tears of sadness to my eyes to see children of five to ten years old who disagree vocally with their teachers when told that something is beautiful, true, or good. Instead of being proud of such precociousness we should be chagrined. These are the years in which children should accept as a natural response what their teachers are telling them. If not, they will never develop fully as a human being.

**[page 151, 152]** Those who are able to observe life find definite connections between the general chaos of today and educational principles that, though highly satisfying to intellectual and naturalistic attitudes, do not lead to a full development of the human being. We must become aware of the polar effects in life. For example, people in later life become free in the right way only if, as a child, they went through the stage of looking up to and revering adults. It is healthy for children to believe that something is beautiful, true and good, or ugly, false, and evil, when a teacher says so.

As an example of how a teacher might approach the subject of immortality, Steiner imagines a teacher who has the pupils observe a butterfly emerging from its chrysalis. If the teacher feels deeply the mystery unfolding before their eyes along with the children, the children will be convinced of its truth. Note how Steiner informs us that what is happening in the teacher is more important than what is happening in the chrysalis.

**[page 153]** If teachers have this experience, something begins to stir between their students and themselves, something we must attribute to the realm of imponderables. If teachers bring this picture to children with an inner warmth of belief, it will create a deep and lasting impression and become part of their being.

This story reminds of when my grandson, Collin, lost his Grampa Gene recently. He stayed with us while his mother was the hospital with her dad as he lay dying. After Mass on Sunday morning, we went into the outdoor chapel of St. Joseph's to light a candle for Grampa Gene. I told him simply, "We are lighting this candle for Grampa Gene because his spirit will see this light and know that we love him." I did this with the same mood that I light candles for my mother and brother. Later he told his mother what we had done, when his mother called to relay what he said to her, she said, "I could tell that it was important to him."

**[page 153, 154, *italics added*]** If you can see how the effects of natural authority lead to a kind of inner obedience, then in a similar light authority will be accepted as wholesome and positive. It will not be resented because of a mistaken notion of freedom. *Teachers,*

**as artists of education, must approach children as artists of life,** because, after the change of teeth, children approach teachers as artists as well — as sculptors and musicians. In certain cases, the unconscious and inherent gifts of children are very highly developed, especially in children who later become virtuosi or geniuses. Such individuals never lose their artistic gifts. But inwardly, entirely subconsciously, every child is a great sculptor; they retain these gifts from before the change of teeth. After this, inner musical activities are interwoven with the inner formative activities. As educators, we must learn to cooperate in a living way with these artistic forces working through children.

The best definition of pedantry is in a question once put to Winston Churchill. At a party a woman asked him, "Sir, what do you think about the abominable practice of ending a sentence with a preposition?" Winston replied, "My dear Lady, that is an absurdity up which I will not put!" Churchill was not one to bandy words because of some pedant's idea of what is proper. Neither, I gather from this next passage, was Rudolf Steiner.

**[page 156] Everywhere, life itself shows us that there are no sharp, rigid contours, so popular among pedantic minds.**

When is the last time, you dear Reader, have read a fairy tale from beginning to end? And yet was there not some time in your life when fairy tales made up a significant part of the stories which were read to you or that you read on your own? And what are fairy tales if not tales from the realm of living and breathing human beings interacting with other equally live beings of all sorts? Children after teeth change love fairy tales, science fiction, and other fantasy tales because they involve living beings, whether they be monsters, aliens, dragons, ogres, witches, or magical lions. It may be a Grimm world, but it's one that lives in the child's mind.

**[page 161] After the change of teeth, when children experience conceptual thinking, it is as if spikes were being driven through their whole being, especially when such concepts come from the inorganic, lifeless realm. Anything taken from the soulless realm will in itself estrange a child. Consequently, those whose task is to teach children of this age need an artistic ability that will imbue everything they bring with life; everything must be alive. Teachers must let plants speak, and they must let animals act as moral beings. Teachers must be able to turn the whole world into fairy tales, fables, and legends.**

Have you ever had a professor in college whose bony face seemed to be covered with parchment and whose lectures were utterly boring?

