

LILIPOH

the spirit in life

SUMMER 2024

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**RADICAL IMAGINATION:
A NEW CHAPTER FOR LILIPOH**

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ISSUE 116 VOL. 32

Natural Benefits

“Tea began as a medicine
and grew into a beverage”

page one of the first sentence of
the first paragraph of the first chapter

*The Cup of Humanity from
The Book of Tea - 1906*



dear readers



This issue marks a major transition for *LILIPOH*.

As Kaysha mentioned in her “Editor’s Note” in the Spring 2024 issue, she is stepping away as editor and passing the torch to a new editorial team to take *LILIPOH* into a new chapter of its storied twenty-five-year history.

This will be the first time the magazine has been led by someone not named Korrow, so it’s only appropriate to take a moment to applaud, celebrate, and thank both Christy and Kaysha—as well as Claus, our technical team, advertisers, contributors, and readers, of course— for stewarding *LILIPOH* to such a strong position upon which my editorial team and I can continue to build and grow.

Rebecca Briggs and Karen Davis-Brown introduce themselves in the following pages, and I wrote a piece in this issue, “Radical Imagination,” to share a little about myself so you know what to expect in this new chapter for *LILIPOH*.

The three of us have been working since January to get up-to-speed and to hone our vision for the future of *LILIPOH*. Even though we’re new to the magazine, we’re not new to the philosophy and application of anthroposophy—although, I’ll admit, I’ve worked tangentially to anthroposophy without ever coming across the community, philosophy, or vocabulary until I began working with this team.

This is an advantage, not a cause for concern: given our diversity of backgrounds and experiences, we’re able to broaden the voices showcased in the magazine and to engage new audiences who, like me, may have never heard of anthroposophy before but are already well

aligned to its message of the inherent wisdom of the human being.

This doesn’t mean that we’re leaving behind what has defined *LILIPOH* over the past twenty-five years: biodynamic agriculture, Waldorf education, eurythmy, Rudolf Steiner’s philosophy, social threefolding, spiritual health and wellness, etc.

What it does mean is that we’re hoping to broaden the major pillars of **sustainability, social justice, community, health & wellness, and spirituality** in ways that will resonate with audiences who aren’t already engaged in the anthroposophical community, as well as with those who have historically turned to *LILIPOH* for an expression of anthroposophy. We also want to feature diverse voices and stories—a value that both Christy and Kaysha brought to the magazine, and we hope to build upon their great work to reach new audiences who can see themselves represented in our pages.

Just as spiritual growth often happens—at least from what I’ve learned and observed in my life—we’re growing in a way that expands upon rather than leaves behind what was already there.

Growth is always exciting, but it’s also a little scary. So, we appreciate you joining us on this journey and helping us grow *LILIPOH*.

If you ever have any questions, comments, ideas, thoughts, or pitches, please don’t hesitate to reach out to me at editor@lilipoh.org.

I’m looking forward to this exciting opportunity, and I hope you are, too.

Cheers,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nico" with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Nico Haven (they/them)

LILIPOH stands for Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness.

Life can mean the quality of life, inner life, consciousness – in other words, living a life enhanced through understanding. Liberty may mean the freedom to choose how one lives. Pursuit of happiness is a high term which has often been used superficially. It can mean the joy of helping each other along the road of inner and outer health, and toward a better world.



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Dear Lilipoh readers, both longtime and new,

My name is Karen Davis-Brown, and I am excited to be part of this transition in Lilipoh’s editorial leadership. Many of you know me from my work in biodynamic agriculture, the Camphill movement, and the larger world of advocacy for vulnerable populations. Joining this team is a natural “next step” for me, and it is an honor to work with Nico, Rebecca, and the rest of the Lilipoh crew.

For many years now, during my tenure with the *Biodynamics* journal among other places, I have been committed to both spreading the word about creative, substantive and beneficial work pursued by individuals and initiatives across this continent and around the world, and in turn supporting them in telling their stories. It is our shared intention, as a team, that the stories,

information, poetry, art, and images we offer you in this and future issues broaden and deepen your understanding and connection with their creators and subjects.

The world is a complex and challenging place, and too frequently we hear, see and read about words and deeds that objectify and exploit the natural world and other human beings. We are here to affirm the inherent truth, beauty and goodness that exists all around us, and to provide for each of you a rich and diverse panorama of how these qualities manifest in our times in the midst of adversity and ignorance.

Thank you for this opportunity to listen and share and encourage each other. We look forward to our journey together.

All the best!
Karen (she/her)



I’m excited to be working with Nico, Karen, and everyone who helps to pull together an issue of *LILIPOH*. Together we’re attempting to find the new path of this esteemed publication, while also holding true to the diversity, creativity, and inspiration found in the pages of this magazine for so many years.

