

ADHD, A Challenge Of Our Time

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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 generalized term, “*minimal brain dysfunction*” or MBD. The disorder was characterized by “overactivity, restlessness, distractibility, and short attention span, especially in young children....” In 1980, the DSM-III labeled the problem “*attention deficit disorder*” or ADD, recognizing that there were two subtypes: ADD with hyperactivity and ADD without hyperactivity. In 1987, the revised Third Edition, DSM-III-R, changed the term once again, this time to “*attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder,*” or ADHD, once again reflecting the importance of hyperactivity uncontrolled will as a central component of the syndrome.¹

By the early 1990’s, schools were reporting a 10% - 20% incidence of ADHD among students, while parents reported as high an incidence as 30%, while by the mid-90’s 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.” Larry Silver, a Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at Georgetown University School of Medicine and an authority on ADHD noted:

Whatever the dynamics or initial cause, the family dysfunction must be corrected. The parents must regain control. Children with ADHD must feel that they can be controlled. These changes are essential for the who/e family. Negative control of parents is unhealthy and unproductive. These children must learn more acceptable behavioral patterns before they start using these negative behaviors at school, with peers, or in the community.

... First comes the behavioral changes and then comes... awareness and insight...

Initially, you must be omnipotent. No more reasoning, bargaining, bribing, threatening, or trying to provoke guilt. Parents make the rules. Parents enforce the rules. Parents’ decisions are final. You must learn that if you “step into the arena” and agree to debate or argue with your child, you will lose...²

Dr. Silver’s comment that “these changes are essential for the whole family” is important. As clinicians have worked with families of ADHD children—and a 30% incidence would imply that any family with three or more children has a good chance of experiencing ADHD—they have increasingly recognized that the clarity, authority and “omnipotence” that the dysfunctional child craves to experience in his parents is actually beneficial for his siblings as well.

Of course, not all child psychologists were ready to make a complete break with the “child-centered” approach of the 60’s, and attempts were made to help the ADHD child control his own behavior, independent of adult guidance. “Cognitive training” was an elaborate (and expensive) training program which sought to teach ADHD children how to cope with difficult social situations in a less impulsive fashion. The methods involved something like a junior Parent Effectiveness Training (P.E.T.) program, with role-playing, training in social problem-solving skills and exercises in cooperation. Yet, after a decade of work in such programs, Howard Abikoff, M.D., one of the founders of this approach, said that “the results [were] very discouraging”; cognitive training “did *not* reduce the children’s need for stimulant medication, nor did it result in improved classroom behavior or in gains in academic productivity or achievement, [and] social behavior was similarly unaffected...”

In spite of the very real passions excited by parents, nutritionists, psychologists and others convinced that one treatment holds the key to ADHD, many clinicians have come to recognize that a combination of treatments, tailored to the individual child and regularly reviewed, adjusted and corrected, will yield the best results. (This comprehensive approach is also increasingly proposed in the treatment of cancer and Alzheimer’s Syndrome.) As Larry Silver writes:

The treatment of ADHD must involve several approaches, including individual and family education, individual and family counseling, the use of appropriate behavioral management programs, and the use of appropriate medications

Such a multimodal approach is needed because children and adolescents with ADHD have multiple areas of difficulty. To help your daughter or son, you must understand how the ADHD impacts on her or him in every aspect of life.³

This approach reflects an understanding that, in spite of the symptoms that all ADHD children have in common, it is not enough to treat the illness one must also treat the individual who manifests those symptoms in his own unique way. This eclectic method could be paralleled to the phenomenological school of psychology, which avoids constructing theories, and whose practitioners believe “that what happens to a person is not as relevant as to *whom* it happens and what it *means* to him/ her.⁴

CAUSES OF ADHD			
Diet/Chemical Imbalance	Lack of authority	Disturbance of feelings	Multiple causes
Physical Basis	Behavioral Basis	Emotional Basis	Individual Basis
Biophysical School	Behavioral School	Intrapsychic School	Phenomenological School

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 again 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 bio-physical researcher, and he 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. As Barbara Ingersoll writes to parents in her guide, *Your Hyperactive Child*,

Psychiatry has turned, for example, from emphasis on disturbances in the mind to a search for disturbances in the brain as the source of disordered behavior and emotions. Research in the

*neurosciences has produced enormous gains in our understanding of how the brain works and how breakdowns in the brain affect the way we think, feel and be have.*⁵

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 nutritional/ environmental clinician expands his concern to all that which affects the child from the outside in. In both cases, the causes are judged to be completely material, however infinitesimal the actual material substance may be:

The Feingold program involves the elimination of all artificial colors and flavors, the preservatives BHA and BHT, and the flavor enhancer MSG. Various other substances are also eliminated, depending on the degree of the child's sensitivity to them. These other substances include salicylates and various food additives...

*...In many cases that at first appear unsuccessful with this method of treatment, the child is absorbing offending substances by some means other than food intake. Irritating molecules might be inhaled, or they might be absorbed through the skin ...*⁶

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 recognizably individuated.

