

Adolescents- their relationship to the night and the senses in connection to their own development.

This is a description of a workshop run over three days at the Kolisko Conference “Today’s Child, Tomorrow’s World.”, in Sydney , July 3 – 8, 2004. I have decided not to try to write an article about the subject but to describe the workshop itself, as the methodology of the workshop was itself an attempt to demonstrate the content. This will run the risk of appearing disjointed at times, because the whole methodology of the workshop was to develop several strands simultaneously, by providing experiences which were then allowed to ripen over the night and subsequently further developed on the subsequent day. It’s inevitable that notes outlining an experiential process of a workshop cannot easily convey that process.

Rudolf Steiner, in his many courses to teachers, has given material which, if worked with, provides a rich resource for understanding the theme, posing new questions and providing practical insights into working with adolescents in the class room. Some of the answers are astounding. For example you will find that education is not all about providing ‘light’ for the students but rather ‘darkness’. You will find that the beginning of the learning process is a ‘conclusion’, not the end of the learning process. (Guttenhöfer, 2004). You will find that there is a need to differentiate between ‘living concepts’ and ‘dead concepts’, a critical differentiation for education. You will find there are implications for the way you arrange your lessons and for the way in which the day is arranged for students.

The workshop attempted to explore this area using text material from Steiner’s work, experiments, biographies, discussion and the participation of those who took part. We attempted in the workshop to work with the same elements we work with at school, i.e. the sleep life, the structure of the lesson and the 2-day and the 3-day rhythm.

Day 1 4/7/04

Which rhythm of life does sleep belong to?

The following table is a summary of the types of rhythm we are involved with in our daily life. It is given without explanation and using the anthroposophical terminology for the members of the 4 fold human being. Going into it here would detract from the main emphasis of this paper.

Year rhythm	1 year	Physical Body	Zodiac
Month	1 month	Life Body	Moon
Week	1week	Astral Body	Planets
Day	1 day	Ego	Sun

(The astral body is a name for that spiritual member of the human being which, in a certain way contains our thoughts, feelings and impulses)

The day rhythm of the Sun is one of renewal, starting again. Just like the Sun has, as part of its being, light and darkness, brightness and shadow, so the day rhythm is made up of day and night.

The night is often forgotten, but we can’t afford to forget it because its role is so important for the healthy life.

The change from our waking consciousness to sleep consciousness and then back again to waking consciousness is one of the fundamental rhythms of our existence. Without one side of the rhythm we would become ill and wasted, without the other we would lack the basis of experience for burgeoning independence. So you see there is a lot to pay attention to in the process of education for all ages. For the adolescent, who is undergoing significant changes in their own relation to their soul life there are particular things to pay attention to, such as:

How is this change happening for boys and girls?

How is the ‘sense life’ to be cultivated?

How is the process of ‘knowing’ managed in school so that the students are active participants?

In the first lecture of the series given to the first teachers at the first Waldorf School, we find the interesting statement : “ **We must teach the children how to sleep**”.

Surely school should be about keeping children awake, even amused, but what on earth are we to understand from this statement about teaching them to sleep. Behind this benign statement is a world of meaning, which can be a key to many of the challenges facing us in the classroom. This statement leads us into the question of what is sleep? What is this state where we lose our memory, where we recover, reorder and are healed?

Our senses, which during our waking consciousness are filled with the images of the world, are closed during sleep and our consciousness is partly extinguished. Rudolf Steiner has described, from a seer’s point of view, what occurs then in our soul. Freed from the distraction of the senses it is given over to a world of order and archetypes out of which the creative forces of the universe flow.

The symbol for the Sun is :  , a circle with a point in the middle. This is a picture of the human experience of the day rhythm. We are a point when we wake up into our senses, our day waking consciousness. At night we lose our consciousness into the world of sleep, the world of the dark, the stars and the periphery.

What are the phenomena we can recognise in relation to our sleep life?

It replenishes us so that we are ready to look at things freshlytake up new tasks . We can go to bed plagued by a problem and then wake to find the solution has dawned upon us. There is also a ripening that happens with sleep, where skills and abilities ripen to new levels. The closeness of events from the day appear in a new perspective, which is why we often sleep on a situation before we make a decision. We

can consciously take a problem with another human being into our sleep and often we can then experience how much of the tightness of the ‘problem knot’ has relaxed and how new possibilities have emerged.



The mention made in Lecture 1 of the Study of Man speaks of teaching the children to sleep. I have come to think of this as teaching the children to breathe between the periphery and the centre.

Angelus Silesius, the medieval mystic wrote something, which refers to this aspect of the human existence between centre and periphery:

“I don’t know what I am, I am not what I know, a thing and not a thing, a drop and a circling.”