Although my experience is in the biodynamic realm, having worked for sixteen-plus years in communications, editing, and outreach for the national Biodynamic Association, my overarching interest is in how everything we do is interconnected, how nothing exists in isolation but instead affects—and is affected by—all that is around it,

whether seen or unseen. I am inspired by the many streams of wisdom in our world and how they can feed and nourish, or maybe sometimes even challenge, each other. We all have so much to learn and to offer. I am excited to expand my own knowledge and gain new insights through this work with *LILIPOH*.

Ultimately, I hope we can provide for you articles that are practical as well as inspirational—something you can take forward, in your own way, into your own life or your own community.

In community,
Rebecca Briggs

LILIPOH

LILIPOH is a quarterly publication featuring an anthroposophic approach to health; encompassing holistic therapies, preservation of childhood, education, the arts, community, agriculture, nutrition and social.

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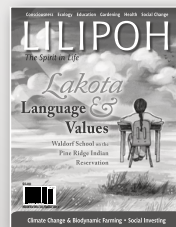
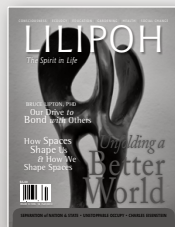
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RACHAEL CROWE. OKCROWE PHOTOGRAPHY

a new chapter for *LILIPOH*

Radical Imagination

NICO HAVEN

I know stories change the world because they've changed mine.

For twenty-five years, I performed as a cis, straight, neurotypical man—until 2020, when it all collapsed under the weight of inauthenticity.

In that moment of freefall, so many things in my life to that point felt fake, foreign, incompatible with a future I wanted or could envision for myself. The narrative I had at the center of that life—a narrative I had inherited from a society built upon binaries, where a boy likes GI Joes and a girl likes Barbies, and where those binaries are strictly enforced—was no longer one around which I could build.

The center would not hold, and I had to come up with an alternative. My life depended upon it.

So, being the storyteller I am, I wrote through this personal growth “Hero’s Journey” upon which I was embarking. Day after day, I sat down at my baby-blue 1963 Olivetti Lettera 22 typewriter

and journaled. Through my writing, I wrestled with the big questions of my personal growth journey—*Who am I? What is authentically me, and what artifices and performances need to be torn down to make way for the real me? What kind of life do I want to live?*

To answer those questions, to be able to understand the present and build a new future, I needed to face my past. I processed past traumas, I confronted and built a relationship with my fear, and I welcomed my authentic queer, trans nonbinary, autistic self back from its exile. Nico was always there, was always me, but I learned at a young age that it wasn’t safe for me to be authentic, so I constructed a towering internal infrastructure of repression to survive. I created a persona self that stood in the breach and took the blows to protect my authentic self until it was safe for it to come alive.

“ I KNOW STORIES CHANGE THE WORLD BECAUSE THEY’VE CHANGED MINE.



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“ THE CENTER WOULD NOT HOLD,
AND I HAD TO COME UP WITH AN
ALTERNATIVE. MY LIFE DEPENDED
UPON IT.

There was a moment, at the end of a long interregnum where the two selves negotiated the transfer of power, when I sat down at the typewriter and conducted an interview of sorts: I would type out questions that my authentic self had for my former self, then I would type whatever responses bubbled up from within me. It was amid this where my former self realized that their job was done, that they had carried the torch until it was safe enough for Nico to emerge, that they could rest now. As I finished the “interview,” I felt my former self slip away peacefully.

The four-year journey brought me through metaphysical waters that were soaked with mystery and beauty, where I felt in communion with ghosts and felt attuned to the logic and movements of the Universe in a way I had never experienced before. It was through these experiences that I also discovered the poetry that had always been in my blood and that now sings out of me. The inherent beautiful mystery of poetry was a perfect compass to help me through.

I wasn't alone on the journey, though; I was helped along by the stories of others who had gone through their own odysseys. They held up mirrors for me to see my reflection, to see that others had gone through similar things as I had and had survived—and, more than that, had

thrived. Seeing creators post on social media about their experiences and showcasing their beautiful androgyny made me feel more empowered to dive into my own gender identity and presentation journey. And reading the words of writers and poets and thinkers—many, like James Baldwin, Muriel Rukeyser, Pablo Neruda, Joseph Campbell, and others with whom our lifetimes never overlapped—made me believe in the interstellar power of storytelling to connect across time and space.

Their words and stories made me feel less alone, and they also helped me embrace a radical imagination for both my new authentic life and the world in which I would live it.

