

L1b) The Pedagogy of Teaching the Whole Person.

By Dr Robert Rose

As we have seen several times by now, Steiner was of the view that education should be of the whole person, not just of a part of the person. In his day, there was a general tendency in education to focus on just one part of the human being, usually this was the intellect. For Steiner, however, the intellect is only one part of the human being that should also be educated. For him, this should be done at the appropriate time, primarily after fourteen years age, with a preview in the 12th year. One could say that Steiner's view of educational holism here is that of a "**Holism Over Time**". Put another way, Steiner's "developmental holism" in a sense overrides the notion of teaching all aspects of the human being at any specific time moment and sees the educational process as aiming at the **whole person over time**. The next two slides represent both of these:

The Whole Person

The “I” / Spirit – The Centre of Independent Self-Activity and Creativity.

The Soul

Thinking
Feeling
Willing
Imagination
Memory
Perception

The Body – the Life Processes and the Physical & Chemical constituents.

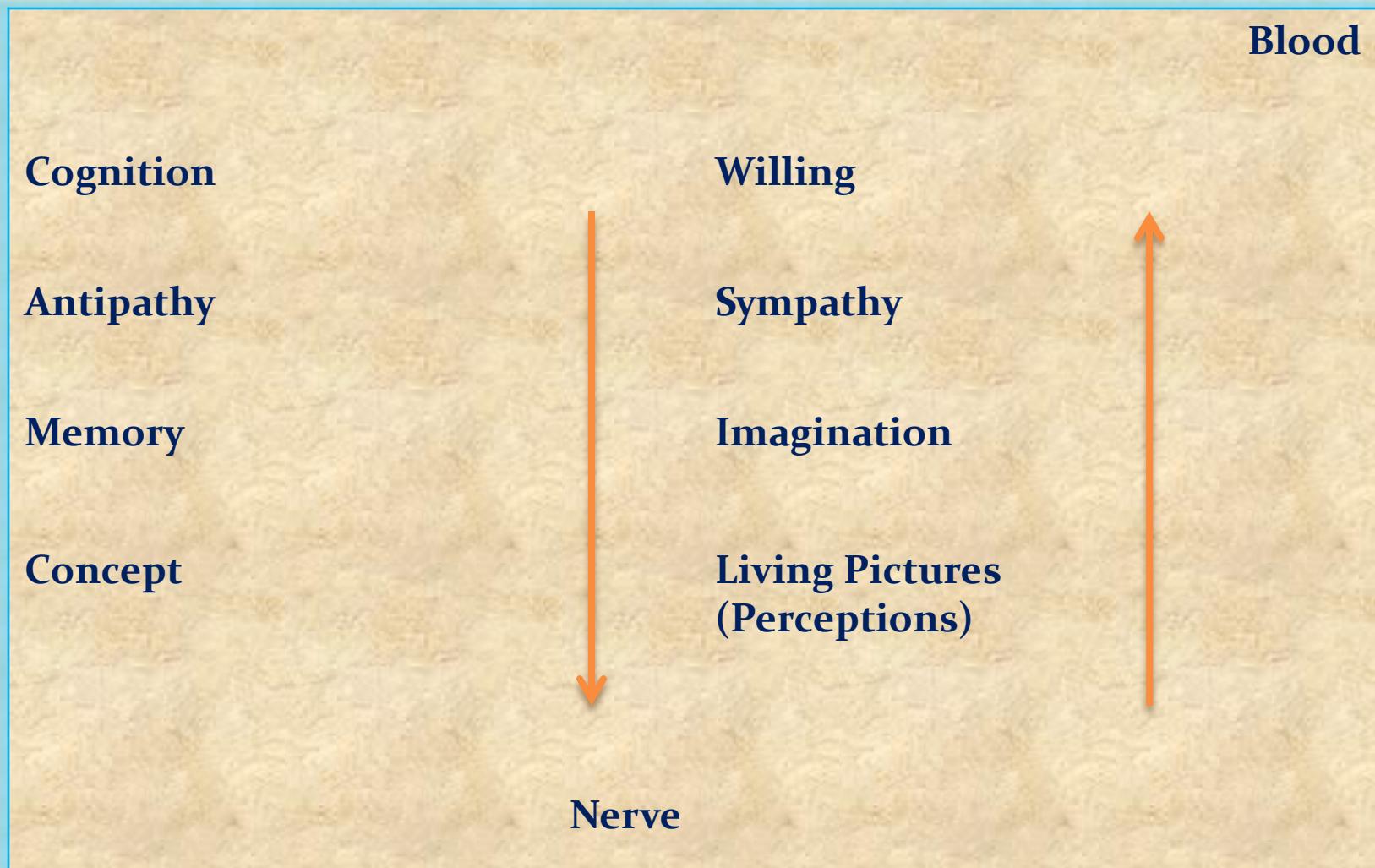
The Whole Person Over Time

Developing Levels of the Whole Human Being				
Human Development	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
	Physical Body 0 – 7 yrs	Life Body 7 – 14 yrs	Soul 14 – 21 yrs	I / Spirit 21 – 28 yrs