The medieval people depicted this in many different ways, one of the most beautiful is represented in Fig.1

Chapter 3 of Steiner’s “*Occult Science*” (1925) is about Sleep and Death. Waking and Sleeping are described as the Astral/Ego being within and without the Physical/Life bodies.

The Life Body is form giving but only if it receives from the Astral Body the ‘pattern forms’ or archetypes.

In awakesness – we turn our senses to the surrounding world to form mental images. These are the ‘disturbers of the peace.’

The Physical / Life bodies contain the organs by which the astral body perceives the external world and has to be

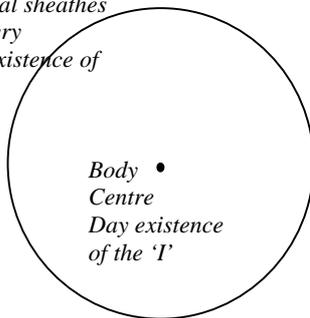
separated from its own world. (See *Occult Science*, p.316)

In sleep the Astral body is united with the World out of which the entire Human being is born. Apparently the medieval people experienced this world out of which we are formed as being the Zodiacal starry world.

Figure 1.
The Zodiacal human being is a constant theme in medieval manuscripts. The signs are associated with corresponding principles in the body to show the human being, the most perfect creature in the world, as the microscopic image of the heavens – a reflection of the celestial mirror.
(Page from MS. *Les Très Riches*

The embryonic picture of the Human Being after about 10 days is of centre and periphery. There are spaces within spaces. The body is only formed after the environmental periphery has been formed. The embryonic body begins at the touching point of the amnion and the yolk sac, themselves within the wide periphery of the Chorion, which becomes the placenta.

Placental sheathes
Periphery
Night existence of
the 'I'



This embryonic form gives a picture of the wholeness of human life between centre and periphery, between waking and sleeping, between incarnation into our senses and excarnation out of our senses

With the senses, our experience is dismembered between 12 fields of experience. In cognition this dismemberment can be remembered, reintegrated. How this happens is important for the art of teaching. It swings between the dismemberment of waking consciousness in the 12 fields of experience (12 senses) and the reunification in the nightly starry world of 12 zodiacal directions of space. The trouble is that we can have experience of the dismemberment but we cannot so easily have experience

of the reunification within the starry world. We can however, experience the extraordinary rejuvenating power of sleep.

Up to puberty the astral body is in gestation. Like the physical body in gestation, it is there, it is being nourished, but it has not yet been born until adolescence dawns.

The birth of the astral body is connected to the development of judgement at many levels over the high school years. So the working with judgement and the birth of the astral body seem to be synchronised. Something, I think, that it is important for educators to realise.

Goethe (1960), in an essay, wrote something important about the space between the experience of a phenomenon and the judgement about it. This space must become part of a hygienic training of the power of judgement. It has important implications for the way experiences are prepared for the students, the timing of the explanation and the way of the explanation.

“One cannot give enough importance to the fact not to draw conclusions, not to prove things too quickly, or support a theory.....”

Between the observation of the facts and the judgement, there belongs a space in time to take up the facts in a pure way. They must live. The mind has the tendency to jump to conclusions...”

Goethe in The Experiment as the Mediator between Object and Subject. (See Bibliography)

This principle was elaborated as a central them in the practice and art of teaching by R. Steiner. (1919 and 1921). In lecture 9 of the “Study of the Human Being” he characterises the sequence Conclusion, Judgement and Concept, whereby the Conclusion is characterized as a ‘happened event’, which stands at the beginning of the process of cognition not as a ‘conclusion concept’.

Here we did two experiments. (von Mackensen, 1992)



The first involved going out into the parking area and looking into a grey trough full of water with two tiles at each end, one vertical and one horizontal. The tiles had alternating black and white stripes painted on them. We tried to pay particular attention to the transition areas of dark to light. The workshop is after all about the night.

The second experiment was done inside. We looked at a person through a large water prism, again paying attention to the transition areas between the light and the dark.

In the first experiment we noticed, after some time, that there was a shift of the image in the water. The more we brought our point of view closer to the water, the more the tile

seemed to be compressed towards the surface of the water. At the same time colours appeared at the edge of the stripes. Warm colours on some edges and cool colours on other edges.

What was seen through the prism has been drawn in the picture above. Notice the colours on the edge of the dark and light areas. These experiences were described and somewhat characterised and then left.

To end the first day a story was told. (Davidson, 1965) This is it in summary. In the 1860's an Irish couple, Alice and Thomas Sullivan, escaped the famine in Ireland and settled in a little farming community in the eastern United States. Their first child, a little girl, Annie, was born to them on April 14, 1866. Her first two years were blessed and then her life became filled with hardship. When she was two her eyes became itchy and her parents using the poor man's doctor, Time, waited for it to go away but it didn't and finally it was diagnosed as Trachoma.

