
Awakening Intelligence

— Janene Ping

Author's Note: *For the last three years, I have been working with a WECAN grant that was designed to build dialogue between Waldorf educators and those working with Social/Emotional learning models and contemporary research. It has been an interesting process to try to integrate the various streams of thought in the following article. It is my hope that with our continued exploration into contemporary research, anthroposophical knowledge of the human being will be further enriched. Our understanding and articulation of the learning processes inherent in whole child education is essential for our work in today's world.*

When one really can take the time to observe and consider the engaged inquiry of self-motivated learning in the young child from birth to age seven, one may witness a higher intelligence working within the wisdom of child development. Imagine what it would take for us as adults to consciously plan and accomplish physical, emotional, social and intellectual achievements parallel to those that the young child is capable of in the first seven years! From total dependence in infancy upon the caretakers and environment into which the child is born, the healthy child becomes able to walk, talk, think, and direct the will of its own individuality. One might compare the young child's achievements in this area to the equivalent of having earned a master's degree in the foundational process of incarnation!

Where does this higher intelligence spring from? How do we understand the foundation necessary for these stages of learning to healthfully unfold? What can (or should) we do as caretakers of young children to support their growth? These, of course, are questions that live in the hearts and minds of parents, caretakers and educators of young children.

Let us take the premise of "higher intelligence" as a first exploration of these questions. Does "higher" refer to a spiritual capacity directed from an angelic hierarchy that perhaps bestows the wisdom of an evolutionary process? For many of us who have direct experience of the existence of the human being having a bodily, soul, and spiritual nature, this is a comfortable premise. The view of body, soul, and spirit as being integrated within the whole human being may be held within many world religions and spiritual streams, but it is not (yet?) universally held as common "scientific" understanding — even though brilliant thinkers like Albert Einstein have

referred with reverence to a spiritual stream working within the laws of the universe.

Rudolf Steiner brought the work of spiritual science into the realm of intellectual inquiry with guidelines for methodical inner practice. Steiner was an astute observer of the human experience of the soul and spirit. Inspired by the work of Goethe, who developed a science of phenomenological observation, Steiner was a fore-runner to contemporary research in the fields of psychology and neuroscience that are now opening the doors to a new understanding of how the physical body, mind and soul are connected. This is extremely helpful for those of us working with anthroposophical indications of human development. We now encounter philosophical and scientific streams of twenty-first century inquiry that work with an understanding of multiple intelligences. It is fascinating to explore these streams as complementary to Steiner's view of the three-fold and four-fold nature of the human being. To bridge the two we must be able to distill an essential understanding of human capacities revealed by anthroposophical research as well as contemporary scientific and philosophical exploration.

At birth, the physical body of the infant is born. This body is a vessel that houses a distinctly unique human individuality. Deeply embedded laws of growth and development, both universal and individual, govern the formation and function of this physical body. Modern science has given us a very detailed picture of the beauty and intricate complexity within its manifold systems. Dissection, examination, study, combined with intuition, inspiration, and devotion to the phenomenological observation have unveiled worlds within worlds! Yet we know that without life force, *and* that pulse

of *light* that sparks the beating of the heart, the individuality cannot live within the body, no matter how beautiful or loved it is.

What is this life force and its accompanying energy of vitality or illness that surges through all living things? In answer one can picture the etheric body moving within the stream of time and space. The etheric works within life processes with rhythm and repetition and resulting relational patterns. It informs the intelligence of immunity that governs the health of an individuality. It influences the habit body and the child's ability to "feel at home" — or not, in the physical body. Within Waldorf early childhood education the teacher works strongly with an understanding of this etheric stream as the foundation upon which healthy development and intelligence rests.

In her exploration of *Truth and Health*, Dr. Michaela Glöckler quotes from the German magazine *Stern*, "For centuries the body and the soul of the human being were seen as separate, independent units. It is now established that they are closely connected. The body is healthier when the soul is doing well. By way of neurotransmitters as chemical messengers the mind-soul disposition of the human being influences (health)." Dr. Glöckler then points to documentation of the psycho-neuro-immunological research that reveals the integrated relationship of emotional, ethical, and immunological intelligences that live and work within the human individuality. The term *mind-soul* is key in our modern inquiry of understanding both the astral and the ego body. In identifying the capacities of each, we realize that both are integrated within our conscious experience of self. In one exploration, the definition of mind-soul is: the subjective, first-person experience of identification of awareness and meaning.

When we expand our understanding of intelligence — the ability to acquire and apply knowledge and skills — we can come closer to the truth of what all education must embrace if it is to responsibly serve human development and evolution. Waldorf education has been striving to serve multiple and interrelated intelligences of thinking, feeling, and willing for almost a century now. To understand any intelligence we must bring focused attention to its revelatory manifestation. This attentional focus can be channeled in many ways: observation, study, comparative conversation, research techniques, re-

flection, and also with capacities of imagination, inspiration, and intuition. We may look at various intelligences of skill and knowing in singularly defining terms, yet we must keep in mind their complex and interrelated realities.

Within *thinking* there is an intellectual intelligence that utilizes rational logic. Often intellectual intelligence emphasizes premises and laws that are measured by factual evidence. Emotional Intelligence lives in the *feeling* life of the human being — with the understanding that the physical body and the mind both influence, and are influenced by, the emotional experience within. Feeling life is individual and subjective, but it is also relational, as it influences, and is influenced by, others. The interdependence of individuals within any social context (when two or more are gathered) requires the knowledge and skills of Social Intelligence. *Willing* can be defined as the intelligence of the "locus of control" or the individual's ability to channel motivational capacities and forces towards the achievement of a goal.