Human Faculties / Learning Principles	Perception – Will: Imitation/Play	Imagination, Feeling and Memory	Independent Thinking, Feeling and Willing	Self / I – Activated Learning

As we have seen from module 3, for Steiner, education should endeavour to teach to the whole person of body, soul and spirit; more specifically the unified set of human capacities of thinking, feeling, willing, imagination, memory and perception. Even then, this principle of holistic education needs to be contextualised in his child development model in which these capacities should be educated at the appropriate time or phase of development.

In the following, we will elaborate on some more details following on from those presented in module 3 and explore the interconnection between these different human faculties in the context of Steiner Education.

In the lecture series called “Foundations of Human Experience”, also called “The Study of Man”, Steiner presents the following picture:



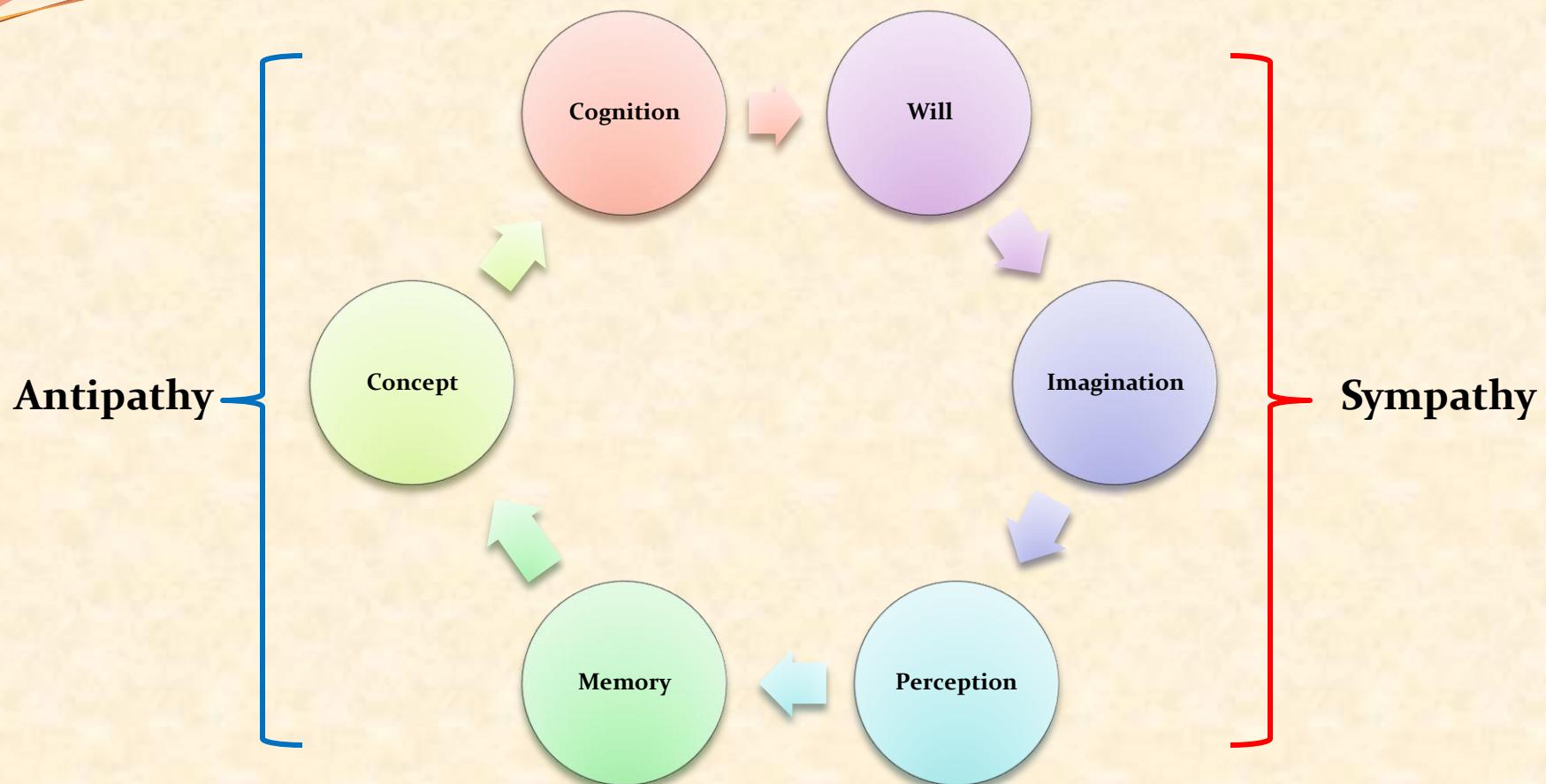
Some care needs to be taken in understanding these terms. The words “sympathy and antipathy” are not the same as what we mean in ordinary life. In Steiner’s world view they refer to universal soul processes which bring about separation or unification respectively between the inner life of a person and the outer world or some object of consciousness. In that sense, the left hand column consists in all those psychological processes which are rooted in “antipathy” and the left hand column those of “sympathy”.