Soon after, her mother, Alice developed tuberculosis and when the next child, Jimmy was born in 1869, he had tuberculosis of the hipbone. Thomas began to drink. A third child was born. Annie became a difficult child with frequent, violent temper tantrums. One day her father said to her after she had thrown his shaving gear all over the bathroom:

"Are you a devil? See what you've done. Brought bad luck to the house. Seven years of bad luck"

Then Alice died and the family all became separated amongst the in laws. No one wanted Annie because of her tantrums and because she could hardly see through her trachoma stricken eyes. After an unsuccessful stay with her cousin, Annie and Jimmy were taken to the Tewkesbury poor house. Jimmy was only allowed to stay with his sister by wearing an apron. They lived in appalling conditions; their playroom was the room where regularly, those that died were kept until burial. Then Jimmy died and Annie's only friends were two old women, one of whom was blind and the other arthritic. The blind woman told her stories and the arthritic woman would read to Anny from magazines in exchange for little chores Annie performed for her with her hands. After a year, a visiting priest, Father Barbara, while visiting the poor house, noticed Annie and took her away to the Sisters of Charity Hospital in Lowell, Massachusetts, for an operation. This was unsuccessful and Annie was returned to Tewkesbury where she continued to live in deplorable conditions for three more years, 1878 –80. During a government inspection of the place in 1880, Annie ran amongst the inspectors, as they were about to depart and cried out that she wanted to go to school.

A few days after, a coach arrived to take Annie to Perkins Institution, a school for the blind and deaf. She was now 14 and had had virtually no schooling. It was difficult with the other children who called her Big Annie. She learnt both signing and Braille quickly but couldn't see the point of spelling. Her stubbornness and the unkindness of one of the teachers led to another serious tantrum and her leaving the room ... and nearly the school. Again, a person appeared, Miss Moore, who took on responsibility for Annie. She set aside some time every week, during which the two studied or talked or walked across the grounds. Over time this weekly meeting began to heal Annie. She began to imitate Miss Moore's soft voice, her gentle ways, and her kindly interest in other people. Slowly the manners she imitated became part of her and the other girls began to warm to the new Annie. It was the beginning of a new experience, one she had not had for so long, she had forgotten it. It was the feeling of happiness.

Two other people contributed to Annie's further development. One was a young Irish man whose rooms Annie cleaned. He convinced her to see a Dr Bradford who eventually convinced Annie to attempt a series of operations, which finally gave her back relatively good vision. She was one of the earliest patients to have an ether anaesthetic.

The second was Mrs Hopkins, a widow from Cape Cod, who had lost a daughter of Annie's age and who became Annie's housemother. In fact she became a mother figure for her till she had completed her education in 1886. There were eight graduates in that class and Annie led them all. She was the class valedictorian. At the graduation she gave a speech that is memorable for its universality.

"Now we are going into the busy world to take our share of life's burdens and do our little to make the world better, wiser and happier....."

.....self development is a benefit, not only to the individual but also to humanity. Every person who improves themselves is aiding the progress of society, and everyone who stands still is holding it back."

Following her graduation Annie was dreading what life would now bring her as she left the security of Perkins. As she contemplated this uncertain future, a letter was brought to her from the principal of the school.

It asked if she would consider taking up the position as governess for a little blind, deaf, mute girl from southern United States. The girl's name was Helen Keller.

Day 2 5th July 2004

A question was asked from Neil Anderson, one of the participants, about scientific language and the appropriateness of its use.

This led to a long answer about 'dead concepts' and 'living concepts'. Scientific language can carry implicitly dead concepts within it. These can pervade our language culture like a cloud and we can carry them unconsciously but in a finished way that imply things about the human condition. Sometimes these unconscious concepts are brought to consciousness when they become applied and then they may shock us. This type of experience is becoming more common as the applications of Biotechnology increasingly become applied in society.

On the other hand it is necessary that children learn names of things and have knowledge of as much as possible about the actual nature of the world. How high mountains are, how deep the sea is, how long rivers are, the time taken to travel between places.

So an example of inappropriate language is for example the language of rays and particles in explanations of brightness and shadow in class 6, 7 and 8. There, it is better to develop your own language as in the case of Mackensen (1992) and Maier (1986).

On the other hand, in learning about rocks and volcanoes in class 6, one may well learn some of the language of geology such as igneous rocks, plutonic rocks, sedimentary rocks etc.

In the light ray example a model is implied while in the second example no real model is implied – the names are descriptive.

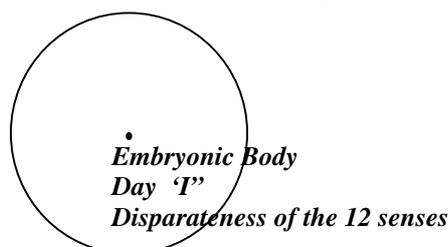
There arose the question of what the students write. This must be addressed on the last day.

