

Remember Remember...

Ireland's Steiner Waldorf Literacy Week!

May 5th–12th 2013

WHAT WILL YOUR EVENT BE?

The Irish Steiner Kindergarten Association proposes that during one week, 5th–12th May 2013, each kindergarten community hosts a “literacy event”!

Your event could take any number of forms, big or small, the emphasis being on reaching the wider community. The following are some suggestions to get your creative juices going:

- + a puppet show or story telling in your kindergarten or in the local library
- + a short play/drama
- + a talk/workshop in connection with your County Childcare Committee
- + a ‘games’ morning at the local GAA pitch or tennis club
- + finger plays with your local parent and toddler group
- + a singing day workshop
- + a display of books/Hawthorn Press catalogues

We suggest that kindergartens host a parents’ evening prior to the event, which will serve to explore the topic, involve parents and gather energy for the event!

Literacy in early years education was the focus of the 2012 ISKA Conference. These quotes from the conference may assist us to set the scene for the week:

“Learning is not just about reading and maths. These are higher abilities that are built upon the integrity of the relationship between the brain and the body.”

“Increased control of movement is indicative of strengthening connections between the brain and the body and within the brain itself. In this way, movement helps to map the brain”

From Sally Goddard Blythe, Director of the Institute for Neuro-Physiological Psychology UK, *The Well Balanced Child*, Oxford 2004

There are currently 19 kindergartens dispersed throughout Ireland. We could certainly have a ripple effect from 19 events!!

We ask that you collate a small bit of feedback from the event, which ISKA will use to report back to the national collaboration group, and some choice digital photos that depict the theme of the event would be great!

Background information

Literacy and numeracy are key priority areas for the Department of Children & Youth Affairs (DCYA) because of concerns that literacy and numeracy levels are seen as low in Ireland.

Part of ISKA’s remit as a voluntary childcare organisation (VCO) funded by Pobal and working with the DCYA, is to collaborate with other childcare agencies nationwide especially within priority areas. So throughout 2013 ISKA will be collaborating with Fingal CC, Early Childhood Ireland, Barnardos and NALA, in the promotion of early literacy and numeracy.

This is a welcome opportunity for the Steiner early years community to spread the word of the Steiner approach to literacy, while also bringing the Steiner pedagogy more to the forefront within the field of early childhood education nationally.

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Greetings Members & Friends

A word from Ulrike Farnleitner; ISKA nominated Irish representative on the board of the International Association for Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood Education (IASWECE)

Ireland is represented internationally through my attendance at the annual member meetings and conferences. In this way ISKA has a role in developmental activities and decisions of IASWECE. My work is done on a voluntary basis with costs funded through the annual ISKA membership fees.

The International Association is an organ of the cultural impulse of Rudolf Steiner and the worldwide Steiner/Waldorf movement is active wherever colleagues work together on behalf of our shared ideals for the development of the young child. This co-operation takes place through conferences, meetings, working groups, collaborative research projects, training and deepening courses, and the development of resources, as well as through partnerships and sponsorships among colleagues throughout the world. You can read about these diverse initiatives at www.iaswece.org

Responsibility for the Association's activities is shared among its council, coordinating group, board, and working groups and committees.

The IASWECE Working Group on Training fosters the working together of training colleagues and courses worldwide, and provides resources to support the quality and deepening of Waldorf early childhood training and professional development.

The members of the Alliance for Childhood European Network Group, together with the IASWECE, share a deep concern about and work together to improve the quality of childhood in the member states of the European Union. The members believe that a poor quality of childhood is harmful for children. When society as a whole improves this quality, it will be beneficial for the children and adolescents in question and for the societies in which they grow up.

Supporting Members – individuals, kindergartens or organisations – provide voluntary financial support for the activities of IASWECE. As a Supporting Member, you will receive mailings and further information on our Association.

A donation or unrestricted gift to IASWECE provides support for general activities, such as:

- + two major gatherings of representatives from our 28 member country associations each year
- + collaboration with other organisations such as the European Council, Hague Circle, Pacific Round Table, and Freunde der Erziehungskunst
- + development of infrastructure for our organisation, including the activities of the Coordinating Group and Board, the office in Sweden, and
- + development of our world directories, child care provider network, and website.