It has to be noted that the text is not entirely consistent with the diagram and requires some interpretation. For example, Antipathy and Sympathy would be best seen as column headings rather than as items of the column. This is as Steiner sees all the other items as examples of universal Antipathy and Sympathy.

Also, the term “living pictures” can also be interpreted as perceptions.

The diagram expresses the interconnection between the different “soul” or “psychological” forces that are the root of Steiner’s concept of learning. For him, these forces are in a continuous state of transformation into and from each other in the process of learning. What this means in practice is that the different soul forces cannot be truly separated with one of them being made the focus of learning. For Steiner, learning is a holistic process in which all the soul forces should be engaged in their continuous transformation from one to the other.

A close reading of the original text may lead to the following image:



We will now consider more aspects of this.

Consider the process through which one observes visually:

- 1) The **Will** is at first engaged in active looking.
- 2) The **Imagination** joins in this process in searching to consolidate on a perception of an object.
- 3) As it does so the potential multitude of what could be perceived focuses down on a specific instance which is the **percept**.
- 4) The percept then becomes a power to re-create an object for **memory** which may be recalled at some later point.
- 5) From a set of perceptions and memories, a **concept** may be arrived at giving understanding.
- 6) The bringing together of perception, memory and concept yields **cognition**.

For Steiner, it is this *whole process* that constitutes Learning.

We will now consider these and other soul forces in light of the pedagogical question.

Teaching as Starting with Life: the role of Experience or Perception.

For Steiner, education should begin with real life experience, or perception, and lead back to life having gained a richness in understanding and inner connection:

“As you will see from this, all of your teaching and education must be taken from real life. This is something you often hear nowadays. People say that lessons must be given in a living way and in accordance with reality. But first of all we must acquire a feeling for what is actually in accordance with reality... You must guide the child to think only about things that are to be found in life. Then through your teaching reality will be carried back into life again. In our time we suffer terribly from the unreality of people’s thinking, and the teacher must consider this very carefully.” Steiner, R (1924): The Kingdom of Childhood, Anthroposophic Press, pp. 115-117.

As we will see in the next section, Steiner Education can be conceptualised as a complex process that occurs within the boundaries of life and thereby expanding and enhancing it.

Teaching through Imagination

The question then is, once one has begun teaching from life, or experience, how should one then proceed. Steiner's answer to this question is through "**Imagination**":

"Do not forget that around the change of teeth children pass over into the period of imagination and fantasy. It is not the intellect but fantasy that fills life at this age. You as teachers must also be able to develop this life of fantasy, and those who bear a true knowledge of the human being in their souls are able to do this... And so between the change of teeth and puberty you must educate out of the very essence of imagination. For the quality that makes a child under seven so wholly into a sense-organ now becomes more inward; it enters the soul life. The sense organs do not think; they perceive pictures, or rather they form pictures from the external objects. And even when the child's sense experiences have already a quality of soul, it is not a thought that emerges but an image, albeit a soul image, an imaginative picture. Therefore in your teaching you must work in pictures, in images." Steiner, R (1924): The Kingdom of Childhood, Anthroposophic Press, p. 22/3.

In the lower school, Steiner made the case that the teacher needs to work out of imagination because this is the age phase in which the child lives primarily in images. It is this imaginative approach, albeit with the fine distinctions discussed in module 3, which feeds the inner life of the child, including, as we will see, the feeling life.