A section was read from chapter 8 of the Study of Man, (Steiner, 1919) about the senses and the polarity of disparateness in the day waking state compared with the unity of the night state. This is a clue to the working with the night and the process of judgement. The integration of sensory experience is an important part of process of judgement and Steiner describes how it begins in the way that sensory experience is integrated as in the example of looking at a shape with colour. There the sense of sight and the sense of movement are being integrated. The senses give us a separate experience of existence; in fact many separate experiences, which Steiner has suggested, have 12 sensory fields. This disparateness of the 12 senses and the unity of the archetypal human being represented by the 12 zodiacal signs form an interesting polarity, which can be added to the diagram from day 1.

Placental sheaths

Night 'I'

Unity of the 12 Zodiacal signs as representing the archetypal Human being



We tried integrating the two experiences from yesterday, the experiment where we looked at the striped tiles in water and the experiment where we looked through the prism.

In summarising the experiences we could list the following:

- Colours appeared on the edges of the light and dark.
- Different colours appeared. On one edge there were warm colours, on the other there were cool colours;
- There was a shift in the image under water. The closer the eye was to the trough water surface, the greater the shift and the more intensive the colour.

The connection of these phenomena was not yet clear so we performed a new experiment to help connect the different experiences above. (von Mackensen, 1992)

A glass tank was filled with water and placed high up for all to see, in front of a white board. Dettol or Savlon was added to the water and formed clouds of turbidity. These took on a warm reddish colour. Next a black board was placed behind the tank and another over the top of the tank. Now the clouds of turbidity took on a cooler, bluish hue.

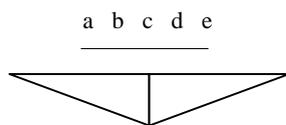


In the second experiment I filled the second prism with water and I started by putting my face up close and then backing away from the prism. My view of the audience was like this. Their view of me was that when I was close to the prisms, my image was pulled out in two directions. As I moved backward from the prisms, the two images of me became even more separate.

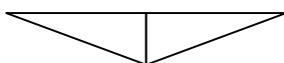
The letters a b c d e were drawn on a black board and placed at different distances from the prisms.

The results from these experiments were drawn up as below.

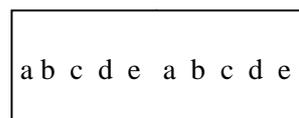
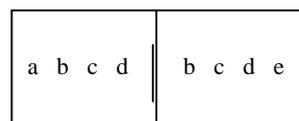
The relative positions of the elements of the experiment



a b c d e



What we saw



There remains a lot to integrate on day 3.

Day 3. Wednesday 7th July

We started with the story of Annie Sullivan coming to work with Helen Keller, the little girl struck deaf and blind by Scarlet Fever when she was 18 months old. Plunged into a world of darkness and silence in the midst of the most formative years when as children we learn to stand and walk, then speak, then think and become self-conscious, Helen was surrounded by sympathy as a prevailing soul mood. Her parents, unable to rise above their sympathy spoiled the little girl and allowed her to do things that were out of control. Her behaviour became so wild and uncontrolled that there appeared at last no alternative than that Helen went to the State Asylum. There was one last chance and a letter was sent to the Perkins Institute for the blind and deaf. This letter reached Annie Sullivan and so the two were brought together for an ego encounter that I believe can be helpful in our understanding of the senses. There is the famous fight over the sausage where Annie refused to allow Helen to pick food off her plate. Then came the ultimatum from Annie that she could only help Helen if she could have her alone in a house for a period of time without the intervention of her parents. God only knows what happened in that house over that time, but we do know that when the two emerged after some weeks that Helen had experienced an awakening that had been dependant on her meeting with her Teacher, Annie Sullivan, an encounter that had not only been one of sympathy but also one of antipathy. This primary encounter of another ego was seminal in the subsequent awakenings of the other higher senses of thought and word, which are remembered so well in the story of Helen being taught the sign alphabet and even spelt words. Although Helen was able to sign many words proficiently, she had no idea that they had any meaning. Then on a fine Spring day, April 5th 1887, teacher and pupil went for a walk and stopped at the pump house. While Helen held her hand under the flowing water, Anny signed into it the W A T E R. Suddenly Helen's face lit up and shone with the dawn of understanding, then she dropped to her knees and pounded on the ground demanding to know the name of this too E A R T H.

For the first time in her life she realised that the signs on her hand had meaning. Within minutes she had learnt the meanings of another half dozen words. Then she thumped her own head ... she wanted to know her own name and then that of her teacher. At last she had realised that she was someone and with that dawning came the experience of the other.