General donations and unrestricted gifts can also be used to support our special projects as needed, and allow us to respond to urgent situations that arise around the world.

IASWECE suggests that each country that can, gives an annual financial contribution towards its work. It is hoped that Ireland's annual contribution will be gathered through all the kindergartens. The suggested contribution is €1 per month for each child in your kindergarten.

My hope is that you, dear colleague, as responsible person for a kindergarten in the role of teacher, assistant, board of management, will help towards this contribution to IASWECE.

To make it easier for all kindergartens in this tight financial situation there are two means of donating:

- + financially
- + by making some crafts/toys that can be sold in May in Germany. Imagine if your lovely doll that you had made with your parents/craft group is going to live in another country and you through her, can stay in touch with colleagues from all over the world. That is building community!

Who wants to have one of my little hand-painted stools to raffle in your community?

Best wishes this spring,
Ulrike Farnleitner

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Approaching Literacy in Early Childhood

ISKA 2012 Conference report

We gathered in the warm, light-filled, pastoral ambience of the Bridge conference room, many of the participants having journeyed through daybreak and the countryside's first hard frost of the winter. Ulrike Farnleitner, ISKA's development officer and mentor, opened with a verse from Steiner's Calendar of the Soul, then invited us to perform a simple whole body gesture and voice to our name, this gesture was then repeated twice with the group, serving to gently remind us that language is so much more than just words.

Philipp Rebuke then took the floor. The following is a synopsis of Philipp's presentation.

As adults, we tend to expect children to approach life in the same way we do, to be the same as we are. In doing so, we project our understanding and expectations upon them. As carers and educationalists of early childhood let us reconsider this and see the young child as totally different from the adult, emotionally, developmentally and spiritually.

The child is at the consequence of all that is around them, when we consider the foetus we are all too well aware of the consequences of the mother's health and emotional well-being on the development of the foetus – the science of embryology has brought forth much proof in this area. "A high level of anxiety or depression of the mother between the 18th and the 32nd weeks of pregnancy doubles the risk of emotional or cognitive troubles when the child is 13 years old" (Vivette Glover, Imperial College London, cit in: *Le Monde*, 2012, October 13).

After birth, the babe constantly receives from outside of itself, from its environment. The very young child also does exactly what it wants, regularly demanding its needs to be met, we are aware that the child does not filter its compulsions and emotions as an adult would. Yet it would seem that in mainstream education there is an expectation on the young child to think and filter as an adult would. The focus of the Steiner-Waldorf pedagogy is to relieve the child of this burden while also preserving the nature of childhood. By observing the child we can see that learning occurs naturally through the child's own invention and imitation. Of course it is in the child's nature to please, and as

adults we often ask too much of the child and show our pleasure at their accomplishment – but at what expense to the child?

"Learning is not just about reading and maths. These are higher abilities that are built upon the integrity of the relationship between the brain and the body" (Sally Goddard Blythe, Director of the Institute for Neuro-Physiological Psychology UK, *The Well Balanced Child*, Oxford 2004, p. 5).

Observe an awake baby. What part of the human being is active? The baby's limbs are moving constantly, yet this movement has no conscious direction (no thought), but of course the baby is learning all the time. From this we understand that learning predominantly commences through movement. This theory on the process of child development is well known; the child develops from doing/movement into speech and on to thinking. But what does this mean?

This is an exciting time because the state is now beginning to consider the child from an holistic perspective, which means to consider a child's physical, emotional and spiritual development. This, it might be said, is the root of Steiner-Waldorf education.

So in answer to that question, we could say that the spirit within the head is asleep, also the spirit of the emotions is slumbering, but the spirit within the limbs is strong and active but not conscious, rather it is connected to the spiritual beings.

So why is it so important that the child remains asleep in the head, so to speak? Or asked another way, what happens to the child if we awaken them to thinking, intellect or reasoning before they are ready? Well, the effect is similar to walking in one's sleep! The abilities of movement are slowed down, compromised. If we observe a dancer dancing then ask them to describe or teach what he/she has just performed, what happens? The body seems to forget the movement and must slow down considerably.