The behavioral school has learned the power that the "pleasure principle" has over human behavior, 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 behavior from cells to chromosomes to molecules to atoms the behaviorist dismisses the inner world as a "black box," and is content to register "inputs" while altering "outputs." What behaviorism will acknowledge concerning the possibility of "inner life" is that behavioral responses are somehow remembered by both animals and humans; indeed, were there no memory of the reward or punishment, behavior could not be altered in any predictable, and thereby useful, manner. Thus the somatized memory of an action and its consequence leads to the learning of a new pattern of behavior:

Behavior modification is based on the idea that specific behaviors are learned because they produce specific effects. In other words, people (and animals) learn to do many of the things they do because of the consequences that follow their actions. Behavior is affected most strongly by consequences which immediately follow the behavior...

*...Thus, a puppy who is rewarded with a pat and a biscuit learns to come when he is called, and a toddler learns to say "Please" if his behavior results in a cookie...*⁷

When ADHD children are treated by behaviorist 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 behavior. The behaviorist is most interested in those areas where the human being meets, or interfaces with, his surroundings.

In Steiner's model, the etheric body stands one stage above the physical body, and 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 yet 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 recognized 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.

The intrapsychic school represents another “contraction,” returning to the inner nature of the human being, although on a “higher” level than that which concerns the research of the biophysical school.

For many years—and even today, in some professional circles—psychologists and psychiatrists considered psychotherapy the treatment of choice for dealing with disordered behavior and emotions in both children and adults... Although there are many “schools” of psychotherapy, most traditional forms are based on the assumption that abnormal behavior is caused by underlying psychological problems. Psychotherapy attempts to deal with these underlying problems—the unconscious conflicts, fears, anxieties, and fantasies—that interfere with the patient’s ability to cope with the demands of everyday life.⁸

In contrast to the biophysical and behavioral schools, the intrapsychic school does not treat the human being as a mixture of chemicals or as a black box, but approaches patients as conscious beings who are endowed with some control over their actions. Although, like the other two approaches, the intrapsychic method recognizes 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 intrapsychic school, with its insights into human consciousness, is most perceptive concerning those desires and drives, needs and fantasies, that work from out of the unconscious level of our nature and impel us into action - or, as in the case of Freud’s first patient, “Anna O.,” freeze us into lethargy and inaction. 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 polarizing 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.

It is this transformation over time, i.e. that which constitutes the unique "biography" of the individuality, which most interests the phenomenological practitioner. Larry Silver describes his experiences over the course of time:

Over the past 25 years of working with individuals with ADHD and/or learning disabilities, I have followed many of them through their childhood and adolescence, into their young-adult life. Often, I ask them to tell me which interventions were the most helpful for them and which were not. I explain that I want to learn from them so that I can better help others. The most consistent response they give me is "When you first explained who I was." Before this time, they saw themselves as dumb or bad. After this time, they began to understand their disabilities, and with this new knowledge of themselves they were able to rethink and change their self-image.⁹

That which allows the human being to experience his or her individual nature is called by Rudolf Steiner the "I" or Ego. This Ego is at once the most universal and the most individualized aspect of our being. We can call ourselves "I," but we can call no one else by that pronoun; it is a name that we all share, yet it is the most personal part of our nature. The Ego "wears" the three other bodies like so many veils, expressing itself through all of them, yet remaining ineffable and unique. It is this "I" which constitutes our spiritual nature, eternal and Divine in essence.

In Steiner's world-view the Ego ceaselessly works upon the three "lower" bodies to spiritualize and perfect them. Its work will eventually result in the creation of new members of the human being. The Ego's work upon the astral body will lead to

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Physical Body	Etheric Body	Astral Body	Ego

the creation of the Spirit Self; its work upon the etheric body will result in the Life Spirit, and its spiritualization of the physical body will bring about the Spirit Man. Hence the Ego stands as the "teacher" of the bodies of the human being, raising the lower into the higher by virtue of its eternal nature. In this respect, the activity of the Ego is the prototype of all education.

Rudolf Steiner also spoke about the chronological nature of these four bodies, 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.

As we have seen, a great deal of the critical situation that we experience at the century’s end in regard to our children has arisen out of the “leveling” and eliminating of the differences between “the child” and “the adult.” This homogenization of the stages of life attained its zenith (or nadir) in Janov’s statement that “there are no ‘grown-ups,’” but it is already implicit in Freud’s conclusions about infantile sexuality, and, as so many variations on a theme, it resounds throughout our century, reaching something of a crescendo in mainstream approaches to sex education in America’s grade schools. 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

It would be fatal to take a fetus out of the womb in its third month and begin nursing it and playing with it; babies born even one month premature require special care and a “womblike” setting before they can acclimatize to the conditions of earthly life. In Steiner’s view, it is no less deleterious to the child’s soul health to pull it out of a “younger” stage of consciousness and begin to treat it like a little adolescent or young adult. Although infants, toddlers and grade-schoolers share the same physical space with us, their consciousness hearkens back to an earlier time; it is only our insensitivity, our insistence that children “speak our language” and act as we do, that prevents us from perceiving this difference and compels the child to prematurely “modernize” herself.

One practice that Rudolf Steiner suggested as a means of understanding the child’s state of consciousness and empathize with her experiences in our world is to contemplate the differences between the states of sleeping, dreaming and waking.¹¹ When we are asleep, we are helpless, insensate and oblivious to all that goes on around us. When awake, we are independent, we are using our senses and we are aware of our surroundings and often acting upon them.