The combined stories of Anny Sullivan and Helen Keller are a wonderful instruction of how amidst the tragedy of an unfolding destiny, the warm human encounter with even one person can make a life changing difference. The second thing we learn is that the perception of the other ego is one in which we participate. This participation is twofold. It consists of both sympathy and antipathy. Only one does not bring the ego of the other to perception. Helen's parents were not able to perceive the ego of Helen; instead she was regarded as an object of sympathy. Annie on the other hand, was able to perceive Helen's ego and this expressed itself in the antipathy that was a part of their encounter. In this perception of the other ego, something was allowed to live in the world that until then hadn't been able to.

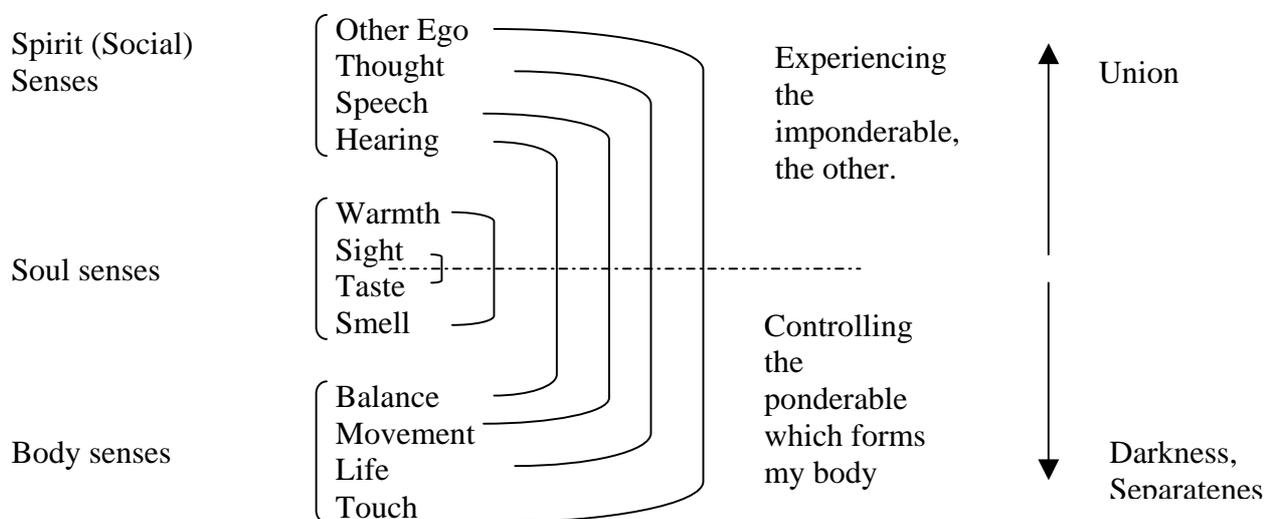
In light of this story it is interesting that in the "The Study of Man", lecture 8 that Steiner gives his description of the 12 senses, starting with the Ego sense and only then going on briefly to the others. He only goes into detail with the ego sense. What can we learn from this? In perceiving, we are helping to develop the perceived. In that we gain knowledge of something, we perhaps change the development of the beings interacting.

"When we look up to the wonder of the starry world, when we contemplate the whole process of the universe with its glories and marvels, then we are led at last to the feeling that all the glory that lies open to our view in the whole universe that surrounds us, only has meaning when it is reflected in the admiring human soul,"

Goethe, quoted by Steiner in lecture 1 of the series called "The World of the Senses and the World of the Spirit." (Steiner, 1912)

Could it be then that the sense activity is something much more active and creative than the passive, physical process that is often imagined? The integration of the sense activity, which Steiner was already demanding in the early 20th Century, is now being taught to training Occupational therapists, (Personal communication with a former student studying Occupational Therapy). Below are some of the connections

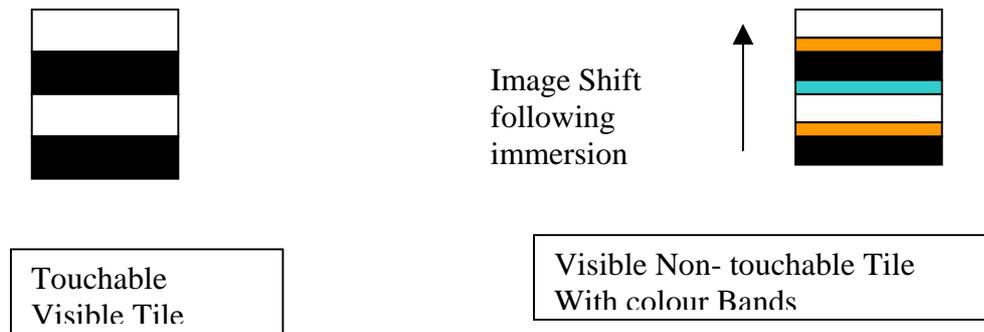
and qualities that were mentioned in regard to this question in the workshop. The 12 senses that Steiner (1919) suggested are listed in three groups with lines connecting them to another sense. The lines connecting the body senses to the Spirit senses are interesting from an educational point of view because they point to transformational potential (necessity?) The content of the senses can have something to do with myself, or it can have something to do with telling us about something else.