"A child's experience of movement will play a pivotal part in shaping his personality, his feelings and his achievements" (Goddard, p. 5).

Riley (2007) indicates that research in the neuroscience field has highlighted three important findings that may influence thinking about education in the early years, namely:

- + the development of the number of synapses between neurons increases rapidly in early childhood
- + there are critical periods when sensory and motor systems in the brain require experience for maximum development, and
- + the more enriched and intricate the learning environment, the greater the number of synapses will form.

(Walsh, G., Gray, C., McMillan, D., Hanna, K., McCracken, O. and Carville, S., *Professional Development for Early Childhood Professionals: Examining Pedagogy in Early Childhood*, 2010.)

Over the last few decades, it seems society has responded to these neuroscientific findings by considering the child as a sponge, by attempting to fill the intellect of the young child, in case that prime time or 'critical period for maximum' learning passes them by. But more recent research in this area recognises that one's learning capacity has its foundation in movement.

"Increased control of movement is indicative of strengthening connections between the brain and the body and within the brain itself. In this way, movement helps to map the brain" (Goodard 2004, p. 28).

Let us respect who and where children are in themselves – respect their way of being – observe, be open and trust that they are showing us how they learn, and what they need to do at each stage of their development.

Play and the role of the teacher

We can easily observe that the young child is strongly attached to the adults around them. This is because the child's etheric body is not developed, so the child is literally linked to the adults etheric body, the adult's consciousness; their behaviours, habits and life force will strongly influence the child. This connection serves to strengthen (or weaken) the formation of the child's own etheric body. Taking this into consideration the work and role of the early years teacher is invaluable, but is often so subtle that it is almost invisible. Confidence in the role of the teacher is very important: "Children need to be inspired by example rather than instruction" (Gerald Hüter, Neuro biologe an der Universität Göttingen).

"The executive functions of the two brain hemispheres are co-dependant with lower centres, with areas of the brain that are primed through sensory-motor experience" (Goddard 2004, p. 100).

The teacher, through an understanding of child development, takes much time to prepare the space both within themselves and outwardly in the physical setting. In this way the being of the child is respected, their curiosity nurtured, their chaos accepted as a process of learning, while consistently ensuring the health and safety of each child.

"Being prepared to take a risk is fundamental to human learning as we endeavour to develop new skills, try new behaviours, develop new technology and abandon the familiar to explore what we know less well" (Little and Eager, in *EECERA Journal*, vol. 18, 2010, p. 481).

It would seem that both the Steiner-Waldorf pedagogy and mainstream education do have the same objectives at heart. The UN rights of the child states that each child has the right to play, but is this play without expected learning outcomes? It is impossible to measure curiosity or the individual daily developments of a child, but it is possible to observe and monitor these learning outcomes over time.

"Ideal spaces should have multiple, flexible parts. What is particularly pertinent to note here, in terms of the opportunities for learning inherent in such spaces, is the dramatic potential for interaction between teachers and their pupils that reflects the interests of the child rather than those of the adult" (Waters and Maynard, in *EECERA Journal*, vol. 18, 2010, p. 480).

What follows are quotes from present-day research that confirm 'routine', yet deeply considered, aspects of Steiner Waldorf early education pedagogy, which on a daily basis contribute to and strengthen literacy development in the young child.

"Balance supplies the brain with information regarding body position in space which gives the child ... 'gravitational security'. ... Immature vestibular functioning is frequently found amongst children who have specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia and Dyspraxia" (Ayres, A. J., *Sensory Integration and the Child*, Los Angeles 1979/1982).

Singing combined with movement has a powerful effect on brain development. When we sing with others the sound penetrates inwardly. "Vocal experience supports learning by incorporating language into the self" (Goddard, p. 83).

It is notable that a stutter will disappear when singing. Research also suggests that through singing, dementia can be diminished, and depression alleviated. "Music training improves verbal memory" (Ho, Y. C., Cheng, M. C., in *Neuropsychology*, vol. 17, 2003).

"Through music, the senses are refined and the musical and rhythmic aspects of language can be developed to assist higher cognitive learning" (Goddard, 2004, p. 74).