“Radical imagination sees the world not as it is, but as it could be,” declares Everyday Activism Network:

Radical imagination is the courage to envision a future that is completely unlike the world we have today. It is limitless. It doesn't react to or get discouraged by current realities. It imagines—without constraint—that anything is possible and that, collectively, we are capable of achieving the impossible.

...

“ RADICAL IMAGINATION IS THE COURAGE TO ENVISION A FUTURE THAT IS COMPLETELY UNLIKE THE WORLD WE HAVE TODAY.

It's not just the ability to see a radically transformed future; it's understanding how the past brought us to the present, and how the present can get us to that future... By being rooted in the past, present, and future, radical imagination combines hope for the future with pragmatism about the present.¹

I first encountered radical imagination as a student—I've focused my studies and work at the intersection of social justice, community development, and sustainability, and my professional background is as a communications consultant for international sustainable development organizations—and it had been a valuable perspective through which to see and approach the world even before my gender transition journey.

Growing up as a millennial in a world that felt volatile and uncertain as it faced serious existential threats, radical imagination helped me stave off the passivity and disengagement of cynical fatalism, and it helped me envision a place for myself in that world where my individual contribution could be part of a collective effort for a better world.

And the world certainly feels like it's changing, and the pace seems to be accelerating (especially in the past four years since the COVID lockdowns and when I was going through my personal

growth journey): climate change is accelerating, armed conflict and genocide is destroying humanity and nature around the world, fascism and authoritarianism is on the rise in many nations, the mental health crisis is worsening, and attacks on healthcare and bodily autonomy are increasing in volume and severity.

The center will not hold, just as it didn't in my former life.

And just as I did as I came out of that life, using radical imagination to revise the narrative, change the language, and broaden the horizon can break us out of what clearly hasn't been working and envision a better, more inclusive, more human and humane world.

That's my vision and hope for this next chapter of *LILIPOH*: as managing editor, I want this to be a place where radical imagination—through new ideas, new voices, and new perspectives—is fostered towards broadening our collective horizons and building a better world together.

Because the only way we build the world we want is by doing it together. 🏳️‍🌈

¹ Everyday Activism Network, "What is Radical Imagination? How To Use Your Radical Imagination to Envision a Just and Equitable World," January 4, 2021, www.everyday-activismnetwork.org/archive/radical-imagination.

Nico Haven (they/them) is managing editor of *LILIPOH*. They are queer, trans nonbinary, and autistic, and they write novels, poetry, essays, and memoir. They are based in Philadelphia.




Celebrating 25 years of LILIPOH

For 25 years, LILIPOH has been on the cutting edge of current events, publishing important articles about hot-button issues well before they became mainstream. With articles on topics as diverse as green burial, gender identity, biodynamic agriculture, and art therapy, LILIPOH's **Special Anniversary Issue** will celebrate this trail-blazing legacy under the guidance of our longtime editor-in-chief, Christy Korrow.

This special edition will unite some of our favorite articles from past issues reintroduced by our authors and editorial staff. We hope you will join us in reflecting on the evolution of LILIPOH over the past two and a half decades and celebrating the start of a new chapter.

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“ THE NUMBER OF TEENAGERS
WITH CLINICAL DEPRESSION
DOUBLED FROM 2011 TO 2021.

Compassionate Education and America's Mental Health Crisis:

how empathetic teaching supports the minds,
bodies, and souls of vulnerable students

MELISSA NILSEN, PHD

As depression, anxiety, and death by suicide become an increasing threat in the lives of ten- to eighteen-year-olds, schools have an opportunity to become safe havens for vulnerable teens and preteens by adopting a compassionate approach to education, which prioritizes caring, authentic student-teacher relationships and supports students' mental health and wellbeing.

Educators who know their students are not just brains to be filled, but multifaceted human beings with mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions, naturally feel the necessity of building authentic relationships with each of them. Relationship-building enables teachers to know important aspects of each student, including their cultural heritage, family background, gender identity, and sexual orientation. When teachers approach education with this posture of compassionate curiosity, students are more likely to feel a sense of

belonging with their teacher and their peers and be more invested in their educational experience. But even more importantly, teachers who get to know their students deeply will be positioned to intercede when their students face mental health problems.

According to a 2023 report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the number of teenagers with clinical depression doubled from 2011 to 2021, and in 2021, twenty-five percent of teenage girls made a suicide plan.¹ Students interviewed consistently reported that the cause of their depression and anxiety was in large part due to stressors in school like doing well on tests and assignments and being popular and attractive. And among LGBTQ+ students, the risks of poor mental health are even more severe: in 2023, fourteen percent of LGBTQ+ students attempted suicide, and forty-five percent seriously considered it. A commonly

“TEACHERS HAVE THE POWER TO GIVE STUDENTS A SENSE OF MEANING IN THEIR LIVES BY DEMONSTRATING THAT THEY ARE CHERISHED HUMAN BEINGS WITH INHERENT WORTH AND UNIQUE GIFTS TO BRING TO THE WORLD.