In our lessons we need to be aware of these connections and how we can integrate the sensory experiences. Particularly in a subject like Physics, it is easy for the lesson to race away into the use of the sense of thought in regard to the mathematical laws of physics. However, many students get lost in that abstraction and it is necessary to be aware how the laws of physics are found in the human body and it is there that they should first be experienced before they are made conscious as thoughts. A friend of mine who is a researcher at the cutting edge of solar energy research calls what I am talking about here 'body learning'. Using Steiner's expression we could say that learning should take place over the whole human being and that it should be based in the body senses.

In the workshop we began with the experience of seeing the warm and cool colours along the edges of the light and dark surfaces as we look into a tub of water. This experience is simultaneous with the experience of seeing the image shift in the tub. The image is lifted. In talking about the experience on the subsequent day, it was clear that the two experiences had been kept separate. There hadn't been an integration of the experiences. It is scary to think how much of this can go in schools where there are many experiences in a lesson which may remain unintegrated for the student. What seems to be an important step in Waldorf schools is that we expect the students to do the integration of experience. We don't spoon feed the integration but we give lots of opportunity and help to the students to do the integration.

On the second day of the workshop we managed to be clear about what was seen but not about the connections between what was seen. As a workshop facilitator I realised two things. The first was that it would have probably been wise to give the experience of the conditions for the colours on day 1. This would have made it fairly easy on Day 2 to come to the connection between all the experiences. The second was that given the situation I had created, the best way forward for day 2 was to come to clarity about what was seen and also to come to clarity about what remained unclear. It wasn't like nothing had been learned. A whole lot had been learned. We had learned what way the image shifted in relation to the geometry of the prism and the surface of the water. We had learned that there was something interesting going on between the image shift and the colour formation. We had even learned how to aim an arrow if you wanted to shoot a fish for dinner. But we hadn't connected the phenomenon of image shift with that of the colours. However, now that we had reached the 3rd day of the workshop, it was time to make the connections (the act of judgement) and also try to develop a living concept of what had been experienced.



We had discovered from the experiment on day 2 with the Dettol in water that the turbidity in the water created conditions that were different in relation to light and dark. When the turbidity was in front of the white board or a light window, it darkened the lightness and warm colours appeared. When, however, the turbidity was in front of a blackboard it had the opposite effect, it lightened the darkness creating cool bluish colours. This is apparently what is happening in the separation of the touchable and visible image, both in the tile in water experiment and in the water prism experiment. As the image shifts up, where the dark bands move across the light bands warm colours are formed and where light bands move across dark bands, bluish colours are formed. This was what Goethe called the archetypal phenomenon: Bluish colours appear when the darkness is lightened and the reddish colours appear when light is darkened. We are surrounded by this lawfulness everywhere.. in the blue of the sky and the warm glow of the transitions from day to night, in the way that a smoke from a fire outside, appears bluish in front of a dark forest but reddish in front of the clear sky.

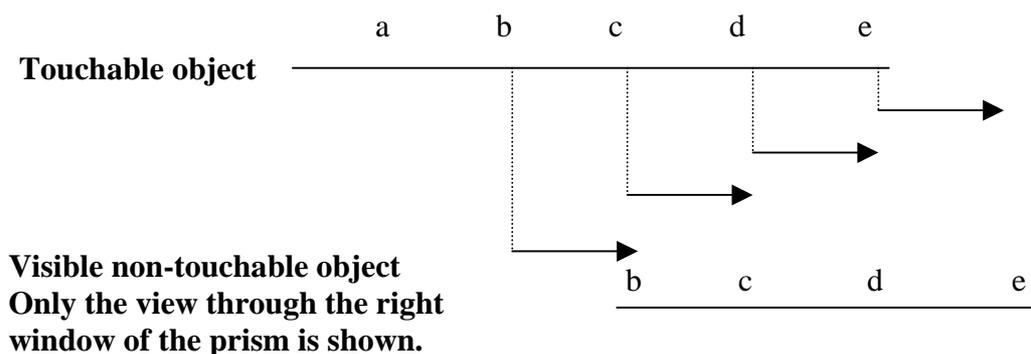
Here we have the test of a living concept. It is one that returns our interest to the world of phenomena. It is not finished within its definition, creating a smug feeling of self satisfied knowledge possession, but creates interest to find the lawfulness again and again in the many conditions that appear in the living world.