Children's brains are not computers that work mechanically; in the process of learning their emotions are always interwoven. For this reason babies and toddlers need less cognitive knowledge, but need someone who is caring and loving and enfolds them.

"This period of giving voice to thoughts and feelings is an important stage in identifying or finding language with which to express them" (Goddard, p. 82).

Reading

When we read we build an inner picture. This picture is created through the faculty of imagination. A printed sequence of letters on a page creates something totally different within us, there is no direct relationship between these symbols and the inner picture that is formed. A child whose imagination is compromised will not be attentive to stories or reading, simply because they are not able to form the inner pictures required to maintain their attention. Steiner-Waldorf pedagogy is a strong advocate in the preservation and development of the child's imagination. The daily rhythm of the Steiner early years setting contains many examples of these pre-literacy skills. Songs, eurythmy, puppet plays, ring time and of course stories which are told and repeated for up to three weeks, using simple props and role play strengthen the child's capacity to create strong, fluid inner pictures. A further example of this conscious preservation comes from the toys used in Steiner settings; these toys are not overly formed, giving room for the imagination of the child to enliven these pieces again and again to their hearts' content.

TV is the best way *not* to instil the mechanics of inner picture building, because the pictures are being created outside of the child; the child therefore simply has no need to exercise the imagination, and the muscle weakens.

Drawing and writing

What the child draws is what is living in the child at this moment. When we introduce the colouring 'between the lines' and the drawing of symbols too early we literally push out this ability of the child to be in and experience the now. Of course young children can and do show great enthusiasm for writing through their many questions, but this does not necessarily mean that the child is ready for formal learning. We can always answer these questions in a general manner.

In addition, while the child waits, they are developing a wonder and curiosity that translates into a healthy eagerness for formal learning ... when the time comes.

"A recent comprehensive Cambridge Primary Review entitled 'Children, their World, their Education' edited by Alexander (2009) stated that starting formal learning before the age of six renders an ill service to young children, damaging both their confidence and their overall learning. Furthermore it states that the primary curriculum has focused too heavily on the '3Rs' and needs to be broadened to provide for children's wellbeing, engagement, empowerment, autonomy, respect and reciprocity, interdependence, citizenship, celebrating culture, exploring, fostering skills, exciting imagination and enacting dialogue. Concluding that England should conform to international practice by delaying the start of formal school until children turn six. This would extend the preschool, play-based curriculum to give children a stress-free grounding before they start formal lessons." (Walsh, G., Gray, C., McMillan, D., Hanna, K., McCracken, O. and Carville, S. *Professional Development for Early Childhood Professionals: Examining Pedagogy in Early Childhood*, 2010).

"In the thrust for academic achievement it is often forgotten, that in order to pay attention, a child needs to have a degree of control over the body" (Goddard, p. 137).

For Steiner (1996, 179), the instruction of reading and writing could be best achieved through art. Walking or running letter shapes,

painting and drawing them, clapping, stamping and reciting rhythmic poems, all call on the child's active will and lay foundations for healthy initial learning in which the child's limbs as well as heart and lungs are energetically engaged. Only gradually, with such an approach, does the head awaken to intellectual understanding and the secure mastery of written language out of which fluency in reading can emerge. By denying, as it learns, the small child's natural delight in movement, poetic speech, singing and the activity of making pictures in a playful, free way, we run the risk of "torturing the head aspect" (Steiner, 1996) until reading and writing become pressurised chores, subject to the demands of an ever-encroaching testing regime that raises 'standards' while killing the enthusiasm for language that all true educators would engender.

Writing in the Guardian, Philip Pullman (2003) sounds a sombre and prophetic note, warning us of the consequences of embedding reading and writing in a too narrow 'performativity' culture. If the path to literacy is not a pleasurable one, we run the real risk of 'losing the plot' in the unfolding narrative of what it means to teach children language. Once lost, the 'plot' will not be easy to recover with untold consequences for future generations. Pullman, himself an English teacher, expresses his concern that: ... in a constant search for things to test, we're forgetting the true purpose, the true nature, of reading and writing; and in forcing these things to happen in a way that divorces them from pleasure, we are creating a generation of children who might be able to make the right noises when they see print, but who hate reading and feel nothing but hostility for literature. (John Burnett, *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy* 2007, 7, p. 321)

Capital grant

The 2013 Childcare Capital Programme is now open for applications, on line only, and will remain open until 30th April. Guidance and further details of the process and criteria are outlined at <http://www.pobal.ie>.