Dr. Nilsen in her classroom

cited reason was lacking a sense of belonging with their peers.

A comprehensive national survey on the state of mental health and wellbeing amongst LGBTQ+ youth by The Trevor Project reported that nearly thirty percent of LGBTQ+ students have been bullied or physically threatened because of their gender identity or sexual orientation. Sixty-three percent felt that their school was *not* an affirming community for them, severely increasing these students' risk of depression and suicide.²

Due to the increasing number of students self-reporting mental health problems and the school-related factors contributing to them, teachers and administrators should be sensitized to the issue of teen depression and be ready to intervene on behalf of students who are at risk for depression and suicide.³

In 2023, the CDC advised that schools should help promote mental health and wellbeing because of their daily access to students and the ability of teachers to enact early intervention on behalf of at-risk youths. The problem of declining teen mental health has now been clearly identified by policy makers, education researchers, and government bodies, but the solution still lacks clear direction. The first step may be giving teachers permission to slow down and prioritize the social health of their class community, getting to know each of their students deeply and cultivating compassion for each one within authentic relationships.

Teachers can build relationships with their students by first beginning to observe them through a lens of warmth and curiosity to see beyond their outward moods, attitudes, and behaviors to the essential character within, where hidden dimensions are revealed. In this deeper look, teachers become more sensitive to the unspoken needs of their students and are enabled to form a classroom environment that is safe and

supportive. As cited in my doctoral dissertation, "Teaching with Higher Senses," Waldorf teachers prioritize relationship building and are trained to use contemplative practices such as deep observation, contemplation, and evening reflection to see through the outward physical manifestation of students into their spiritual dimensions.⁴ Taking this deeper approach to student-teacher relationships develops within teachers *supersensible*, or higher, senses with which to determine the needs of the class and each student within it.

These techniques are not just for Waldorf teachers. Teachers from any school or educational background can slow down, observe deeply, reflect, and work to cultivate positive relationships with their students. Doing this will help combat the negative mental health impacts of cold, discriminatory, or conformative class communities. McDermott underscored the importance of transforming normative environments that send subtle and overt messages to LGBTQ+ kids that they do not belong to their class community or fit in with their peers.⁵ Rather, teachers should work to cultivate communities of acceptance and respect in which all students feel belonging.

In the Trevor Project survey, LGBTQ+ students who feel supported by their social circles are fifty percent less likely to attempt suicide than those who do not feel supported. As such, teachers must build class communities that honor and make welcome students from all sexual orientations and gender identities. A safe and accepting environment such as this fosters trusting relationships critical to the academic, physical, and spiritual development of the human being. When students' holistic development is supported through authentic connections with their teachers, students become more open and willing to ask for help and support when they need it.

If students cannot openly express themselves to their teachers or do not feel safe to



communicate when academic or social pressure is becoming too much to cope with, their teachers may have inadvertently built walls between themselves and their students rather than compassionate connections. According to a recent study on the importance of teaching through a lens of care, the impact of building walls rather than connections with students disproportionately disadvantages Black and minority students. Without the leadership of a compassionate teacher who honors and respects diverse cultures and cultural-specific mannerisms and dialects, these students may be expected or required to modify their speech and behavior to fit into what the teacher deems an “acceptable” class culture.⁶

A closer look at many American classrooms reveals often overlooked or unrecognized discrimination towards racial minority groups as well as LGBTQ+ students, which places them at a higher risk for mental health problems—minority stress theory suggests that minority groups experience

stress stemming from stigma and discrimination due to their differences.⁷ The way to confront discrimination and stigmatization against vulnerable students is by cultivating compassion and respect in the classroom. Teachers have the power to give students a sense of meaning in their lives by demonstrating that they belong and matter to the class community and are worthy of respect, care, and compassion—not because of good behavior or academic achievement but because they are cherished human beings with inherent worth and unique gifts to bring to the world.

The Trevor Project (2023) found that there is a strong correlation between life purpose and mental health: students who reported having little or no life purpose had vastly higher rates of mental health problems, depression, anxiety, and suicide attempts. These correlations are found in hetero, cisgender, and LGBTQ+ students alike. When teachers teach to the individual interests and experiences of their class, the education

becomes meaningful and fulfilling to students, directly combatting the sense of meaninglessness and lack of purpose associated with poor mental health and high suicide risk. Thus, teaching from a place of authentic knowledge about one's class not only protects students from the risks of depression and anxiety, but it also contributes to a rich, dynamic, and equitable education that provides for the needs and abilities of all students.