Using Steiner’s fourfold paradigm, “sleep” is characterized as the state experienced by the human being when the physical and etheric bodies are “present,” while the astral body and ego have “withdrawn.” We are “awake” when the astral body and ego rejoin the two lower members. If we compare this description to the chronological “unfolding” of the human being over seven-year periods we can see that the transition from infancy to adulthood is tantamount to a twenty-one year long “awakening.” Conversely, every time we awaken from sleep we are almost instantaneously recapitulating our own development from baby to adult. States of consciousness and stages of consciousness bear a richly reciprocal relationship to one another.

The state of consciousness which bridges the polarities of sleeping and waking is that of dreaming. The importance of the dream as a mirror of the riddles of human life has never been lost on artists and philosophers, and it was Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* which heralded the birth of psychoanalysis. While "sleep" is the quintessential state of infant consciousness and "wakefulness" is endemic to adulthood, "dreaming" and its many variations can well characterize the nature of childhood.

Modern education, by and large, is predicated on the notion that we must "awaken" children as quickly as possible to guarantee their "success" in later life. Little regard is given in most educational situations today for the long period of transition between "sleep" and "wakefulness" that the human being requires.

Although child psychologists have divided this twenty-one year period into any number of discrete stages and observed their particular characteristics with accuracy, schools tend to obliterate the differences between the particular age periods and teach not only similar content, but utilize similar methods and approaches. Just as even the most exquisite dream is drowned almost instantly in the overwhelming deluge of sights and sounds and smells that accompanies awakening, and rarely is recalled in the fullness of its beauty, so the "dream of childhood" is forgotten as the physicality of adolescence and the responsibilities of adulthood vie for our attention. Educators working only out of their adult wakeful consciousness are as little able to penetrate the nature of the child as a researcher working with electrodes and oscilloscopes is able to "perceive" the dream of the sleeper he is examining.

Another significant correlation indicated by Steiner is that of the three "soul forces," thinking, feeling and willing to the three stages of consciousness. James Dobson notes:

As I've stated, a child's will is a powerful force in the human personality. It is one of the few intellectual components which arrives full strength at the moment of birth...

The will is not delicate and wobbly. Even for a child in whom the spirit has been sandbagged, there is often a will of steel, making him a threat to himself and others as well... My point is that the will is malleable. It can and should be molded and polished—not to make a robot of a child for our own selfish purposes, but to give him the ability to control his own impulses and exercise self-discipline later in life...¹²

The soul force of willing is actually strongest in infancy, when the human being is most asleep; it is so strong that it engulfs the delicate forces of feeling and thinking and subjugates them. The baby is all will, but it is uncontrolled will, will born out of the instinctive need to live and be nurtured, rather than will reined in by intentionality. Not only is the will strongest when we are asleep; the consciousness we possess of our activity of willing always remains at the stage of sleep. The nerve impulses, muscular contractions and skeletal movements that are necessary to lift a finger remain far below the level of wakeful consciousness. Even in the most intentional movements, e.g., the activities of a watchmaker or a surgeon, far more remains below the threshold of consciousness than above it. When we live in our will, we become little children again—and, as such, the Kingdom of Heaven is potentially opened to us.

The soul force of thinking, on the other hand, remains weak in our earliest years, gradually growing into its ascendant role as the regent of our adult consciousness. We can think independently only when we are awake. True thinking requires us to be fully present and fully consciousness in relation to both the content of our thoughts and the dynamic of their active interplay.¹³

Stage of Life	State of Consciousness	Active Members	Active Soul Force
Infancy	Sleep	Physical/Etheric	Willing
Childhood	Dream	Etheric/Astral	Feeling
Adulthood	Wakefulness	Astral/Ego	Thinking

Steiner's threefold picture of child development is not unique in its general outlines. Alan Kay, for example, who is responsible for the development of the "menu" and "window" on the Apple computer, subsequently created a computer-based program called "Vivarium," the purpose of which was to teach children to think. Kay has acknowledged his debt to Jerome Bruner, who

...divided child development into three stages of learning mentalities. The child of four and five thinks kinesthetically by doing—actively. Everything is done by direct actions, very tactile. Children a few years older are dominated by the visual. Their attention moves around the way your eyes move around on a bulletin board. The third stage is symbolic thinking, the practicality of translating their creative ideas into things or symbols. What seems to happen in our society is that adults turn into basically sequential processors and shut down the creative things that children are able to do. The Vivarium program attempts to rotate people's mentalities from the kinesthetic, to the visual, to the symbolic.¹⁴

In spite of his insight into the changing nature of the child's relationship to the world, Kay is not able to perceive that the computer, itself a product of the "symbolic thinking" stage of understanding, may not be an appropriate learning tool for a youngster still involved in the "kinesthetic" stage. Kay perceives the computer "mouse" pointing device as a method to "engage your body in the knowledge of things,"¹⁵ and doesn't seem to recognize that the only bodily parts that the mouse engages are the wrist and index finger. The mouse provides a "symbolic" experience of movement on the computer screen, and so draws the child prematurely into a sedentary, "head-directed" approach to learning. Steiner's perceptions of the stages of child development are accompanied by a sensitive understanding of the methods and content appropriate to each stage. Marie Winn describes the environment that is created when computers replace the toys of an earlier generation:

The loud whizzes, crashes and whirrs of the video-game machine "blow the mind" [we no longer require mind to work in the will sphere!] and create an excitement that is quite apart from the excitement generated simply by trying to win a game. A traditional childhood game such as marbles, on the other hand, has little built-in stimulation; the excitement of playing is generated entirely by the players' own actions. And while the pace of a game of marbles is close to the child's natural physiological rhythms, the frenzied activities of video games serve to "rev up" the child in an artificial way, almost in the way a stimulant or an amphetamine might.¹⁶

It is no coincidence that there is an interwoven connection between such stimulants as methylphenidate (Ritalin) and the conventional treatment of ADHD.

The "excitement" to which Marie Winn points is intimately connected to the sensory-motor functions of the child. We have already discussed the accelerated nature of life today, and the burden of "sensory overload" that it places on any human being living in a westernized urban environment. A helpful insight provided by Rudolf Steiner concerned the "nourishment and education of the senses," not merely for their own sake, but as a foundation for all of our later learning. Let us consider three scenarios: a grade-school child partaking in a little pageant, a child watching a performance of the pageant, and a child watching a videotape of the performance.

The child who takes part in the pageant has to be active in several sensory domains. She is speaking her own part, she is aware of her movements on the stage, she hears the lines spoken by other actors and perceives their movements, and she has to establish a "touching," tactile link with the audience. Of course, she must maintain her balance, in every sense of the word, as she performs. While all of this is going on she is strengthening her memory by reciting her part and she is stimulating her imaginative powers by being someone other than she really is.

A child in the audience is certainly less active than the child on stage, but an observer of “live theater” has watched the eye movements and bodily movements that reveal how strongly the imitative qualities of the young child are affected by drama. Although the stage can alter perspectives and offer dramatic shifts of light and darkness, the young child’s eyes are basically witnessing activities performed by human beings at “real” proportions of size, distance and speed; there is little stress on the child’s sensory-motor life.

A child watching a videotaped version of the same performance will have a qualitatively different experience. When we sit in the audience and watch a play, we must move our eyes and heads and sometimes our whole body in order to “take in” all the action going on around us. When the action is reduced to the monocular vision of the camcorder (even if several were used and edited to provide close-ups alternating with panoramic views etc.) the viewer’s eye is “fixed” onto the rectangular dimensions of the screen. The healthy sense of sight is intimately allied with the sense of our own body movement; fixation on any one object of vision, especially when the object is in motion, can be numbing or hypnotic (or, in its extreme form, cause seizures). The *willing* aspect of our sense of sight (and we tend to forget how many muscles are involved in the act of seeing) is weakened, and muscles lie unused. Whatever information emanates from the set in the way of color, sound, or form, it is not truly corroborated by the other senses.

When a child takes part in a play, or game, or any other activity with others, she must adhere to certain rules of conduct in order for the whole to grow greater than the sum of its parts - choral singing provides a powerful example of this. Whether she likes her fellow actors or not, whether she is happy or unhappy with her part, whether her mood is high or low, she has agreed to take part for the sake of the bigger picture. Although less bound up with the performance, the audience member has also agreed to a “contract” with the players, and will tend to quietly absorb the play’s action, laugh at its humor and applaud its denouement, unless it is egregiously awful. The child who watches the video is by no means bound to such a social contract. He is free to make comments, loudly munch on snack foods, make the players pause while he leaves the room, command them to start up again when he returns and cut them off completely if they displease him! Not only are his bodily senses virtually uninvolved with the performance, but his *social sense* is alienated as well. Should it surprise us that an increasing number of children suffer from ADHD—a syndrome distinguished by profound difficulties in integrating sensory impressions, a lack of control over motor activities, and a lack of social skills?

A similar set of scenarios could be created comparing a child who learns to play (however simply) a musical instrument with one who is asked to sit and consciously listen to a live musical performance. In both situations the child’s attention is directed and focused, and in both cases several senses are integrated. Compare this to a third composite child - who, is, alas, the one we are most likely to encounter in real life who goes about her daily life with the omnipresent sound of TV or radio in the background at home, Muzak in the supermarket or shopping mall, and, very likely, a ceaseless flow of announcements over the P.A. system at school.

The ear, which revels in the reception of music and all of the subtleties of pitch, timbre etc. connected with that art, is, in the last scenario, ceaselessly barraged by sound or noise, and no demands are made upon the child’s ability to focus or even really listen. M. Scott Peck perceives our inability to listen as a critical social and psychological malaise:

By far the most common and important way in which we can exercise our attention is by listening. We spend an enormous amount of time listening, most of which we waste, because on the whole most of us listen very poorly. An industrial psychologist once pointed out to me that the amount of time we devote to teaching certain subjects to our children in school is inversely proportional

*to the frequency with which the children will make use of the subject when they grow up. Thus a business executive will spend roughly an hour of his day reading, two hours talking and eight hours listening. Yet in school we spend a large amount of time teaching children how to read, a very small amount of time teaching them how to speak, and usually no time at all teaching them how to listen. I do not believe it would be a good thing to make what we teach in school exactly proportional to what we do after school, but I do think we would be wise to give our children some instruction in the process of listening— not so that listening can be made easy but rather that they will understand how difficult it is to listen well. Listening well is an exercise of attention and by necessity hard work ...*¹⁷

An ancient Athenian was considered “educated” when he could perform gymnastic exercises, play the lyre and recite Homer by heart, i.e. integrate his capacities of willing, feeling and thinking as well as the diverse sensory experiences underlying them. Could ADHD and the many as yet unlabeled syndromes that burden today’s child be, in part, the vengeance wrought by senses that have not been stimulated and harmonized? And could the school setting provide the means for remediating this deficiency?