Irish Steiner Kindergarten Association has a **facebook** page. Use it to keep up to date with all the workshops available nationally.
www.facebook.com/pages/Irish-Steiner-Kindergarten-Association/127057877421038

Training news

Introduction to Child Protection

Barnardos is now offering eLearning, enabling you to proceed through a training programme at your own pace from a place of your choice, with access to the course at any time.

The aim of the Introduction to Child Protection eLearning course is to give you an understanding of key aspects of Children First, National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children. This includes the different categories of abuse, your role and responsibilities under Children First and how to handle concerns within your organisation. There is information on the role of the designated liaison person, indicators of concern, how to support a child during a disclosure and the importance of child protection policy and procedures.

This new course is free to use and is a suitable introduction for anyone working with children and students of childcare related courses. It is easy to work through and includes quizzes and sample scenarios throughout to confirm your learning as well as links to useful resources.

This is an introductory course and should be used as a basis for learning more about child protection.

You can access Introduction to Child Protection at the link below:

<http://www.barnardos.ie/what-we-do/training/elearning/elearning-course-introduction-to-child-protection.html>



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Verse

Verse for Parents

Into my will
 Let there pour strength
 Into my feeling
 Let there flow warmth
 Into my thinking
 Let there shine light
 That I may nurture this child
 With enlightened purpose
 Caring with hearts Love
 And bringing wisdom
 Into all things.

Rudolf Steiner

* * *



When I come in from outside play
 I take my shoes off right away
 I put them in my cubby so
 This is where they always go ...
 This is where they rest just so

* * *

Poems for spring and summer



Once I saw a little snail
 Upon the garden wall
 I tapped upon the little door
 No answer came at all
 But as I turned to go away
 A snail crept out to see
 Who tapped upon her little door
 And waved her horns at me



A branch of May I have brought you,
 And at your door I stand;
 It is but a sprout, but it's well budded out,
 The work of Nature's hand.

from A Child's Seasonal Treasury

* * *

In the Whitsun garden, white the flowers grow,
 Earth is listening, glistening, listening, warming
 breezes blow.

N. Foster

* * *

The little darling, Spring, has run away;
 The sunshine grew too hot for her to stay.
 She kissed her sister, Summer, and she said:
 "When I am gone, you must be queen instead."
 Now reigns the Lady Summer, round whose
 feet
 A thousand fairies flock with blossoms sweet.

Cicely Mary Barker



For a Whitsun dove template see
littlepassengersonspaceship.blog

* * *

Here is my garden (a)
I rake it with care (b)
Then a few seeds I shall plant there (c)
The sun will shine (d)
And the rain will fall (e)
And up come the flowers straight and tall (f)

(a) Hold one hand palm up throughout.

(b) Use opposite hand with bent fingers to “rake” the soil of the first hand.

(c) Plant little seeds with forefinger and thumb.

(d) Gesture to the sun shining in the sky.

(e) Pitter patter onto the “garden” with tinkling fingers.

(f) Tip up fingers slowly sprout up between the palm up fingers of the garden hand.

Simple paper craft



Cut leaf shapes with long stems. Cut some with one leaf while others with leaves on both ends.

Fold the leaves down the middle to give them that classic shape, then curl the stems around a pencil, and hang them from the springtime branch along with felt butterflies and bees.



From passengersonalittlespaceship.blogspot.ie.
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Report on the Dornach Early Years Conference 2012

Ulrike Farnleitner

At the opening of the world conference, IASWECE council members arrived on the stage accompanied by one or more dolls from their countries. Each doll had a name, and each had come to Dornach in order to find adoptive parents in one of the countries of the conference participants. During the course of the conference each was lovingly welcomed by their new mother or father.

Our Irish doll (Sinéad), who was created by Heike and Ulrike found a new home in France.

Back from the International Conference for Early Childhood Educators that was held in the Goetheanum I am still feeling inspired from Endless encounters, changing experiences multitude of memories.