According to the California Department of Education, an equitable education means that

Author, educator, and social critic bell hooks said that when teachers succeed in cultivating loving relationships with their students, the quality of the education increases. She remembered the words of one of her past students: "The more you loved us, the harder we had to work." hooks characterized love in the classroom as "a combination of care, commitment, knowledge, responsibility, respect, and trust." "When we teach with love," hooks asserted, "we are better able to respond to the unique concerns of indi-

“TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS SHOULD BE READY TO INTERVENE ON BEHALF OF STUDENTS WHO ARE AT RISK FOR DEPRESSION AND SUICIDE.

teachers and administrators "recognize, respect, and attend to the diverse strengths and challenges of the students they serve."⁸ It seems clear from this definition that teachers cannot provide an equitable education without first getting to know their students and learning about their diverse strengths and challenges. From that knowledge, teachers can build a community of loving respect for the class. If the teacher has failed to cultivate understanding and loving respect for each of their students, equity has not been achieved, and vulnerable students remain at a greater risk of disconnection from their class community, academic apathy, and mental health problems.

viduals while simultaneously integrating those of the classroom community."⁹ In her research on pedagogical love, transformational scholar and Waldorf teacher Nancy Kresin-Price suggested that the epicenter of educational success has always been the student-teacher relationship; in this relationship "either everything or nothing is achieved."¹⁰

When teachers are encouraged to put compassionate relationships with students before academic accomplishment, they not only serve their students' academic achievement, mental health, wellbeing, and future aspirations better, but teachers themselves are freed to slow down

and enjoy the vocation of educating, diving deeply into the infinite richness of compassionate teaching. In so doing, compassionate teachers find their own inner wellspring of enthusiasm and inspiration for their work, bringing to life their teaching as they awaken their joy and passion.

In this more awakened educational experience, teachers' perceptions sharpen, and they are better able to discern the subtle but critical needs of their students. Taking time to consider the needs and emotions of the students who sit before them may inspire the realization that beneath their academic abilities and their outward attitudes and behaviors, students are sacred beings with complex emotions and unique gifts to offer humanity. When teachers become inspired for their work in this way, their passion and enthusiasm become contagious. Students will "catch" their teacher's inspiration and become imbued with a sense of purpose and belonging, combatting apathy, anxiety, and depression. Within this model of education, it has been shown that students flourish academically, mentally, socially, and emotionally.¹¹

When students are guarded and cherished by compassionate educators, they become protected from the ever-increasing risks of depression, anxiety, and suicide. McDermott et al. advise that to address the complex problem of mental health amongst heterosexual and LGBTQ+ students alike, teachers must understand the individual lives of their students, connect and collaborate with them, facilitate their autonomy, and encourage their agency. Though educators and policy makers now know with vivid clarity that there is a mental health epidemic threatening the lives and futures of America's youth, society is stuck at the point of action. What can teachers do to empower vulnerable teens and instill in them a sense of hope, life purpose, and meaning?

A compassionate education supports the healthy development of the whole student—mind, body, and soul. Teachers can support this holistic development by slowing down, refocusing on the wellbeing of their students, observing them deeply, and reflecting on them later. As teachers get to know each student deeply through authentic relationships and build trust within those relationships, students will begin to courageously live into their true identities, knowing they are cared for, valued, and protected. With focused attention, care, and compassion from their teachers, each student will not only succeed at their education but will realize their extraordinary worth, discover their life's purpose, and learn how to bring their talents to the world. 🏡

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Melissa Nilsen PhD lives with her family in San Diego where she was a Waldorf teacher for seven years. She continues to write about Waldorf education, the critical importance of compassion in teaching, and the ways teachers can cultivate positive relationships with their students. She authored the book, *To Guard and Cherish: Contemplative Practices for Compassion in Education*, set to be published later this year. www.compassionineducation.com



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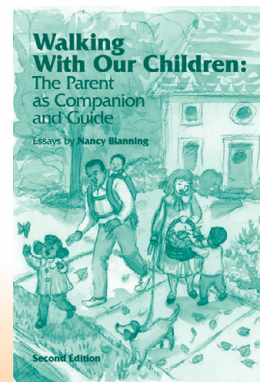
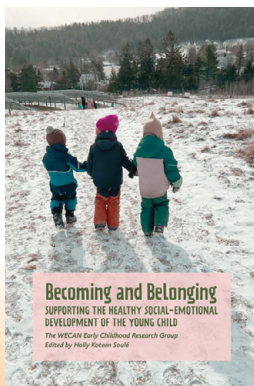
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The ADHD Evolution

from prescriptions to empowering minds

CONNIE MCREYNOLDS, PHD

In the labyrinth of mental health diagnoses, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) often emerges as a life sentence—a label that comes with myriad challenges and misconceptions. But it is time for that narrative to shift. There is more we can do for ADHD beyond just treating symptoms with medication, and more people need to be aware of their options.