Howard Gardner and his associates at Harvard’s Project Zero have wrestled with these questions for the past two decades. The publication of Howard Gardner’s *Frames of Mind* in 1983 occurred during the period of intense research on the part of the American Psychiatric Society which resulted in the 1980 DSM-III term “ADD” and the 1987 term “ADHD.” Gardner’s theory of Multiple Intelligences opened up new vistas which had the potential of revolutionizing both the academic parameters which underlay educational testing as well as the actual classroom practices which seemed helpless before the onslaught of attentiondeficit children. More than any other university educational researcher in the latter part of this century, Gardner has had an immediate and powerful impact on schools and their teachers.

Through the middle of our century, the most common approach to understanding the nature of the child and the development of intelligence and intellectual faculties has had a *psychological* bias. The basic assumption underlying most of the childrearing and pedagogical methods of the twentieth century has been that the child has a well developed and independent inner life, and that whatever serves to allow this inner life an outer expression is to the good. One of Howard Gardner’s most striking achievements has been to break free of this psychological bias and to approach the child from a very different perspective:

*... Consider, for example, the twelveyear-old male Puluwat in the Caroline Islands, who has been selected by his elders to learn how to become a master sailor. Under the tutelage of master navigators, he will learn to combine knowledge of sailing, stars, and geography so as to find his way around hundreds of islands. Consider the fifteen-year-old Iranian youth who has committed to heart the entire Koran and mastered the Arabic language. Now he is being sent to a holy city, to work closely for the next several years with an ayatollah, who will prepare him to be a teacher and religious leader. Or consider the fourteen-year-old adolescent in Paris, who has learned how to program a computer and is beginning to compose works of music with the aid of a synthesizer.*¹⁸

By utilizing a methodology that borrowed more from anthropology than from psychology, Gardner effected a quiet revolution in mainstream American education, one whose impact has not diminished in the fourteen years since his book *Frames of Mind* first appeared.

In attempting to provide a theoretical framework for his anthropological study of the development of cognitive activity in childhood, Gardner had to redefine “intelligence.” Earlier theorists had gone so far as to contend that intelligence comprises multiple abilities. But Gardner went a step further, arguing that there is no single intelligence. In his view, intelligences are multiple, including, at a minimum, linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligence; subsequent research led him to add the “naturalist” intelligence to this list. Some of these intelligences are quite similar to the abilities proposed by the psychometric theorists, but others are not. For example, the

idea of a musical intelligence is relatively new, as is the idea of a bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, which encompasses the particular faculties of athletes and dancers. Gardner derived his listing of intelligences from a variety of sources, including studies of cognitive processing, of brain damage, of exceptional individuals, and of cognition across cultures. Gardner proposed that whereas most concepts of intelligence had been ethnocentric and culturally biased, his was universal, based upon biologic and cross-cultural data as well as upon data derived from the cognitive performance of a wide array of people.

When compared to the work of his peers in academia, Gardner's work is revolutionary. Underlying most cognitive approaches to intelligence is the assumption that intelligence comprises a set of mental representations (e.g., propositions, images) of information and a set of processes that can operate on the mental representations. A more intelligent person is assumed to represent information better and, in general, to operate more quickly on these representations than does a less intelligent person. Hence intelligence is measured in much the same way that Taylor's "time and motion studies" (so enthralling to the early twentieth century captains of industry) studied efficiency in the workplace.

Researchers have sought to measure the speed of various types of thinking. Through mathematical modeling, they divide the overall time required to perform a task into the constituent times needed to execute each mental process. Usually, they assume that these processes are executed serially—one after another—and, hence, that the processing times are additive. But some investigators allow for partially or even completely parallel processing, in which case more than one process is assumed to be executed at the same time. Regardless of the type of model used, the fundamental unit of analysis is the same: a mental process acting upon a mental representation: we are still fettered to the a head-first conceptual universe.

Gardner's vision is far more inclusive; indeed, although he shares Gardner's contextual-cognitive approach, Robert Sternberg has him for labeling "mere talents" as "intelligences" Gardner's own summary of the "core components of multiple intelligences" lists the following:

Linguistic	Appreciation of the sounds, rhythm, and meanings of words, sensitivity to the different functions of language, and the capacity to use language for different purposes.
Logical – Mathematical	Recognition and appreciation of patterns, orderliness, and systematicity; the ability to handle long chains of reasoning.
Musical	Sensitivity to pitch, rhythm, and timbre; an appreciation of the expressive qualities of music and melodic, harmonic and rhythmic structures.
Spatial	Capacity to perceive the visual world accurately, to manipulate one's initial perceptions, and to recreate aspects of one's initial perceptions.
Bodily- Kinesthetic	Capacity to handle objects skillfully and to control one's body motions for expressive or other purposes.
Naturalist	Abilities to recognize flora and fauna and to make consequential distinctions in the natural world, and to use these abilities productively.
Interpersonal	Sensitivity to the thoughts, feelings, and motivations of others, and the ability to act upon this knowledge in responding to others.