The tall spacious big hall filled to the rim with 1000 kindergarten teachers from 53 countries!

A friend said: “I am so grateful for the communion of soul.” And so am I.

It was pure nourishment for soul, spirit and body, and it was a shared event on so many levels. Another friend’s comment was “I never, ever will forget what I gained here on understanding and inspiration.”

Walking through the massive staircase of the Goetheanum that is painted and lazured in rainbow colours is an adventure and a valuable memory. Joy of colour and form could be experienced.

There is so much more from the conference still to be digested, from lectures, performances, workshops, discussion times, meeting and market places. But foremost was the hope that we are the change for the future of the children of this world. These events will bring much warmth and enthusiasm and new community to the world. Let us be the messenger with ever growing enthusiasm that children can experience childhood. Bringing anthroposophy alive through our deeds, actions and endeavours in the world of challenges and joy.

EYFS exemptions and modifications in the UK

UK Steiner Waldorf kindergartens have been granted permanent exemptions or modifications from aspects of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) learning and development requirements that relate to the formal introduction of literacy, numeracy, technology and, in some cases, the assessment regulations.

The Secretary of State has agreed to all the exemptions or modifications requested on the grounds that Steiner kindergartens cannot meet these EYFS requirements without compromising their ethos and practice. The granting of these exemptions and modifications is in accordance with the *established principles* route as set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage (Exemptions from Learning and Development Requirements) Regulations 2008 as amended by the Early Years Foundation Stage (Exemptions from Learning and Development Requirements) (Amendment) Regulations 2012.

Steiner Schools and Early Childhood Settings, made a united application through the umbrella organisation, the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship (see www.steinerwaldorf.org).

To achieve this, the schools/settings had to complete the following steps:

1. Contact the Local Authority to make sure their funding was safe, should they have exemptions. Some settings are still waiting for responses from their LAs.
2. Notify parents, and get their agreement. There was unanimous support from all parents, who chose Steiner education specifically for their children to have the benefit of a later introduction to formal learning, and experience an extended childhood in an enabling environment that prepares them for life, not only for school.
3. Notify the LA of the parents' decision.
4. Send the application to the DfE exemptions team.

In some cases, kindergartens not in receipt of the Early Years Grant made an application also for exemption from the Assessment regulations which includes the Profile submission. These too were granted.

For further information, please contact:

Janni Nicol, SWSF Early Childhood Representative jnicol@steinerwaldorf.org

ADHD: The challenge of our time

Excerpts from an excellent (lengthy) article written by Eugene Schwartz

In 1968, the American Psychiatric Society published the Second Edition of its standard reference book, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-II)* in which the term "hyperkinetic reaction of childhood (or adolescence)" was first used, supplanting the more generalised term, "minimal brain dysfunction" or MBD. The disorder was characterised by "overactivity, restlessness, distractibility, and short attention span, especially in young children ..." In 1980, the DSM-III labelled the problem "attention deficit disorder" or ADD, recognising that there are two subtypes: ADD with hyperactivity and ADD without hyperactivity. In 1987, the revised Third Edition, *DSM-III-R*, changed the term again, this time to "attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder," or ADHD, again reflecting the importance of hyperactivity uncontrolled will as a central component of the syndrome.⁽¹⁾

By the early 1990s, schools were reporting a 10-20% incidence of ADHD among students, while parents reported as high an incidence as 30%. By the mid-90s ADHD had become such a pervasive phenomenon in urban schools that the *New Yorker* featured a "hack-to-school" cover entitled "The Three R's" showing a blackboard on which was written, "Readin, Ritin, Ritalin".

Causes of ADHD

Diet/chemical imbalance, lack of authority, disturbance of feelings, multiple causes, physical basis, behavioural basis, emotional basis, individual basis

Treatment of ADHD

The conflicts concerning the "right" way to treat ADHD, and their partial resolution in the accepting attitude evinced by the "individual basis" or phenomenological approach, finds a profound resonance in the image of the human being developed by Rudolf Steiner. Drawing on ancient traditions, esoteric teachings, and his own clairvoyant faculties, Steiner described the human being as an entity possessing four "bodies", each of which manifests itself in a unique manner. These "bodies" should ideally function in harmony with one another, resulting in well-integrated and balanced human beings. In real life, however, they are often vying for

dominance, overstepping their apportioned boundaries, and their conflicts may go so far as to appear as mental imbalance and physical illness. Except for the “physical body”, the other “higher members” of the human entelechy are invisible to ordinary sight. This does not mean that those of us who are not clairvoyant must accept them on faith, or scoff at the pretensions of those who claim to perceive “invisible bodies”. Steiner was helpful in delineating the effects through which these bodies make themselves known in the sensory world, the ripples and echoes through which even ordinary perceptive faculties can be made aware of their presence and activities.