For decades, the narrative surrounding ADHD has been predominantly one of limitation that saw it as a lifelong struggle with no clear path to improvement. This view, however, is rapidly changing, with emerging insights pointing to auditory and visual processing differences as

contributing to the underlying cause of ADHD. This shift offers millions a beacon of hope.

ADHD has long been perceived as a complex neurological disorder characterized by symptoms of inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsiveness. Traditional treatments have focused largely on medication and behavioral therapy, which have provided relief for some but do not address the underlying causes for many. The revelation that auditory and visual processing difficulties can significantly contribute to ADHD symptoms presents a new frontier in its resolution. When this understanding is combined with the scientific application of neuroplasticity, the

“ THE NARRATIVE OF ADHD IS BEING REWRITTEN, FROM ONE OF LIMITATION TO ONE OF HOPE AND POSSIBILITY.

narrative surrounding ADHD undergoes a profound transformation.

Auditory and Visual Processing: The Key to Unlocking Potential

Delving into auditory and visual processing challenges offers a revolutionary viewpoint on ADHD, shifting the focus from conventional treatments to tackling the underlying causes behind many of its symptoms. For those with ADHD, their world often seems chaotically unstructured, not from a want of trying but due to their unique way of processing information. Challenges with auditory processing can render simple conversations as overwhelming as trying to concentrate in a bustling cafe, leading to frequent miscommunications and exhaustion. Visual processing hurdles can make tasks like reading or navigating environments seem insurmountable, turning both academic endeavors and everyday routines into sources of significant distress.

In the classroom, these processing difficulties can manifest as an inability to follow instructions, leading to gaps in learning and participation. Children may struggle to keep up with lectures or discussions, missing crucial information that affects their academic performance. Homework and tests, reliant on understanding written instructions or deciphering visual information, become formidable challenges rather than opportunities for learning.

At home, these challenges can strain family dynamics. Misunderstandings arising from communication breakdowns can lead to conflicts and frustration on both sides. Simple requests or instructions that require processing auditory information can result in incomplete tasks, further compounding the sense of disorganization.


Visual processing problems can make it difficult for children to organize their belongings, leading to cluttered and chaotic living spaces, which can exacerbate feelings of overwhelm for the entire family. Acknowledging and tackling these processing obstacles is crucial for fostering harmony, paving the way for deeper comprehension and enhanced support within the family unit.

Harnessing Neuroplasticity

Neuroplasticity, the brain's remarkable ability to forge new neural pathways at any age, serves

“THERE IS MORE WE CAN DO FOR ADHD BEYOND JUST TREATING SYMPTOMS WITH MEDICATION.”

as the foundation for an innovative approach to ADHD. Challenging the longstanding belief that brain development is largely immutable past childhood, this concept shines as a beacon of hope for individuals with ADHD across all age groups. By harnessing neuroplasticity through

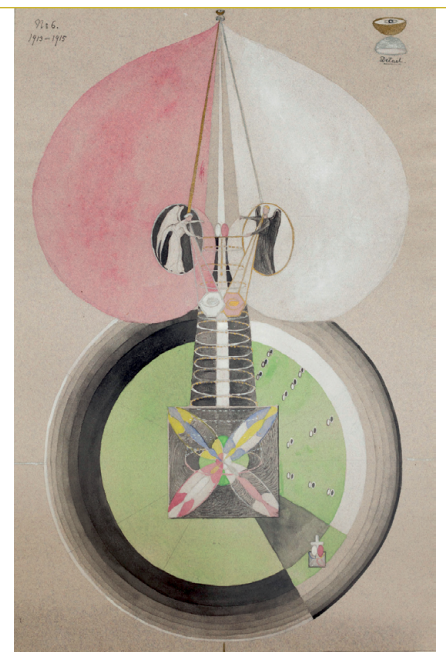
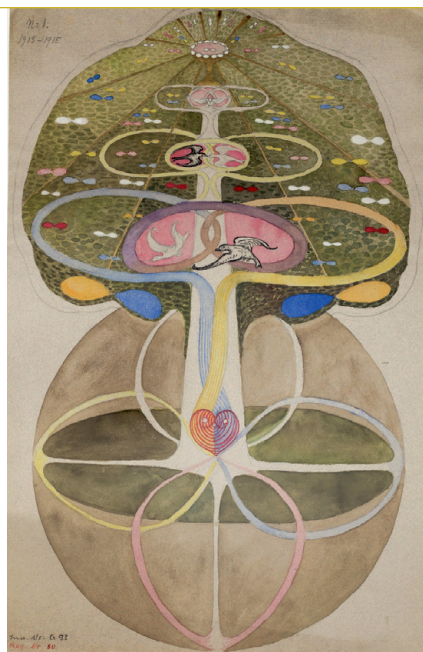


Transforming Culture

Rudolf Steiner spoke about
“a future worthy of the human being.”