Intrapersonal

Access to one's own feelings, the ability to discriminate among these feelings and to describe or draw upon them to guide behavior.

We might imagine that, having divided the otherwise nebulous quality of "intelligence" into eight clear components, Howard Gardner would be at pains to examine the means by which educators and psychologists could help us to make all of these intelligences function harmoniously within and about us. In spite of his liberation from the bounds of the psychometricians, Gardner on the other hand shows an uncritical acceptance of our century's bias towards specialization. In his view, educators should recognize the particular one or two intelligences with which a child is gifted and work with those strengths, all the while recognizing which intelligences are of special value to the society in which the child will grow and one day assume responsibility

Although he finds many points of agreement with the developmental picture of Jean Piaget,¹⁹ Gardner tends to approach the different stages of childhood with the eye of a quantifier, not in relation to their qualities. The field research methods favored by Gardner and his associates most often has to do with problem-solving: the problems posed remain the same regardless of the age of the children being tested. In his often perspicacious quest to understand the nature of intelligence, Gardner fails to notice the profoundly qualitative nature of the dynamic entity through whom intelligence flows - the child.

Rudolf Steiner begins with that entity and asks: What is a child? What, indeed is childhood? What is the difference between a "child" and an "adult" (a difference which Janov, for one, refused to acknowledge even exists)? Why can an adult still discover "the inner child?" In Steiner's research, the key to all of these questions is changing consciousness. To give some idea of the treasure trove of inspiration that may be mined from the picture of the human being that Steiner gives, I want to explore only one aspect of this question of the nature of childhood, and its impact on a problem as pervasive as ADHD. In the 1960's powerful changes in the way in which parents related to their children were effected by such psychologists as Ginott (Between Parent and Child), Janov (The Feeling Child), and Gordon (Parent Effectiveness Training) and their research on the proper way in which to speak to children. Let us examine the effect that their thoughts continue to have at the century's end through the lattice of Steiner's ideas.

A basic tenet in Steiner's developmental picture is the understanding that whatever in our childhood acts upon us from "outside" will in adulthood be transformed into forces that work from *within*. A child who lacks the living example of a self-assured and guiding adult will have to struggle, in later life, to attain inner assurance and inner guidance. A youngster who is not exposed to the kind but clear precepts of outer discipline will find it difficult to attain true inner discipline as an adult. If we cannot steel ourselves so that we meet the children with certainty in our will and clarity in our intentions, we are depriving them of one of childhood's most valuable experiences.

In the United States, which, after all, is a nation founded on the Divine right of freedom of choice, it is a mighty task indeed to overcome this dogged tendency to ask children questions! Our whole culture summons forth the interrogative voice:

Are you ready to wake up? Do you want to stay in bed awhile? Should we decide what to wear today? Would you like the Chanel sweater or the Polo sweatshirt? The Tommy Hifinger pullover? Do you want to wear your Guess shorts or your Calvin Klein jeans? How about the DKNY pair? Gap? The relaxed fit with the button fly or the zipper fly? Ready for breakfast? What would you like Cheerios, Corn Flakes, Wheaties, Granola? Granola with almond chunks? Granola with raisin bits?.. How about strawberries? No? Blueberries? Bananas? Do you want to sweeten it

with honey Maple syrup? Sugar? White or brown?... Do you want milk? One percent? Two percent? Skim? Organic? Eden Soy with minerals or Rice Dream with calcium?..."

And these are just the first two minutes of the day!—a day that moves from question to question, with nary a word of declarative guidance on the part of parents or other adults. When a question is asked of a child, she assumes that you expect an answer, and I have heard many children answer questions like the above with witty or even downright rude answers!

Such domestic scenes are part of the dilemma of raising children in a country that rightfully calls itself “The Land of the Free,” but has lost the capacity to distinguish between the potentially independent, “free” adult and the highly dependent and “unfree” child. It may be asked, of course, how can we train our children to be free later in life if we don’t give them choices in childhood? Yet, even for adults, real freedom is a capacity which can unfold only on occasion, for life is filled with necessities that impinge upon our freedom. When we ask a child to make a choice, several things occur. First of all, we ask the child to draw upon capacities for judgment that he does not yet have. On what basis will a seven year-old make a choice? Invariably, on the basis of sympathy and antipathy. And whence does he get this sympathy and antipathy? From his astral body, that is, from a member of his being that should not be “activated” until adolescence. An analogy might prove helpful here:

We can think of the child’s astral body as “soul principal” which is being held in a “cosmic trust fund” until such time as the youngster’s lower members are developed enough to receive it, i.e., ages 13-15. As is the case with a monetary trust fund in an earthly bank, it is the trustee’s responsibility to see that the principal is not disturbed for the apportioned period, knowing that the interest that it generates provides sufficient funds for the beneficiary’s needs. If, however, the trustee proves to be irresponsible, and the youngster for whom the principal is intended gets hold of it long before he is mature enough to make wise financial decisions, the principal will be drawn upon prematurely. In the worst case, the entire trust will be depleted, leaving neither interest nor principal at a time in the young person’s life that they are most needed.