**[page 162] If you tell students what you found in books — no matter how lively you may be — if you tell them what you have read and perhaps even memorized, you will talk to them like a dry and desiccated person, as though you did not have a living skin but were covered with parchment, for there are always death-like traces in one's own being of what was thus learned from the past.**

I include this to show you that Rudolf Steiner is not such a desicated, parchment-covered professor telling us of stuff he read in some books, but rather a living human being sharing with us his direct experience of life. Rightly understood, all teachers should strive for the type of teaching that he provides in his lectures.

**[page 162] If, on the other hand, you are creative in your work as a teacher, your material will radiate with growing forces, it will be fresh and alive, and this is what feeds the souls of children.**

Homework is another thing which falls by the wayside in Waldorf schools. Steiner in the beginning considered the need for homework as a sign that the teacher was making excessive demands on their students, which is detrimental at many levels.

**[page 173] Sometimes it is simply beyond their abilities to fulfill a teacher's demands. But the worst thing is when children do not do what the teacher has told them to do. Therefore, it would be better to ask less than to risk letting them get away with not fulfilling their assignments.**

How many times can you remember your children coming home from school saying they were tired? Perhaps you remember that from your own school years? Steiner asks us: "What is the one thing of which we never grow tired?" Breathing is his answer. Also our blood flows effortlessly without tiring. Even if we are otherwise exhausted, our blood flows and we keep breathing. We never tire of breathing. Why then should we tire of education?

**[page 178, 179] Doesn't this show us that teachers who work from a real art of education constantly appeal to these very organs, which are never subject to fatigue? . . . But there is one thing we can be sure of: that the rhythmic system, which is of such primary importance in any true art of education, never suffers from tiredness or fatigue.**

One of Steiner's observations about our nerves is still at odds with neurologists, so far as I know. He claims that neurologists make an unnecessary distinction between sensory and motor neurons — that there is no difference between the two. Motor neurons are simply those which give us feedback on the results of our will impulses.

**[page 187] Nerves that enter the metabolism and limbs transmit only the impressions of what a person is doing in response to soul and spiritual impulses. Through them we perceive the consequences of soul-spiritual will processes in the blood circulation, in the remaining metabolism, and in the movement of the limbs. These we perceive. The so-called motor nerves do not initiate physical movement, but allow us to perceive the consequences of our will impulses.**

After the lectures, during a question and answer period, Steiner gave direct evidence of the equivalence of motor and sensory neurons.

**[page 316, 317] To give another example, a so-called motor nerve may be cut or damaged. If we join it to a sensory nerve and allow it to heal, it will function again. In other words, it is possible to join the appropriate ends of a "sensory" nerve to a "motor" nerve, and, after healing, the result will be a uniform functioning. If these two kinds of nerves were radically different, such a process would be impossible.**

Even in 1922, some four years after the Russian revolution, Steiner could see that the communist's focus on what people should know was an error. It would be better to ask what a people can do to become a real human being.

**[page 197] People will not admit that events in Russia are merely the ultimate consequences of our own situation, taken to extremes in Eastern Europe. The absurdity of communist ideology is that it has determined and officially declared what a citizen must know; it does not ask what people can do to become real human beings who are properly integrated into the world's fabric.**

Any knowledge of the full human body would be incomplete without a treatment of the four types of human beings: melancholic, phlegmatic, sanguine, and choleric. One should not be surprised to find that these types correspond to the physical body, etheric body, astral body, and Ego body (I-being) which are members of the full human being<sup>(7)</sup>. Teachers need to be attuned to the particular temperament of each child as it will give them a way of approaching the child most readily.