Through multiple intelligences we can explore other ways of knowing:

- Kinetic Intelligence is related to movement, dominance and coordination, and utilizes both early developmental reflexes and autonomously directed motor skill.
- Sensory Intelligence enables us to cognize ourselves and the world through attention to sensory experience.
- Creative Intelligence is the capacity to manifest new thought, structure or form.
- Instinctual Intelligence informs a subconscious and contextual interaction with the world upon which survival depends.
- Immunological Intelligence is inherent in the body's ability to maintain health.
- Ethical Intelligence could be said to be that which discerns between what is morally right or wrong.
- Mystical Intelligence relates to a reciprocal connection between the soul and that which is mysterious within and beyond ourselves and spiritual in orientation.

These intelligences inextricably weave together our understanding of ourselves, each other, life, and the

universe. Each individual's "IQ" varies in ability level for skill and understanding within them. Some intelligences touch upon cognitive thinking within the right or left hemisphere of the brain. Some intelligences are deeply embedded in the subconscious or rest within our inherited physical body. Some intelligences live outside of our individuality, yet we can still access an understanding of them through focused attention that requires discipline and practice. When we achieve this, dualistic definitions of "self" and "other" disappear and our understanding unites with a universal or more spiritual intelligence that informs all of creation.

When we look back upon the engaged inquiry of self-motivated learning of the young child, we can observe that healthy children learn through the intelligences that surround and work within them — and in the first three years these are not yet intellectual. By observing young children, we witness that other primary intelligences form a foundation for the emergent intellect. Mystical intelligence is perhaps the first — it is present in the newborn's gaze. It lives in the trust the infant has for her mother or caregiver. Instinctual, kinetic, and sensory intelligences are also foundational in the process of incarnation.

In the next three years of life, from the third to the sixth year, we can learn about the child by observing the universal capacity for play. In this realm, we can identify that the learning process is engaging creative intelligence, as well as emotional and social intelligences. Through play the "being-ness" or archetype of things is explored. A stick can reflect the branching out of a tree, or the stick can be transformed with unlimited potential into other "things." In play, the child learns capacities for communication, collaboration and cooperation. The young child "digests" life experience through its imitation and recreation. Dramatic play explores feelings born from familial roles or social relationships. Play can also be a healthy way for children to create situations for the therapeutic "working through" of life experiences. The research of neurobiology has identified how instinctual intelligence, upon which survival depends, works within neurological patterns that reflect safety and comfort or danger and fear. These are foundational patterns that inform our emotional and social intelligence. Rhythm and repetition of safe, healthy life experience builds capacity for security and resilience. Trauma disrupts this capacity and creates

patterns of "fight or flight" that can repeat themselves when relational stress or anxiety is experienced. By being able to re-create safe situations in which that initial trigger of stress or anxiety can be healthfully integrated, capacities for resilience are developed. This, of course, requires the conscious supervision of an experienced therapist, teacher or parent.

Childhood is a time when foundational intelligences are key developmental motivators. Curiosity to explore the world through true sensory experience is natural. The need to move and tumble, climb and balance, roll and swing is essential! Transformation of self and the world through creative play is magical. The child's ability to learn through these multiple intelligences is rich and beautiful. We must understand and respect this foundational capacity for joyful learning. As Steiner reminds us, all education is self-education. The capacity for all intelligent learning increases when the individual is enthusiastically attentive and engaged. The more we understand these complex intelligences and how they are interrelated, the more we can meet educational needs of the whole child, and advocate for our children's innate capacity for learning to be enhanced. In Waldorf education, Steiner developed a holistic curriculum that works within relational developmental capacities. In this age of the awakening consciousness soul, our collaboration with others who recognize these multiple intelligent capacities will strengthen the gift of learning what it means to be truly human and help the evolution of humanity to be realized. ♦

References and Further Reading:

The above article shares an exploration of thoughts that were inspired by anthroposophical study of the works of Rudolf Steiner, attendance at conferences held at the Garrison Institute (see below), and 26 years of early childhood teaching at the Hawthorne Valley Waldorf School in upstate NY.

Booger, Cornelis. *Nurturing Potential in the Kindergarten Years: A Guide for Teachers, Carers, and Parents* (Floris, 2012)

Garrison Institute Conferences:

The Art and Science of Contemplative Teaching: Exploring Ways of Knowing with Dan Siegel, Linda Lantieri, and Laura Rendon, November, 2012
Soul and Synapse with Dan Siegel, April 2014

The Chemistry of Connection with Daniel and Tara Goleman, November 2012

Glöckler, Michaela. *Truth and Health* (Mercury Press, 2015)

Goleman, Daniel. *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More than IQ* (Bantam Books, Tenth Anniversary Edition, 2005)

_____. *Social Intelligence: The New Science of Human Relationships* (Bantam, 2007)

Parabola Magazine, Fall 2015 Issue on Intelligence

Steiner, Rudolf. *Study of Man: General Education Course* (Lectures given in 1919; Rudolf Steiner Press, 2004)

Siegel, Dan. *Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation* (Bantam, 2010)

A puppetry and storytelling enthusiast, **Janene Ping** celebrates entering her 26th year teaching Kindergarten at the Hawthorne Valley Waldorf School. She has enjoyed leading adult education workshops at the Center for Anthroposophy, Sunbridge College, and the Rudolf Steiner Institute, and is currently a faculty member of Sophia's Hearth. In the summer of 2016, she will host the third bi-annual Collaborative Puppetry Conference at Hawthorne Valley.