We had also to take the new step of seeing where the image shift that we had seen in the prism led to. Here too there is a step of integrating different sense experiences. A series of drawings help in the process of understanding the phenomenon. On the one side there are drawings from the plan view, which show how the elements of the experiment are moved in relation to each other, on the other we have corresponding drawings showing what was seen. Again we have an integration of two types of sensory experience, one from the tangible touchable, moving world and the other from the visible world.

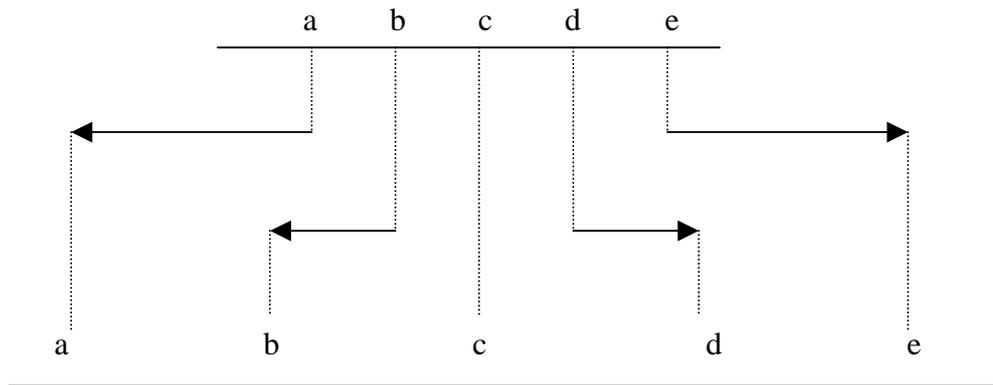
From these two results, we can see that the further the object 'a b c d e' is placed behind the prisms, the further the shift of the image. So we have a multiplication of images!! How can we develop a system that not only multiplies images but also magnifies them? In other words, how do we go from prism shift to magnification?

To do this we need to realise that in the image shift, each point was shifted by the same amount towards one pulling edge of a prism. However if we looked through the window of the prism with the wider angle pulling edge then the shift is increased.

In our example above, the following diagram represents the image shift. Each shift is by the same amount.

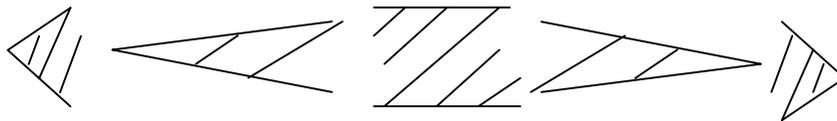


Now what do we need to do to get the movement so that each element moves proportionally to its distance from the middle point c?

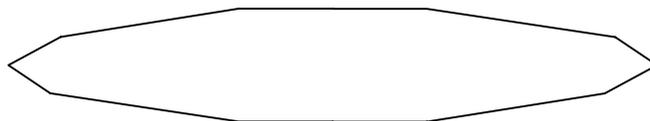


To get this magnified image we would need the central point not to shift as in c, b and d to shift a little, a and e to move the most.

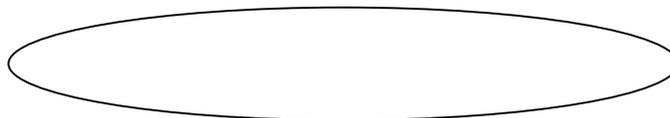
This would require a series of prisms with no pulling power in the middle, like window glass, and an increased pulling power towards the edge.



Putting this together would give an arrangement like this:



If this were ground smooth then we would have a cross section like the following figure, which would be the cross section of a convex lens.



Finally we have come to an understanding of the lens. Which can lead into a whole world of new phenomena. In the context of our workshop and being the last day we experienced a series of new phenomena around the theme of the eye. The detailed working before hand had hopefully awakened a sense for integrating these phenomena without a great deal of explanation. There follow the phenomena with a few brief indications of how the phenomena can be incorporated into the theme of the senses and their integration in the work of the night.

Experiment (von Mackensen, 1992): The ‘chaos point’ of a lens. The photographs show a series of changes as seen by the workshop participants as the lens is moved away from my eye. The image of the eye gets larger and larger as the lens is moved away from the eye until it reaches the ‘chaos point’ when the lens seemed to be filled with the central point of the eye. This is also the point (i.e. the distance from the lens) when the lens is filled with the sun, as seen from the focal point, which then begins to burn. When the lens is moved beyond this distance then the image becomes inverted and small ... as though the lens goes beyond infinity in the point and returns from the periphery inverted, in a way that is similar to a conic section in the practice of projective geometry.



1.Lens close to the face.



2.Lens moved away.



3.Chaos Point



4.Past the Chaos point, Inversion



Finally a model of the eye was demonstrated using a flask painted in a special way, with a convex lens stuck to one side. (Maier, 1986) The ‘chaos point’ or focal point of the lens is at a point just short of the opposite face of the flask. There a hazy image of what is in front of the lens is visible. It perhaps gives an impression of what Anny Sullivan could see when she was living in the poor house.