## **Melancholic Temperament**

[page 209] Melancholic children are those who depend most strongly on the conditions of the physical body. Because of their special constitution, they tend to feel weighed down by their bodily nature. They easily become self-centered and, in general, show little interest in what is going on around them. Yet it would be wrong to think of melancholic children as simply inattentive, since this is true only with regard to their surroundings and what comes from their teachers. They are, on the other hand, very attentive to their own inner conditions, and this is the reason melancholic children tend to be so moody.

### Phlegmatic Temperament

[page 210] The relationship of phlegmatic children to their environment is one of complete, though entirely subconscious, surrender to the world at large. And since the world is so vast and full of things to which they have surrendered themselves, they show little interest in what is closer to them. Again, my remarks about this temperament refer only to children, otherwise they might be seen as a compliment to phlegmatic adults, and they are certainly not meant to be that. Making a rather sweeping statement, one could say that, if children with phlegmatic tendencies did not happen to live on earth but out in the heavenly world of the cosmos, such children would be full of the deepest interest in their surroundings. They feel at home in the periphery of the world. Phlegmatic children are open to immensity and anything that is vast and remote and does not make an immediate impact.

### Sanguine Temperament

[page 210, 211] To a certain extent, sanguine children display the opposite characteristics of the melancholic or phlegmatic child. Young melancholics are immersed in bodily nature. Phlegmatic children are drawn outward to the spheres of infinity, because they are so strongly linked to their ether body. The ether body always inclines outward toward infinite totality; it disperses into the cosmos just a few days after death. Sanguine children live in what we call the astral, or soul, body. This member of the human being is different from the physical or ether bodies inasmuch as it is not concerned with anything temporal or spatial. It exists beyond the realm of time and space. Because of the astral body, during every moment of our lives we have an awareness of our entire life up to the present moment, although memories of earlier experiences are generally weaker than more recent ones. The astral body is instrumental mainly in directing our dreams. These, as you know, bear little relationship to the normal sequence of time. We may dream about something that happened only yesterday yet, mixed up in the dream, people may appear whom we met in early childhood. The astral body mixes up our life experiences and has no regard for the element of time and space, but in its chaotic ways it has its own dimension that is totally different from what is temporal and spatial.

Sanguine children surrender themselves to their astral body, and this becomes evident in their entire pattern of behavior. They respond to outer impressions as though what lies beyond time and space were directly transmitted to us through the outer world itself. They quickly respond to impressions without digesting them inwardly, because they do not care for the time element. They simply surrender to the astral body and make no effort to retain outer impressions. Or, again, they do not like to live in memories of earlier events. Because they pay so little attention to time, sanguine children live in and for the present moment. They express outwardly something that, in reality, is the task of the astral body in the higher worlds, and this gives sanguine children a certain superficiality.

### Choleric Temperament

[page 211] Choleric children are most directly linked to their I-center. Their physical build shows a strong will that, permeated by the forces of their I-being, is likely to enter life aggressively.

Waldorf teachers use their perception of the temperaments in their children in various ways. They may place them in groups sorted by the various temperaments.

**[page 211] There are children of mixed temperaments, of course, and this has to be considered as well. In general, however, it has a salutary effect when children of the same temperament are seated together, for the simple reason that the temperaments rub up against each other.**

Melancholics will learn from each other by seeing, in others of their group, indications of their own symptoms, and this will have a "healing effect on their own nature." Phlegmatics will become so bored in the company of other phlegmatics that they will be stirred to action rather than take a back seat as they might in less phlegmatic company. Sanguine children, watching others flitting from one thing to another will recognize the superficiality of their own processes. Choleric children will be in a constant battle with the other cholericics and this help them be less combative.

The role of the teacher is to treat like with like. This is what in NLP would be called pacing to establish rapport. Teachers should not go against the natural disposition of each student.