The Role of Feeling for Memory and Learning

Steiner was critical of the theories of teaching and learning that were prevalent in his time. In particular the assumption that learning is determined by a form of memory that is fed just with concepts and ideas:

“To begin, let me draw your attention to the many erroneous ideas that are current regarding the human being. Teachers, especially, are convinced that what and how we teach—be it through visual perception or stories or activities—will increase children’s skills, ideas, and concepts, will strengthen their feeling, and that the increase and strengthening will last throughout the children’s lives. But this is not so. Let us proceed by example. We give the children certain ideas and mental images—in a history lesson, in the history of literature, in mathematics, or in geography—assuming that they will retain them as lasting possessions. It is generally assumed that such concepts descend somewhere into the lower regions of the soul, into the sub- or unconscious spheres, and that there they remain in one way or another, to be called upon whenever a situation arises. This is the function of memory, so they say. But this assumption is not true.”

Steiner, R (1921): Education for Adolescents, Anthroposophic Press, p. 17

Instead, he made the case that it is Feelings that primarily determine memory and thereby learning:

“It is really not all that important to have an exact knowledge of these processes. We need to be aware of something else. We need to know that the continuing effects of mental images and ideas that, later, emerge in memory actually take place in the sphere of our feelings. **It is our life of feelings—with its joys, pains, pleasures, displeasures, tensions, and relaxations—that is the actual vehicle for the enduring qualities of the ideas and mental images that we can recall at a later stage.** Our mental images change into stirrings of feeling, and it is these stirrings of feeling that we later perceive and that enable us then to remember.” Steiner, R (1921): Education for Adolescents, Anthroposophic Press, p. 18. (My bold)

In his view, this should have a direct impact on how teaching is carried out; through appropriate feeling, not just concepts:

“I cannot overemphasize the importance of such an approach. It is, of course, more difficult. It demands great presence of mind. Mere intellectual instruction is easier than a teaching that wishes to stimulate the children’s feeling, that makes for an inner connection with a subject. We need not be pedantic in this teaching, need not necessarily always connect feeling directly to the subject taught. We may refer to something else in order to stimulate feelings. The important thing is that the children’s feelings are engendered during a lesson. Such stirrings of feeling aid memory. And this fact we must not lose sight of. Even in the driest of subjects, such as physics or geometry, we should try to appeal to the children’s feelings. If, for example, we interrupt a thought process and ask a child, “If you were to do this and something unexpectedly were to happen ...?”—**we add feeling to the lesson. We add tension, expectation, and relaxation that will permeate and benefit the thought process.**” Steiner, R (1921): Education for Adolescents, Anthroposophic Press, p. 19. (My bold).

From Educating Feeling to Educating the Will

For Steiner, it is not just through feeling that the education should occur, but also in the life of **will**. Having explained that Feeling is the precursor to Will, or Feeling is “Will in reserve”, he goes on to make the case that the education of both lies in the **repetition of right actions**:

“We must ask ourselves how we can influence the child’s feeling in a good way. We can do that only when we have **repetitive** activity. You cannot have the proper effect upon the child’s will when you tell the child just once what is right, but only when you allow the child to do something today, tomorrow and the next day. The proper action does not at all lie in reprimanding the child or giving the child rules of morality, but in guiding the child to something that you believe will awaken a feeling for what is right and allowing the child to repeat this. You must raise such deeds to habit. The more things remain as unconscious habit, the better it is for the development of feeling. The more the child becomes aware of the need to do deeds out of devotion to repetition, because they should and must be done, the more you elevate these to true will impulses. **Thus, unconscious repetition cultivates feeling; fully conscious repetition cultivates the will impulse because through it the power of decision increases.**” Steiner, R (1919): Foundations of Human Experience, Anthroposophic Press, p. 92. (My bold)

Educating Thinking, Cognition and Logic: Conclusions, Judgement and Concepts.

But cognition and logic do have a significant role in the process of learning. However, for Steiner, a proper understanding of the above processes is crucial for a healthy education.

“Theoretical logic does not take into account that we draw a **conclusion** when we look at something. Imagine going into a zoo and seeing a lion. What is the first thing you do when you **perceive** the lion? First, you become conscious of what you see as a lion; only through becoming conscious do you come to terms with your perception of the lion. Before going to the zoo, you already learned that things that look like the lion you are looking at are “animals.” What you learned in life, you bring to the zoo. Then, you look at the lion and realize that it does what you have learned animals do. You connect this with what you already learned in life and then form the **judgment** that the lion is an animal... People normally believe that humans arrive first at **concepts**. That is not true. In life, the conclusion is first.” Steiner, R (1919): Foundations of Human Experience, Anthroposophic Press, p. 149.

