

Towards Wholeness in Knowing: The Renewal of Thinking, Feeling and Willing

In conjunction with a three-year longitudinal study of the Urban Waldorf School in Milwaukee, a survey is being conducted by Patti Smith of Sunbridge College to investigate the unique characteristics of Waldorf education. The survey will focus on perceptions of the philosophy of Waldorf education, strengths of the Waldorf approach to curriculum and instruction, and the outcomes of a Waldorf education.

This summer a pilot survey will be distributed to individuals who participate in summer programs at major anthroposophical adult education centers throughout the U.S. After the results are reviewed and necessary modifications are made, the survey will be sent to individuals who are familiar with Waldorf education, including graduates, parents and teachers in both private and public settings. If you would like to participate, a copy of the survey can be obtained from Sunbridge College, Hungry Hollow Road, Spring Valley, NY 10977 (914-425-0055).

To complement the results of the general survey, a more intensive ethnographic study of classroom interactions will be undertaken by a select group of teachers. Periodically documenting conversations among these teachers will reveal aspects of curriculum and instruction, the developmental needs of students, and general school concerns unique to Waldorf education. Support for the study is being provided by the Nathan Cummings Foundation.

The extensive three-year longitudinal study will begin in September. We will offer a report of preliminary data in the next issue of the Research Bulletin.

This invitational research consultation took place at Sunbridge College, June 12-15, 1996. It was a collaboration of the Center for the Study of the Spiritual Foundations of Education at Teachers College, Columbia University, and the Waldorf Education Research Institute at Sunbridge College.

The consultation brought together leading persons from both mainstream education and from Waldorf education to explore together in conversation areas and issues of mutual concern in meeting the real educational and developmental needs of children today. Specifically the tasks of the consultation were 1) to identify areas of common concern; 2) to explore both points of convergence and differences in understanding, outlook, and interpretation; and 3) to take first steps in identifying central research questions that most need to be addressed in order to support an education that truly understands the needs of the developing child, and that in its curriculum, pedagogy and community life genuinely meets those needs. Participants included:

Professor David Elkind, Director of the Child Study Center, Tufts University

Professor Jerome Bruner, New York University

Professor Edward Joyner, Project Director, Comer Project for Change in Education at Yale Child Study Center, Yale University

Dr. Thomas Hatch, Project Director for Howard Gardner's Project Zero at Harvard University

Professor William Cram, Chair of the Department of Psychology, City College of New York

Dr. Michaela Glöckler, Head of the Medical Section of the Anthroposophical Society

Felicitas Vogt, Waldorf teacher and researcher from Würzburg, Germany

Eugene Schwartz, Sunbridge College

Susan Howard, Sunbridge College

Astrid Schmitt-Stegman, Rudolf Steiner College

Professor Douglas Sloan, Teachers College, Columbia University
Joan Almon, President, Waldorf Kindergarten Association of North America
Professor Jeffrey Kane, Editor, *Holistic Education Review*, Dean, School of Education, C.W. Post Long Island University
Dr. Gerald Karnow, Rudolf Steiner Fellowship Community
Patti Smith, CUNY Institute for Research on the African Diaspora in the Americas and the Caribbean

From the beginning, participants in the consultation found themselves converging around three central, common concerns. One concern was the image of the human being that informs and guides education. All education, implicitly if not explicitly, is guided and shaped by some image and conception of the human being. To what extent is modern education guided by an adequate image of the human; in what ways is it constricted and impoverished by truncated images of the human? What constitutes an adequate image of the human being?

Another shared concern was with the changing needs and capacities of the developing child and the importance of an education that takes these changes into full account. Although participants differed in details and emphases in their understanding of child development, they generally agreed that a sensitive, developmentally informed education was crucial to the emergence of strong aptitude for thinking, suffused with insight, understanding, and care. There was also wide agreement that great harm can be done to the cultivation of these capacities.

A third, related area of common concern was the need to recognize the several, interrelated dimensions of the whole human being - the cognitive, the emotional/volitional, and the physical-organic - and how they are involved in the various forms of human knowing: the cognitive, analytic, aesthetic, synthesizing, personal, and other ways of knowing. Finally, all participants were mindful of the challenges confronting children today, such as poverty, racial prejudice, dysfunctional family and community structures, indiscriminate exposure to television. Identifying and minimizing such factors and, at the same time, nurturing children's strengths and abilities, were seen as complementary tasks for modern education.

The first main presentation was by Professor David Elkind, Director of the Child Study Center, Tufts University, and internationally known authority on child development. Professor Elkind's presentation, "Education in a New Key: The Quiet Revolution in Our Schools," dealt with the major shift he sees taking place from the dominant modernist assumptions about reality, which have shaped our culture and education, to postmodernist assumptions that are restructuring both our understanding of the world and our social-cultural institutions. Professor Elkind explored what he sees as major changes, and the implications of these, now under way in education broadly conceived, as well as in schooling more specifically, and in family and personal life, as a consequence of the shift from modernist assumptions of progress, universality, and regularity, to postmodernist assumptions of diversity, particularity, and irregularity. Central to Professor Elkind's concerns was the importance of identifying, in order to respond adequately to, the challenges and the opportunities this "quiet revolution" poses for us.

The second main presentation was by Dr. Edward Joyner, Director of the Corner Project for Change in Education at the Yale Child Study Center, Yale University. Dr. Joyner's topic was "The Developmental Pathways: A Framework for Assessment, Program Development, and Evaluation." As the title suggests, Dr. Joyner concentrated on our understanding of the essential nature of child development and the implications of that understanding for actual policy and schooling. He described six significant pathways of development - physical, cognitive, psychological, social, ethical, and linguistic - and the problems that result when any of them are neglected. He stressed the potential for social backgrounds and relationships to further or hinder these pathways, to prepare or handicap children for their school experience. He then discussed the school reforms and social policies needed to navigate these pathways successfully, with particular concern for poor and minority children in American culture.