In the course of healthy development, the young child has just enough astrality apportioned to her to sustain those organic processes requiring movement and catabolism, and to support such soul phenomena as the unfolding of interest in the world. And where do ADHD children have their greatest difficulties? In developing and sustaining any interest in anything for very long! The environments that we create for our youngest children, the way we speak to our grade schoolers, and our inability to differentiate, between what is appropriate for an adult and not appropriate for a child - all of these phenomena eat away at astral “interest” early in life and devour astral “principal” long before it has ripened. By the time many “normal” young people are twelve or thirteen they seem to have lost interest in learning, or even in life; they have “been there, done that,” and take on a jaded, middle-aged attitude toward their own future. **The ADHD child is only an extreme reflection of soul attitudes that will be endemic to many American children at the century’s end.**

The entire thrust of the childrearing methods developed by the most influential thinkers of our century has led to the soul bankruptcy of today’s children just as inexorably as the financial and banking policies of the first two-thirds of the century have led to the collapse of scores of savings and loan associations in the past decade. ADHD is not merely a phenomenon that has arisen alongside modern education and child psychology; it is the logical end product of those erroneous pictures of the human being and the methods arising from them. Children do not need choices; they need guidance.

When an adult asks a young child to make a choice, the adult relinquishes the majesty and power that should be hers by dint of experience and acquired wisdom. In that moment, child and adult become equal; over the course of many such moments of choice, this equality becomes habitual, and the sweetest

children gradually turn into little tyrants who wield the power to determine the restaurants in which the family will eat, the movies that they will see, the malls in which they will shop. We don't have to watch situation comedies on TV to experience the ubiquity of such children in modern life!

Most importantly, we should realize that a child who is given too many choices will become an adult who has difficulty making decisions. While choice, according to definition, "implies broadly the freedom of choosing from a set of persons or things," decision is defined as "the act of reaching a conclusion or making up one's mind," and also, interestingly, as "firmness of character or action; determination." This is not merely a semantic matter; there is a real difference between these two acts. The power to decide, I would claim, is built upon the ability to accept the decisions of adults in one's youth. (This assumes, of course, that one encounters adults who are themselves capable of making decisions.) Childish choosing draws on those very forces of soul and spirit that are meant to mature and become adult decisiveness. In an article on children's rights, Federal Judge Mary Kohler emphasized "the right to be a child during childhood" and emphasized that one of the impediments to the achievement of this "inalienable" right is the "too early forcing of choices upon children."²⁰

The simplicity of life in earlier days was accompanied by a lack of choices—which we would today find boring—but this in turn led to a consistency of life which we today might find healing. This is no turning back from the "freedom of choice" that we as adults expect, but we must recognize that a pre-determined and expectable course of events strengthens the etheric body of the child, and it is this which provides a healthy foundation for behavioral stability and predictability in childhood, as well as for the capacity to make important decisions in later life.

We can encompass the child with our own certainty by creating a form into which the child enters every day. For parents, this means establishing a regular rhythm of bedtimes and mealtimes, a secure and serene "time-environment" in which the child's etheric body is free to do its work. A young child who "decides for herself" when she is ready for bedtime, or who refuses to go to sleep until her parents have turned in, as well, begins to weaken her etheric forces in early childhood. Toddlers who are free to "eat when they're hungry," or to help themselves at the refrigerator may be nourishing their physical nature, but are not providing the rhythmical and social nurture that their etheric body requires. Parents may contend that they give their children free reign in these two matters because "the child's body knows best." "I can't crawl under her skin and know when she's hungry or tired - she has to tell me! And she knows a lot better than I do which foods she needs," etc. In spite of the parents' protestations that they are leaving their children free in their interest of their psychological and physical health, a sensitive observer can usually judge by their "waif-like" appearance which children have been allowed to decide their own bedtimes and left to fend for themselves in the kitchen. Invariably, children who are "free" to make choices about these fundamental matters look unhealthy, have less physical stamina and a shorter attention span than their peers and are not much inclined to cooperate in any activity that they find antipathetic or laborious. That is to say, even at the nursery school level, we find such children manifesting behavior that fits the general description of ADHD. It is no wonder that Ritalin is now being prescribed for children at an ever-younger age.