From the above, it can be seen that the direction of the process is the opposite from the case of formal logic in which the starting point of the deductive activity is the concept. Steiner’s argument however, makes the case that, in Cognition, the beginning is a perception upon which a conclusion is formed. Judgments and Concepts then follow in order.

The order of these is significant in the context in Steiner education:

“These three things—conclusion, judgment, concept—exist in cognition, that is, in the living human spirit. How do they behave in the living human spirit? Conclusions can live and be healthy only in the living human spirit. That is, the conclusion is healthy only when it exists in completely conscious life. That is very important, as we will see later. For that reason, you ruin children’s souls if you have the children memorize finished conclusions... **Concepts can live in the unconscious. Judgments can live only as habits in semi-conscious dreaming, and conclusions should actually be present only in the fully conscious waking life.** This means that while we must be very careful to speak with children about everything connected with conclusions, we should not provide them with finished conclusions, but only allow them to retain what will ripen into a concept with maturity. What do we need for this?” Steiner, R (1919): Foundations of Human Experience, Anthroposophic Press, pp. 150-153. (My bold)

Clearly then, this identifies a distinct direction to the process of teaching and learning in Steiner Education in terms of the Cognition – Logic of the pedagogy. The next sub-section highlights more details of this.

Characterisations and the Education of Living Thinking

In the context of education prevalent at the time, teaching, as Steiner observed it, proceeded in the direction from definitions which he conceived as having a deadening effect on human consciousness. The Mr Gradgrind story discussed in module 2 is an example of this.

Contrary to this, Steiner proposed the use of characterisations from multiple viewpoints which can lead to living thinking:

“In teaching, we should not define, we should attempt to characterize. We characterize when we look at things from as many points of view as possible. If we teach children conventional natural history, for example, then we only define animals. We must try to portray animals from different standpoints in the various areas of instruction, for example, from the standpoint of how people came to understand an animal, how people use the animal’s work and so forth. Rationally formed instruction can characterize if you do not simply describe a squid and then again later, a mouse, and again later, human beings (during the corresponding blocks of instruction), but rather place the squid, mouse and human being next to each other and relate them to one another. In this case, these relationships are so manifold that no single definition emerges, but rather a portrayal. From the very beginning, appropriate instruction works not toward definitions, but toward characterization.” Steiner, R (1919): Foundations of Human Experience, Anthroposophic Press, p. 154

He re-emphasised this later from a different perspective:

“For instance, people define things too much. As far as possible, we should avoid giving children any definitions. Definitions take a firm grasp of the soul and remain static throughout life, thus making life into something dead. We should teach in such a way that what we provide to the child’s soul remains alive... We should learn concepts that are so living that they are transformed throughout our lives. To do so, we need to characterize rather than define. In connection with the formation of concepts, we need to imitate what we can do with painting or even photography. In such cases, we can place ourselves to one side and give one aspect, or we can move to another side and give a different aspect, and so forth. Only after we have photographed a tree from many sides do we have a proper picture of it. Through definitions, we gain too strong an idea that we have something.” Steiner, R (1920): The Renewal of Education, Anthroposophic Press, p.223/4

The aim then is help children develop a living thinking that enables them to see knowledge as something that grows throughout life rather than be fixed at an early stage. This can be achieved through giving characterisations of something from many different perspectives.

Integrated Learning: from the First Lesson and Onward

Pedagogy in Steiner Waldorf Schools also involves integrated Learning of the “soul capacities” just discussed. This means a number of things:

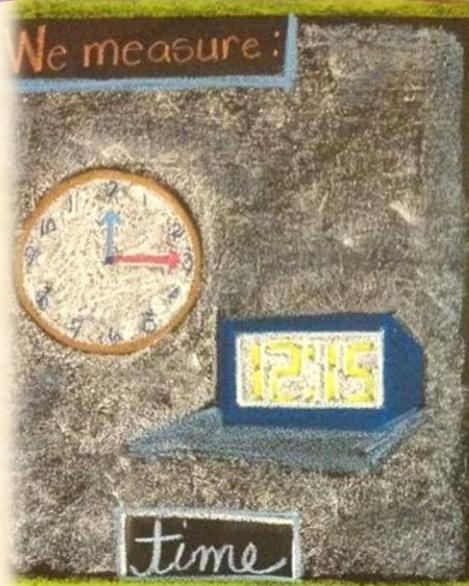
- 1) The raising of the pupils **consciousness** to their means of learning at school, their hands for doing, eyes for seeing and ears for listening;
- 2) The awakening of the pupils to **doing**;
- 3) The conscious raising of the pupils to **beauty**;
- 4) The integration of the children’s **actions** with those of the teacher.