The afternoon of the first day of the consultation was devoted to two presentations that figured prominently in conversations throughout the rest of the symposium. The first one illustrated some of the central tenets of Waldorf education, especially its emphasis on curriculum and pedagogy that integrate the cognitive, aesthetic, emotional, physical-organic and social-ethical dimensions of human development at every point in education. Eugene Schwartz of Sunbridge College and Astrid Schmitt-Stegman of Rudolf Steiner College demonstrated actual classroom and curricular approaches.

Jerome Bruner of New York University, well-known throughout the world for his work in developmental psychology and philosophy, brought the first day to a close with some brief “Comments on Self-formation” drawn largely from his new book, *The Culture of Education*. Professor Bruner stressed the inseparability of cognitive-psychological development and the cultural setting in which it takes place.

He talked about culture’s ability to create meaning, constrain our minds and influence our institutions and sense of reality; the cultural dimensions of developing a sense of self-identity, self-esteem and self-agency; and narrative as a way of knowing, a way no less viable than logic. The discussion that followed traced many connections between his remarks and the day’s earlier presentations.

The second day began with a presentation by Dr. Michaela Glöckler, Head of the Medical Section at the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland, and responsible for the medical work associated with Waldorf education world-wide. The substance of Dr. Glöckler’s presentation, ‘The Interrelationship between Life and Intelligence in the Development of the Human Being,’ is reprinted in this issue of the *Research Bulletin*. She described the interrelationship between thinking and the physical-organic development of the human being, the essential unity of human life-forces with the nature and development of thinking itself. This perspective defines a radical approach to overcoming the mind/body dualism that has such a stranglehold on modern thought and culture. It is also a concrete basis for understanding how vital it is to have an education that integrates bodily-organic-physical and cognitive-emotional development in both the curriculum and the classroom.

Dr. Glöckler also presented a paper by Dr. Wolfgang Schad, a biologist and Waldorf teacher in Germany whose teaching schedule kept him from attending the consultation in person. The paper (“The Organology and Physiology of Learning,” also reprinted in this issue) uses research data derived from children’s drawings to solidify the connections between learning and the development of the human body, and what they entail for our understanding and practice of education. The articles by Drs. Glöckler and Schad warrant careful reading because of their implications for all of education.

In the next main presentation, Dr. Thomas Hatch, Director for Howard Gardner’s Project Zero at Harvard University, outlined Gardner’s conception of multiple human intelligences: We possess not only a logical-mathematical intelligence, but other intelligences as well - linguistic, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, spatial, interpersonal, and intrapersonal - seven all told. Dr. Hatch paid particular attention to the role of interpersonal intelligence in child development and education. The ensuing conversation drew many connections between the Hatch’s multiple intelligences and the presentations of the other participants. Many participants noted the contribution that multiple intelligence theory could make to a language of human development that embraces dimensions otherwise devalued or neglected by the educational mainstream.

Felicitas Vogt, a German Waldorf teacher who works in drug treatment and rehabilitation, spoke on “The Challenge of Adolescence in the Attack of the Drug Culture: The Other Curriculum.” Her remarks, on one of the major threats to the human being found in nearly every school in the western world, were a major service to the consultation.

The final presentation (also in this issue) was by Professor William Cram, Chair of the Department of Psychology of the City College of New York and author of a comprehensive text, *Theories of Development*. Professor Cram looked at the impact on child development of the pervasive technological environment that dissuades today's children from any real knowledge and experience of nature. Professor Cram emphasized the responsibility educators have for helping children develop a sensitivity and attachment to the natural world.

This introduction can't begin to convey the range and richness of the conversations generated by all these presentations. Suffice it here to underscore once more the areas that were seen at the outset as central to an adequate understanding of human development and education, and that remained at the end as main areas for further research and dialogue.

1. An adequate understanding of child development and of a developmentally appropriate education. Several participants observed the extent to which a developmental perspective is ignored, even undercut, by much that takes place in mainstream modern education.
2. An adequate image of the human. Every form and expression of education is informed, or misinformed, by some underlying image and understanding of the human being and of the human self. A truncated image of the human being will result in an education that is neglectful, often drastically harmful, to the realization of human wholeness. In the consultation the importance of giving explicit attention to the view of the human being guiding education was brought out especially by Edward Joyner, describing the development pathways, and by Michaela Glöckler, elucidating the Waldorf understanding of the wholeness of the human being in thinking and growing. Though the language used by each sometimes differed, the conception of the essential human being and the ensuing developmental requirements as expressed by Joyner and Glöckler, seemed to share many points in common and, in this, to provide rich opportunities for further exploration.
3. The integral relationships among physiological, emotional, rational, moral, and social/cultural development. The nature of the interrelationships and of the interplay among these many dimensions of the human being and the growing child were seen by the members of the consultation as extremely important for any conception of education that holds the development of the child as its central concern, rather than the service of interests—social, economic, ideological—extrinsic to the interests of the child.
4. The social/cultural/economic conditions of healthy human development. Identifying and providing the necessary conditions for a whole and healthy education is a major task of those genuinely concerned with human development. This also entails recognizing the negative influences to which children are increasingly subject in our time. The challenge is to find ways of providing a protective arena within which children have space to be truly themselves and within which the necessary positive conditions for education can be established and cultivated.

To pursue the many issues and questions arising from this consultation, a further, follow-up consultation is planned for February, 1998.

NOTE: The Proceedings from the "Towards Wholeness" consultation, including the full texts of the major presentations, will be published in July, 1997 by the Research Institute. They may be ordered for \$8 a copy, including postage and handling, by writing to the address at the back of this issue.