If sleeping and eating are not guided by the certainty and clarity of their parents, even those children who come from well-to-do households and have been "given everything" nonetheless appear to be as neglected as a child raised by a dysfunctional inner city family. In my own work with New York City public school children, I've met youngsters who came from tragic backgrounds (a father killed or unknown, a mother heavily addicted or in jail) who despite all of this sorrow appeared healthy and lively. In every such situation, the child was being raised by the grandmother, who, untouched by the theories of contemporary child psychology, insisted on a consistent bedtime and prepared meals with care and regularity. As the psychoanalyst Peter Neubauer has observed of his young patients, "Children who are

pushed into adult experience do not become precociously mature. On the contrary, they cling to childhood longer, perhaps all of their lives.²¹

We might turn our thoughts for a moment to Helen Keller, whose multiple disabilities make her something of a paradigm of the behavioral problems of our time. Helen's handicaps led her to evince behavior that ran the full gamut from depression to hysteria, from autism to ADHD. And then Annie Sullivan entered Helen's life, struggled to find the right approach to this seemingly insoluble problem, and succeeded. In a newspaper interview with Annie Sullivan, her interlocutor said, "You worked miracles with Helen because you got her to love you," to which Annie Sullivan replied, "No; first Helen had to learn to obey me. Obedience came first, then came love."

From a more contemporary perspective, here are the words of a mother of two schoolchildren who needed her attention during an outbreak of lice:

I realize that I love my children more for having gone through this with them. I know that nobody else could really have taken care of them with the same spirit that I did... And there is one more thing. I learned that I could do something with my children to which they are totally opposed. No amount of distraction, crying, screaming or complaining could take me off my task; I was going to do what was necessary to take care of them, and they were going to comply. There was no flexibility.

This was a big hurdle for me, but I think that my children now have a better sense of who's in charge and why they need that, and perhaps they even love me a little more for being in charge. All this, thanks to head lice.²²

If what the childraising theorists cited in the previous chapter indicate is true, those children who are being born in the 1990s, who will be coming of age in the next millennium, challenge us—and are themselves challenged—in the sphere of the *will*. Writers on childraising methods such as John Rosemond and Mary Sheedy Kurcinka may provide accurate descriptions of the behavior of these "spirited" or "strong-willed" children, and may also suggest helpful ways of dealing with their behavior so as to make home life harmonious (or at least bearable!) but their writings do not help us understand why it is particularly the will that is unfolding in children at this point in our century. Nor are they able to articulate just what the will is, nor, most importantly, what the relationship of human will is to what Kurcinka vaguely (and somewhat arbitrarily) characterizes as *spirit*.

It is here that Waldorf education may have its greatest contribution to make to the challenge of ADHD. By laying the foundation for their educational methods on the principle of the whole human being, Waldorf teachers do not stop with the static concept of "multiple intelligence."

Rather, they help an *intelligent multiplicity* to thrive in every child in the classroom, recognizing that every child needs to cultivate her linguistic side, her bodily-kinesthetic side, her spatial side, etc. Indeed, we can see that part of the genesis of ADHD lies in the stifling of too many facets of a child's nature so that a one-sided "intelligence" can shine at the expense of all else. Waldorf education can not "cure" ADHD, but its theories and its practices can serve to mitigate hyperactive tendencies in young children, and can be an important part of the treatment of older children faced with this challenge of our times. Some measure of the importance of understanding the challenge may be gleaned by words spoken by Rudolf Steiner one year after the first Waldorf school had been opened:

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 and will 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.

NOTES

¹ Cited in Larry Silver, M.D., *Advice to Parents on ADHD*, (Washington, DC, 1993), 6.

² *Ibid.*, 154, 156

³ Silver, *Op. Cit.*, 125.

⁴ David Black, ‘On the Nature of Psychology’, *Towards* magazine, Winter 1980-81, 32. Although they were concerned with the psychology of adults, Mr. Black’s insights have proven to be of the greatest help in building a bridge from mainstream psychology to Steiner’s perceptions about the human soul,

⁵ Cited in Barbara Ingersoll, *Your Hyperactive Child*, (New York, 1988), xiii.

⁶ John F. Taylor, *The Hyperactive Child and the Family*, (New York, 1980), 47, 54. Dr. Taylor provides a list of over 70 “Environmental irritants that Can Trigger an Increase in the Hyperactivity of an Exposed Child,” including ball-point ink on skin, postage-stamp glue, smoke from a fire, and plastic food wrap.

⁷ Ingersoll, *Op. cit.*, 97

⁸ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁹ Silver, *Op. cit.*, 134

¹⁰ To the author’s best knowledge, the first university-level course given in the United States on “The History of Consciousness” appeared almost two generations after Rudolf Steiner’s writings on the subject. It was given in the University of California at Santa Cruz in 1968, and was thought to be the quintessential manifestation of Generation Two.

¹¹ See his *Foundations of Human Experience*.

¹² James Dobson, *The Strong-Willed Child*, (Wheaton, IL, 1987), 76, 77, 78.

¹³ See Rudolf Steiner, *The Philosophy of Freedom*, (Hudson, NY, 1995).

¹⁴ Cited in Saul Wurman, *Information Anxiety*, (New York, 1989), 157.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 158

¹⁶ Winn, 79.

¹⁷ M. Scott Peck, *The Road Less Traveled*, (New York, 1980), 121.

¹⁸ Howard Gardner, *Frames of Mind*, (New York, 1983), 196

¹⁹ See Gardner's *Art, Mind, and Brain*, which antedates *Frames of Mind* by one year.

²⁰ Cited in Marie Winn, *Children Without Childhood* (New York, 1983), 196.

²¹ Op. cit., 199.

²² "What Could Be Good About Head Lice?", *The Garden Gate* (Bulletin of The Waldorf School of Atlanta), December, 1995.

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