Steiner describes how the teacher needs to draw the children’s attention to their bodily means of learning. It would be good at this point to read chapter 4 from “Practical Advice to Teachers”. In the next set of slides, we will see how these are engaged in the Teacher’s Creativity leading to the Pupil’s Creativity.

From the Teacher's Creativity

Following on from this, the teacher's creativity plays a central role in the pedagogical process of integrated Learning. It may be recalled from module 2, Lecture 2, that artistic creation was conceived by Steiner as the **special way** an “Idea” can be embedded in “matter”. This can be done in all areas of the artistic and in any medium. This involves many things, including the ability to create stories, or adapt existing stories, writing and reciting poems, singing, playing a musical instrument, clay modelling, acting and so on. An important aspect to this is the teacher's ability to create artistic productions including painting, drawing and blackboard drawing. In the context of a Steiner School, the aim of these is not just to express beauty, in colour and form, they are also used to represent “Ideas” in artistic form as well as the skilful will of the teacher. In that sense, these creations represent the thinking, feeling and willing aspects of the pedagogy. The following slides give a few examples of blackboard drawings done by teachers:

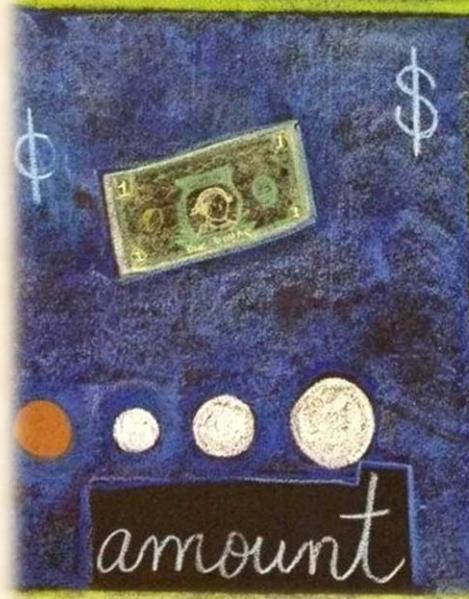




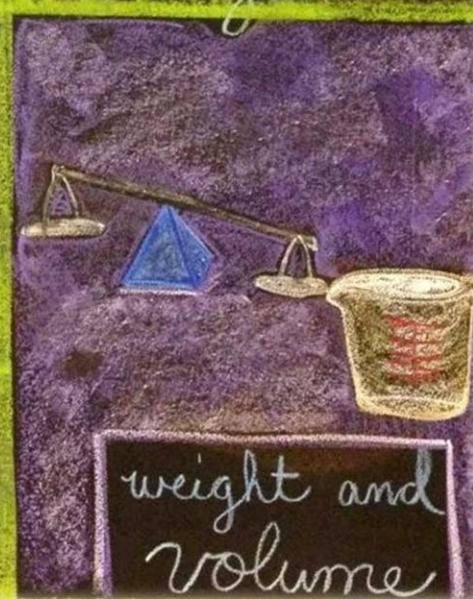
time



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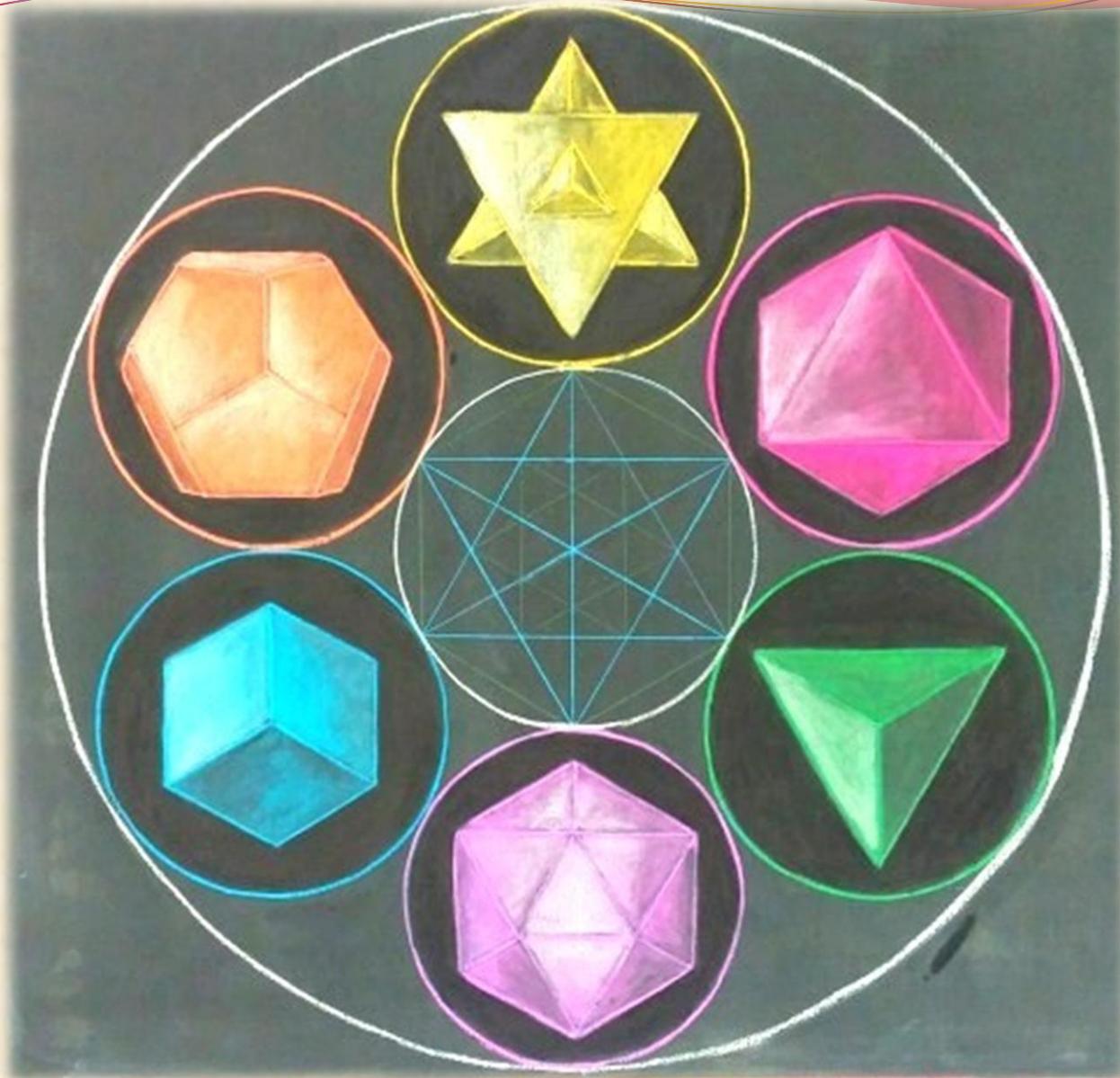


amount



weight and
volume



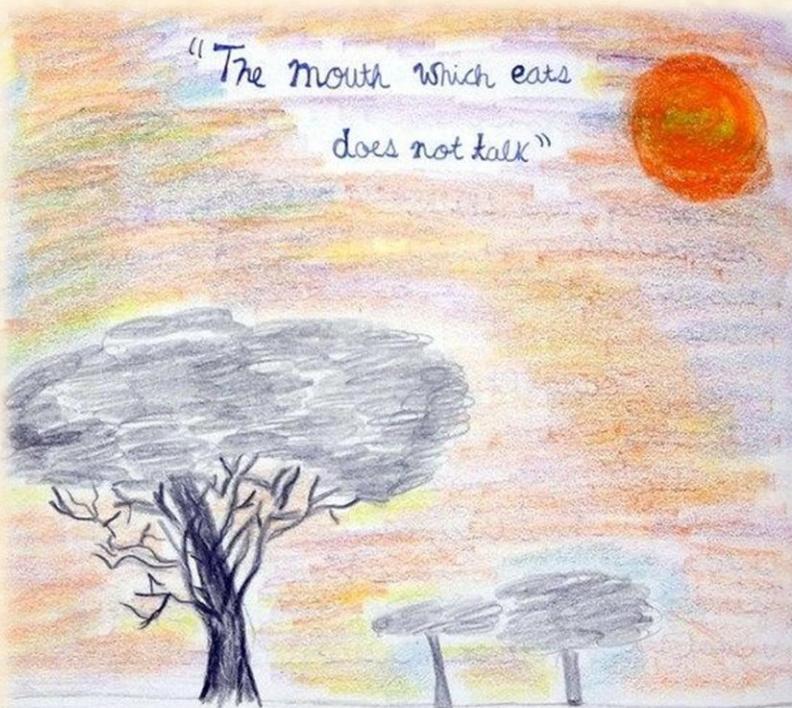


To the Pupil's Creations and Assessment Material

Following on from the teacher's creativity, a very important part of the Steiner / Waldorf pedagogy is the creativity of the pupils. This takes on many forms in accordance with the subject being taught. These creations can be seen as a kind of summation of the particular learning activity being done and an integration of the pupil's cognitive/thinking, feeling and willing in learning. One common example of this is the pupil's self-created books which can be seen as their creative / innovative and individualised transcripts of what the teacher has brought to them. In that sense, they can also be used for the assessment of the pupil's capabilities and which may form a part of their reports (see module 8).