**[page 212, 213] On the contrary, we should develop the habit of treating like with like. If, for instance, we forced a choleric to sit still and to be quiet, the result would be an accumulation of suppressed choleric that would act like a poison in the child's system. It simply would not work. On the other hand, if, for example, a teacher shows continued interest and understanding for the doleful moods of a melancholic child, this attitude will finally bring about a beneficial and healing effect. When dealing with phlegmatic children, outwardly we should also appear rather phlegmatic and somewhat indifferent, despite our real inner interest in the student. Sanguine children should be subjected to many quickly changing sense impressions.**

For choleric children, it is best to get them outdoors as much as possible to run around until they are worn out. Steiner proposes an interesting exercise to do with cholericics:

**[page 213] I would let them climb up and down the trees. When they reach a treetop, I would let them shout to a playmate sitting on top of another tree. I would let them shout at each other until they are tired. If we allow choleric children to free themselves in a natural way from pent-up choleric, we exercise a healing influence on their temperament.**

Why perform psychological experiments? This is a question Steiner gives an amazing answer to while pointing out that there are valid uses for such experiments in limited contexts.

**[page 286] We experiment with the human soul because, during the course of human evolution, we have reached a point where we are no longer able to build a bridge, spontaneously and naturally, from one soul to another. We no longer have a natural feeling for the various needs of children, of how or when they feel fatigued and so on. This is why we try to acquire externally the kind of knowledge that human beings once possessed in full presence of mind, one soul linked to the other. We ask, How do children feel fatigued after being occupied with one or another subject for a certain length of time? We compile statistics and so on. As I said, in a way we have invented these procedures just to discover in a roundabout way what we can no longer recognize directly in a human being.**

Steiner was asked if eurythmy<sup>(8)</sup> is a version of another art form or a new art. If you observe life rightly, Steiner says, you will notice that almost anything can be proved right or wrong depending on how you arrange your definitions.

**[page 290] Yet the real value does not lie in proving something right or wrong or in finding definitions and making distinctions; it is a matter of discovering ways to new impulses and new life in the world. You may have your own thoughts about all this, but spiritual scientific insight reveals the development of humankind, and today it is leaning toward overcoming the intellectuality of mere definitions, being drawn instead toward the human soul realm and creative activity.**

In conclusion we can see that the drab situation of our public school system today is a result of the application of abstract educational theories to the captive students who attend them. They are captive due to the illusion held by their parents that the public school system is "free" when in fact it is the most expensive in terms of money spent and the damage to the subsequent lives of the children who attend them. We can only offer Steiner's quote from Goethe's *Faust* as a description of the folly of public education:

**[page 204]**

*Grey, dear friend, is every theory  
And green the golden tree of life.*

Green and living is a system of education, like that of the Waldorf and associated Steiner schools, which is based upon a true knowledge of the full human being. In such schools we find teachers who, "as artists of education, approach children as artists of life." Steiner does not quibble with those who argue against his educational approaches, he says merely, "The only thing that matters is whether what I say can stand the test of a true knowledge of the human being." Some eighty-five years after he innovated the Waldorf system of education, the schools are flourishing around the globe. The schools themselves are a living testament that Steiner's knowledge of the full human being has stood the test of time.

Does that mean that Steiner's approach to education has no detractors? No, it doesn't. But there are people who do not understand that reality is often much different than their theories of reality and they are not willing to consider whether their theories of reality may be wrong. Steiner says this will ever be so, but that should deter no one from approaching his works with an open mind.

**[page 224] If we speak the truth today, people tend to think that we do so merely to present contrary statements to the world. Yet the reality is often unorthodox. Therefore, if we want to speak the truth, we must put up with seeming contrary, however inconvenient this might be.**

No doubt to many, Steiner seems to be a touchy-feely, air-fairy kind of writer of metaphysical gobble-gook of no material consequence that should be discarded off-hand without any investigation. Yet, Steiner himself admits that he prefers people with a materialistic concept who can think to those who, overly-attracted to the spiritual world, create materialistic versions of the spiritual world.