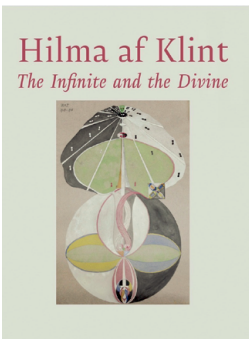
How do we get there?

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Rudolf Steiner's Vision in Action



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“ DELVING INTO AUDITORY AND VISUAL PROCESSING CHALLENGES OFFERS A REVOLUTIONARY VIEWPOINT ON ADHD.

targeted brain training exercises, it is possible to significantly enhance cognitive functions related to focus, attention, and impulse control. This shift in perspective marks a departure from viewing ADHD as a fixed condition, illuminating the potential for profound improvements in both ADHD symptoms and associated challenges such as anxiety, depression, and learning difficulties.

The implications of embracing neuroplasticity regarding ADHD extend beyond symptom management. Engaging in specialized brain training allows individuals to enact significant changes in their brain processes, leading to marked improvements in cognitive abilities, better focus and attention, and enhanced auditory and visual processing skills. This process also enhances mental resilience, equipping individuals with the capability to handle life's obstacles more efficiently.

Neuroplasticity is not just a scientific concept but a source of empowerment for individuals with ADHD. It affirms that change is possible, that the brain is capable of remarkable transformation. This understanding paves the way for a more optimistic and proactive approach to ADHD, one that embraces the possibility of growth, adaptation, and resilience.