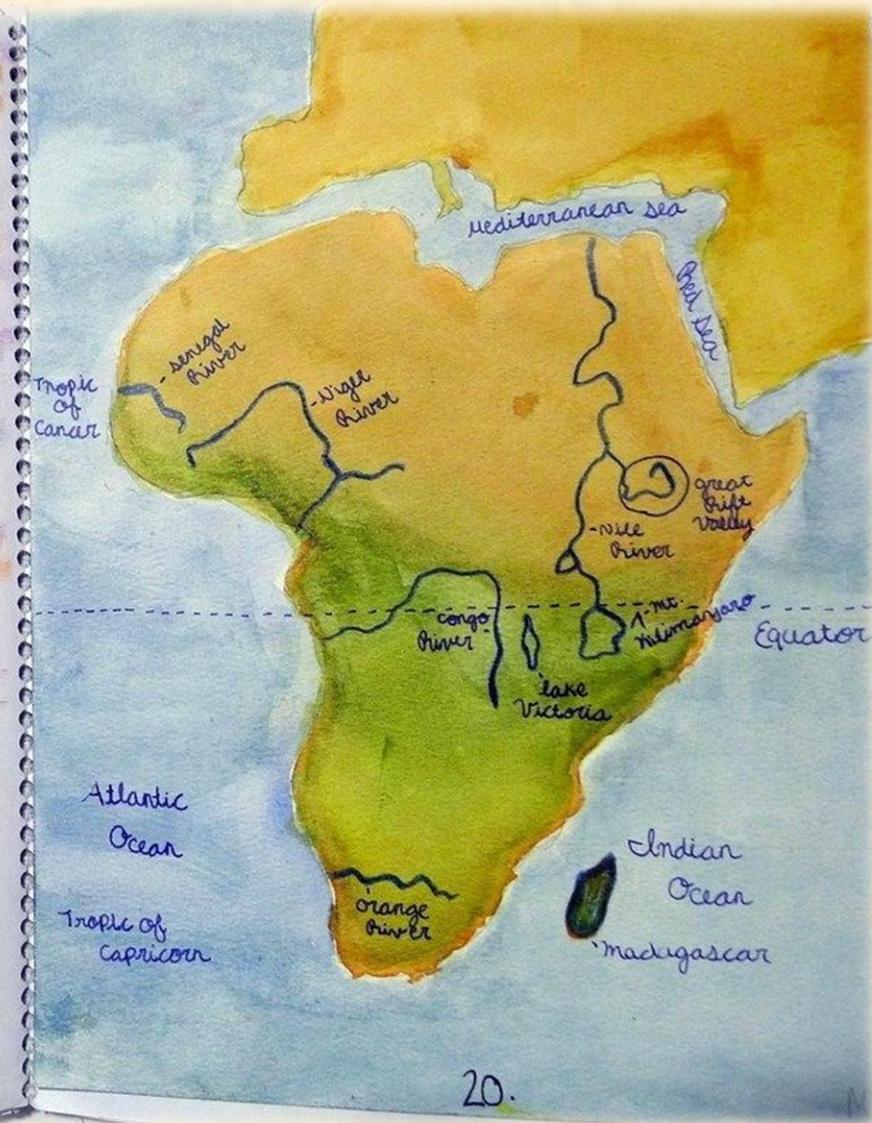
Some teachers prefer to have at least two versions of these books. One is for the best creations, the other is for exercise and the process of improving their work. The following slides give a few examples of these:





AFRICAN GEOGRAPHY

19.



20.

Exercises

- 1) Imagine that you are teaching a mathematics lesson on triangles. Describe how you would use characterisation rather than definitions.
- 2) Suppose you are telling a story, how would you include the intonation of feeling in this?
- 3) Describe an activity you might do with the children that, through repetitive **right** (i.e. is morally justifiable) action, you may help educate their will.
- 4) Consider the slide above on the geography of Africa. Think about how you would assess this from thinking, feeling and willing perspectives. Does it represent the rights **ideas or facts** of the area it depicts? Would you consider it **artistic (beautiful)**? Is the picture skilfully **done**? How would you relate your thoughts to the pupil concerned?