**[page 237] On the other hand, I like to tell those who are willing to listen that I prefer a person with a materialistic concept of the world — one who is nevertheless capable of the spiritual activity of thinking — to a theosophist who, though striving toward the spiritual world, falls back on materialistic images. Materialists are mistaken, but even their thinking contains spirit — real spirit. It is "diluted" and abstract, but spirit nevertheless. And this way of thinking compels people to enter the realities of life. Therefore I have found materialists who are richer in spirit than those who are anxious to overcome materialism but do so in an entirely materialistic way. It is characteristic of our time that people absorb spirit in such diluted forms and can no longer recognize it. The most spiritual activity in our time, however, can be found in technological innovation, where everything arises from spirit — human spirit.**

For myself, the above passage brought to my mind one of the most materialistic persons I've ever met, Dr. Andrew Joseph Galambos. He was an astrophysicist, a great thinker, and an innovator *par excellence*.

What he created was a way of understanding freedom which is as rich in spirit as Steiner's own masterpiece, [The Philosophy of Freedom](#). In Galambos' [Sic Itur Ad Astra](#), one can find the blueprint to a practical implementation of Steiner's threefold society. Galambos, a self-proclaimed materialist, was a genius of technological innovation in the field of spirit.

Rudolf Steiner and Andrew Galambos were geniuses who never had their wings clipped. Imagine the debt we owe to the parents and teachers of these men. They raised these two men from infancy, holding moral thoughts as they cried intensely as babies, providing authority during their growing years, and allowing their gifts to blossom in their own time.

**[page 272, 273] In their bodily nature, those of a lower intelligence are born with a heavy burden. A genius, on the other hand, is born with a winged soul. We must admit to ourselves that we are called to help carry the burden of a disabled person. But we must also admit that, as teachers, we may not be able to follow the flight of a young genius. Otherwise, every school would have to be staffed with great geniuses, and this is probably impossible. Our teaching methods must nevertheless ensure that we do not impede the progress of an inherent genius. We must never clip the wings of a genius's spirit. We can do these things only by developing an art of education that does not interfere with the spiritual forces that must work freely in growing human beings.**

This is the task before you and me, dear Reader. How can we help the genius in our children and grandchildren so that their wings of spirit are not clipped away by some desiccated, parchment-faced pedant following their rule book of educational practices? Until educational practices in public schools begin to take into consideration the reality of the full human being, it is comforting to know that there are Waldorf schools nearby to provide a place of unfettered flight for our offspring.

Note: This book may be read on-line here:

[http://steinerbooks.org/research/archive/soul\\_economy/soul\\_economy.pdf](http://steinerbooks.org/research/archive/soul_economy/soul_economy.pdf)

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

**Footnote 1.** Thanks to this webpage <http://www.nlpanchorpoint.com/ARTbolstad1.htm> for helping me recall some of the details of this famous story of Dr. Milton Erickson, world famous hypnotherapist for over fifty years till his death in the last decades of the twentieth century.

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

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**Footnote 2.** In my essay "The Childhood of Humanity" I point to the evidence of Cro-Magnon and Neanderthal skulls which illustrate the time of the appearance of the neo-cortex. See this webpage: [http://www.doyletics.com/childofh.htm#N\\_9](http://www.doyletics.com/childofh.htm#N_9) .

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**Footnote 3.** These are three processes for experiencing the suprasensory or spiritual world which are described in detail in many places, such as Rudolf Steiner's [Knowledge of the Higher Worlds](#).

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

**Footnote 4.** If, on the other hand, a student evinced a slight blush or redness in their complexion, the teacher might assign some memorization task at the point to restore balance in the student.

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**Footnote 5.** Knowledge of the full human being requires knowing about its four bodies or members: physical body, etheric body, astral body, and Ego body (or "I").

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

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**Footnote 6.** This was mentioned above, and here is Steiner's description of the episode.

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**Footnote 7.** A detailed treatment of the four bodies or members of the full human being can be found in this book of lectures, [The Education of the Child](#), by Rudolf Steiner.

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**Footnote 8.** Eurythmy is a new art innovated by Rudolf Steiner which combines speech and dance. For details see this book: [Eurythmy](#), by Rudolf Steiner.

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