However, when the flask is filled with water a clear image appears on the wall of the flask opposite the lens. The lens of the eye is the whole eye. The eye too works between centre and periphery. It is perhaps the key sense in the sleep process. We after all close our eyes to sleep. There in the eye we also have the place where we meet ourselves in the other. This has been characterised so well by Ysaye Barnwell in her children’s book “ No Mirrors in my Nana’s House”, which describes how a little girl finds her self worth in the eyes of her Nana.

“ There are no mirrors in my Nana’s house...
 No mirrors to reflect the cracks in the wall,
 The clothes that don’t fit, the trash in the hallway.
 No mirrors.
 But there is love.
 The beauty in this child’s world is in her Nana’s eyes.
 It’s like the rising of the Sun.....”

There in the dark pool of the eye called the pupil, separated from the white of the eye by the colour of the Iris, we find there, where the light of the other gleams forth a source for our own self-knowledge. There in the dark pool of the night, separated from the light of the day we find the connection to our peripheral self.

This is the secret of the admonition given by Steiner to the first little group of pioneer teachers at the first Waldorf School. “You must teach the children how to sleep”.

How can this be now put into the technique of the day-to-day classroom work with our children? We find a method described by Steiner in the course for adolescence, Lecture 3. In the course of the workshop we have tried to practice this method and integrate it with the other clue to working with the

night given in the 1919 course to the teachers, lecture 9. There he characterises the steps of Conclusion (Schluss), Judgement (Urteil) and Concept (Begriff) in an unusual order, beginning with the Conclusion.

This conclusion is like a biographic moment ... a happening that we have been witness to and is completed. That is the beginning of the way in the classroom. To go from an event that engages the whole human being, the whole of the lower senses, the middle senses, but without isolating the judgement and conceptualisation from the process. Guttenhöfer (2004) has written about this eloquently.

The Judgement is what is engaged between the biographic impact of the 'conclusion' and the concept that is formed. The Judgement is engaged in the feeling life, in comparisons. It must be trained to not fall too quickly, like a bolt from the sky, but in silence and in the night to ripen and then be met in the classroom by questions, posed by the teacher out of their contact with the students. These questions are the preparation of the teacher. The well-prepared questions strike a chord with the students and engage them. It involves for us teachers the task of trying to find the latent questions that live often unarticulated in the feeling life of the adolescent students. They lead the 'biographic event', the conclusion, after a night's sleep over into 'consideration', the forming of a concept.

This is the third movement of Guttenhöfer's Sonata. It must lead what has gone before out into a renewed interest in the World, a new connection to the World, by picking up the themes of the biographic event and connecting them to wider and wider circles of phenomenon. The Concept that is formed must give shape and meaning but not in the sense of finishing the process of cognition but by leading to new cognition. This is the sense of the 'living concept' as opposed to the 'dead concept'.

This can be summarised in the following slightly graphic way:

Day1.

Experience- as rich and sense rich as possible. Allowed to happen without commentary or explanation. This is not a time to spread light on everything. This is the 'Conclusion'. It may be an experiment, or it may be the telling of a historical event. The whole body should be engaged. This does not mean doing gymnastics.

Characterisation: Here what has been experienced is recalled as though as a witness for the rest of society. In the case of an experiment, the apparatus is cleaned away and the event is recalled. The excitement of the experiment is given some order not by explanation but by being clear what was. The feeling life is touched and the children can be let into their recess break. The darkness of the unknown is intimated. Expectancy grows. This forms a healthy beginning to the process of judgement.

NIGHT / SLEEP The events of the day are integrated into the wholeness of the individual biography. Descriptions of the experiences of the lesson may be written for homework if they have not been done in the lesson. Connections are made at an unconscious level, which raise latent questions.

Day 2.

Questions,- prepared by the teacher but also coming from the students. A mood of antipathy prevails in the room. This is not to be confused with unkindness but with demand. Here the teacher is in a position to demand something from the students that they remember what occurred the day before and are prepared to try and answer the riddles that come from that experience. This can lead to debate to feeling the vulnerability of uncertainty. Disparate experiences are led to integration and then connected out to the World. A living concept can be formed.

A new Experience – a new Conclusion.

NIGHT / SLEEP Descriptions of the experiences of the lesson may be written for homework if they have not been done in the lesson. Questions set by the teacher based on the mornings discussion may also be written about.

Day 3.

Questions and so on.

This is the medicine we have as teachers for the young people of today. This is the daily work of the main lesson that can go from day to day, year to year. It forms one part of the day in the Waldorf School, the part that is most active in fulfilling the prerequisite for Freedom.

For more about this and how the rest of the day is addressed, see Glasby (2001).

Peter Glasby, 28th July 2004

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