Let us look at the treatment modalities for ADHD.

The biophysical approach acknowledges only the physical body. Only that to which the senses can testify really exists for the biophysical researcher, who is confident that, one day, all “qualities” and intangibles, e.g. emotions and thoughts, longings and desires, will be shown to have a neurological basis arising from the body’s electro-chemical composition and amenable to chemical and electrical manipulation.

While neurologists work with ADHD almost exclusively on the basis of brain chemistry, others approaching the problem from the biophysical standpoint look to the child’s metabolic sensitivities as a causal factor. In this respect, the neuroscientist’s approach represents a contraction, a focus on the internal nature of the human body, while the concerns of the nutritional/environmental clinician will expand to all that which affects the child from the outside in. In both cases, the causes are judged to be completely material.

This component of the human being is what Rudolf Steiner, too, termed the physical body. At death, or through the severance of any part of that body from the whole (the cutting of the hair, the loss of a limb) the physical body will revert to the same chemical components as are to be found in the “lifeless” mineral world. Hence the physical body can also be called the “mineral body”. Indeed, even when we are alive, the physical body is on the verge of reverting to its mineral, chemical basis. It is only due to the presence and interwoven activity of three “higher” bodies that the physical body remains intact and recognisably individuated.

The behavioural school has learned the power that the “pleasure principle” has over human behaviour, and how a system of rewards and punishments can alter the way in which a human being acts. While the biophysical researcher looks within the human being and finds ever more minute “causes” for emotions and behaviour from cells to chromosomes to molecules to atoms, the behaviourist dismisses the inner world as a “black box”, and is content to register “inputs” while altering “outputs”. What behaviourism acknowledges concerning the possibility of “inner life” is that behavioural responses are somehow remembered by both animals and humans; indeed, were there no memory of the reward or punishment, behaviour could not be altered in any predictable, and thereby useful, manner. Thus the somaticised memory of an action and its consequence leads to the learning of a new pattern of behaviour.

When ADHD children are treated by behaviourist methods, such matters as regular daily rhythms (meals, bedtimes, etc.) and consistent responses to their actions are extremely important as means to reinforce desirable “patterns” of behaviour. The behaviourist is most interested in those areas where the human being meets, or interfaces with, his or her surroundings.

In Steiner’s model, the etheric body stands one stage above the physical body, and is responsible for sustaining both its life and its form; Steiner also calls this member of our being our “life body”. The etheric body bears within itself the “memory” of our form (the “body of formative forces” is another term used to describe it) and, in its interplay with our physical nature, it carries our predisposition to health or illness. The immune system recognised by modern medicine is one of the “effects” of the interplay of the etheric body with the physical body. The memory of our form gradually becomes the capacity to “re-member” which, as the word implies, is a mental faculty based on our physiological nature.

In contrast to the biophysical and behavioural schools, the intrapsychic school approaches patients as conscious beings who are endowed with some control over their actions. Although, like the other two approaches, the intrapsychic method recognises that much that leads us to act belongs to the “unconscious” part of our nature,

the psychoanalyst's goal is to bring much that is unconscious to full consciousness and, in so doing, to bring the unconscious under the control of the conscious component of the patient. The degree to which the unconscious part of a person guides her actions is in part dependent on the age and maturity of an individual, but it is also determined by those experiences which formed the psyche in the individual's childhood. If the unconscious is merely "repressed", it will continue to rebel against the guidance of the conscious mind; rather, that which is vexing in the unconscious must be recalled, re-examined, and integrated into the conscious mind. In this approach, the impulsiveness, restlessness and social clumsiness of the ADHD youngster may all be signs of a misdirected stage of psychic growth now erupting out of the unconscious, craving to be redirected by a strengthened conscious mind.

The component that Rudolf Steiner perceives as most active in this scenario is the astral body, which is even more subtle in nature than the etheric body. It is this member which is often termed the "soul" or "soul body." Steiner also identifies it as the body of wishes and desires. The etheric body gives us life, but it is the astral body which gives us sentience (however dreamlike it may be) and the capacity to move towards those objects or images we desire. Whether the object of this desire is as simple as food and warmth, or as grandiose as world domination, we are experiencing the astral body in action. An important characteristic of this body is its polarising tendency. Whatever is astral in nature in the human being will be twofold in nature, manifesting as love and hatred, joy and sorrow, elation and depression, laughter and tears, wakefulness and sleep etc. The "creative tension" of the interplay between the conscious and unconscious poles of the human psyche typifies the very nature of the astral body.

Although the condition of ADHD cannot be "cured" and presents challenges which last a lifetime, many ADHD youngsters mature into relatively "balanced" adults who appear to have integrated personalities and the ability to fit into virtually any life situation. In fact, the severe behavior difficulties and social problems that were so burdensome for them as children now become positive attributes in their personal lives and careers. The irksome restlessness of childhood may manifest as healthy adult

ambition, the child's short attention span and distractibility can become flexibility and cognitive mobility in the adult, while the impulsiveness that frustrated scores of teachers throughout his years of schooling may become a youthful vigor and openness to change which delights friends and colleagues. In this remarkable metamorphosis from childhood to adulthood, we see how the unique nature of the human individuality may, under the right circumstances, sublimate, or compensate for, or even transcend, the seemingly intractable symptoms of a deep-seated condition.

Rudolf Steiner spoke about the chronological nature of these four bodies, Physical Body, Etheric Body, Astral Body, Ego and it is here that we find the basis for a comprehensive study of "developmental psychology." Although we are four-fold beings from the moment of birth, a number of years must pass for all of the bodies to "incorporate" and act in concert from within the human being. From birth until age seven (or about the time of the second dentition) our physical body is being worked upon, "from without," by the etheric body, and the child's consciousness is bound up with processes of assimilation and growth. From ages seven to fourteen, the etheric body slowly assumes the same contours as the physical body; it now dampens down its predominantly "organic" activity, and its forces are metamorphosed into the newly-arising powers of memory. From fourteen to twenty-one, the astral body becomes dominant as it is incorporated into the adolescent and young adult. The life of desire grows strong, and so does the life of ideals; the capacity to reason is born in the midst of the turmoil of the life of emotions. At twenty-one the ego is truly "born" within us. From this point on, human education is increasingly a matter of self-education. The life-long process of becoming "adult" and fully human now begins.

Lest these simplified descriptions seem too rigid, it should be stressed that in the fullness of his work Rudolf Steiner approached his picture of the four-fold human being from a multitude of perspectives and always stressed the mobility and transformative quality of the higher bodies of man. Only modes of thought which are in themselves mobile can comprehend the continually metamorphosing nature of the four-fold human being.

The developmental picture provided by Rudolf Steiner, in spite of its somewhat foreign terminology, provides a wealth of insights which can help us answer the questions, "What is the difference between an adult and a child?" and "What is a child?"

Rudolf Steiner's research led him to conclude that the most profound differences between adults and children, and even between children of different ages, were differences in consciousness. The changes in consciousness that accompanied the growth process from infancy, through childhood, to adulthood (and beyond) paralleled the development of consciousness that is found in the course of events and artistic creations loosely categorized as "cultural history."⁽¹⁰⁾

External earthly life, insofar as it is a product of earlier times, will pass away — and it is an entirely vain hope to believe that the old habits of thought can continue. What must arise is a new kind of knowledge, a new kind of willing in all domains. We must familiarize ourselves with the thought of the vanishing of a civilization; but we must look into the human heart, into the spirit dwelling in man; we must have faith in the heart and spirit of man in order that through all we are able to do within the wreckage of the old

civilization, new forms may arise, forms that are truly new.

Rudolf Steiner

The full article, together with references, is available on <http://www.waldorflibrary.org>

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