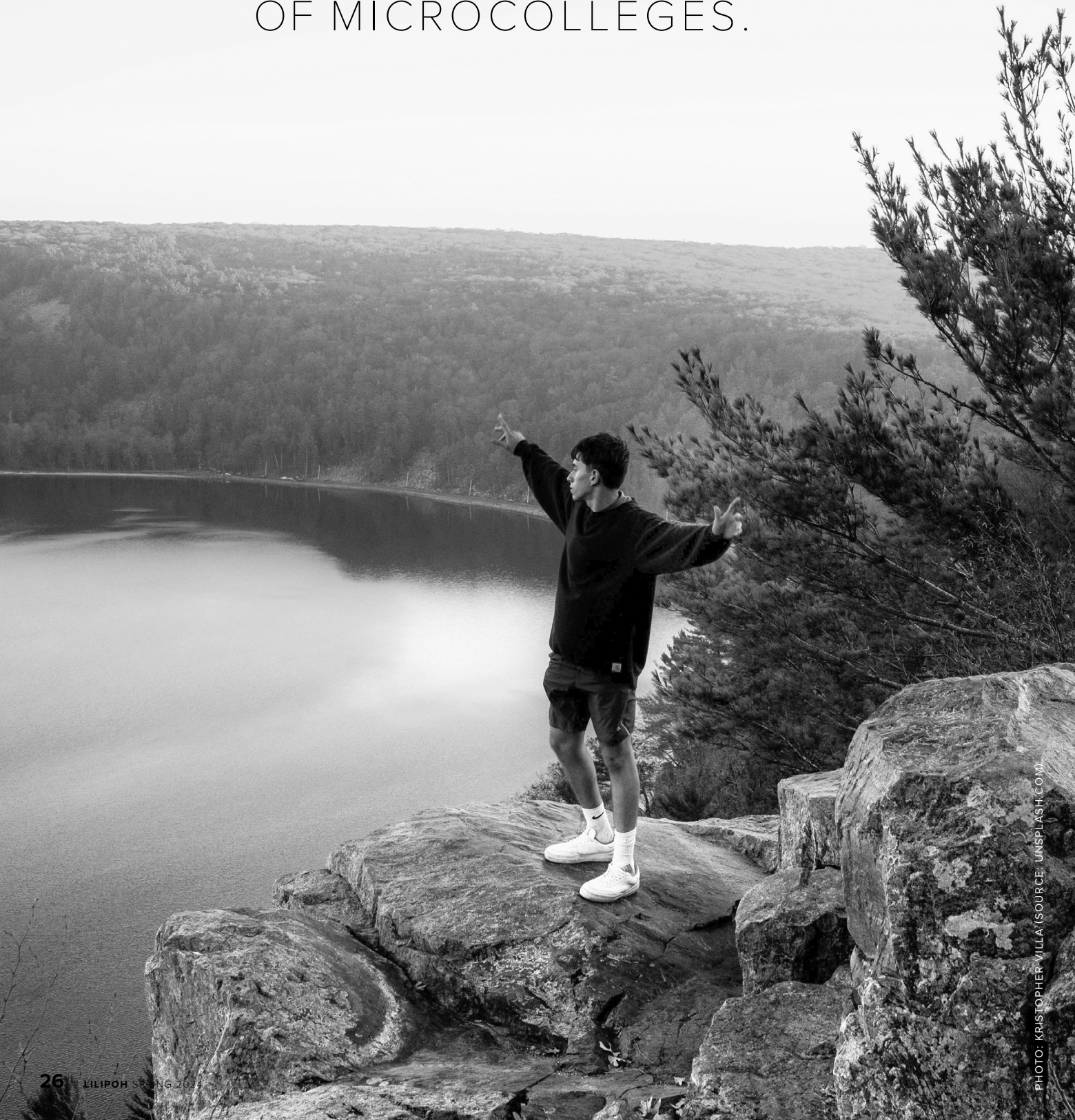
A Call to Action

The discovery of the link between auditory and visual processing difficulties and ADHD, coupled with the promising potential of neuroplasticity-based processes, calls for a shift in how we approach ADHD. It urges parents, educators, and healthcare professionals to consider alternative strategies that address the root causes of ADHD. By embracing these innovative approaches, we can unlock the full potential of individuals with ADHD, enhancing their ability to harness their unique strengths and thrive.

The narrative of ADHD is being rewritten, from one of limitation to one of hope and possibility. By harnessing the power of neuroplasticity and addressing the underlying causes of ADHD, we can unlock a realm of new possibilities for individuals experiencing these challenges. It's time to move beyond managing symptoms to truly transforming lives. 📖

Dr. Connie McReynolds is a Licensed Psychologist and Certified Rehabilitation Counselor with a 30-year career in rehabilitation counseling and psychology. Earning her PhD from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, she is the visionary behind pioneering neurofeedback clinics in Southern California aimed at treating ADHD, anxiety, depression, trauma, and other conditions. Dr. McReynolds is an acclaimed author, with her book *Solving the ADHD Riddle* reaching #1 on Amazon in eight categories. www.conniemcreynolds.com

“ A STRONG CONNECTION
TO PLACE IS A KEY ASPECT
OF MICROCOLLEGES.



Thoreau College and the microcollege movement

An Educational Model *for the Future?*

JACOB HUNDT

When the history of American higher education in the twenty-first century comes to be written, 2024 will stand out as a watershed year when many dire predictions finally came true.

Less than halfway through the year, at least a dozen colleges with long histories announced that they are closing or are teetering on the brink. These include some of the most innovative small colleges in the country, as well as more mainstream private and public institutions of all kinds. The reasons for this mass extinction event are numerous and well-publicized, including a sharp demographic decline in the college-aged population, a botched roll-out of the new federal financial aid form by the Department of Education, and a disastrous college business model that continues to drive runaway tuition increases and deepening student debt.

However, when you spend a little time digging deeper into the state of higher education by talking with current students, professors,

and administrators, or by browsing publications like *Inside Higher Ed* and *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, you quickly realize that these quantitative woes are really just the tip of the iceberg.

No one, it seems, thinks that things are going well on any level. This includes both ends of our increasingly polarized political spectrum, for whom colleges serve as a primary battleground and punching bag, as well as business leaders who fret about finding the next generation of educated and resilient workers. More urgently, this distress also includes many of the people actually engaged in higher education, such as educators and students themselves, whose levels of mental and emotional health—not to mention sense of meaning, purpose, and hope for the future—have collapsed catastrophically.

If we, as a civilization, find ourselves in the midst of a “meaning crisis,”¹ as cognitive scientist John Vervaeke and others have argued, it stands to reason that colleges and universities—the very

heart of meaning-making in modern societies—are Ground Zero.

A More Human and Interconnected Approach

It is in the context of this metastasizing cultural crisis that Thoreau College and the wider micro-college movement finds its calling.

Rooted in the green ridges and valleys of the unglaciated Driftless Region of rural southwestern Wisconsin, Thoreau College seeks to rethink and renew education for young adults from the grassroots up. Since incorporating in 2015, Thoreau College has prototyped and staged a variety of immersive full-time residential programs for small groups of young adults. These programs range in length from three weeks to a full year.

In addition to Henry David Thoreau and the American transcendentalists, this project has

drawn inspiration from the ideas of Rudolf Steiner and Waldorf pedagogy, from the Danish folk high school movement. Its biggest inspiration, though, comes from Deep Springs College,² a remarkable and highly respected “microcollege” with twenty-six students that has operated on a remote cattle ranch in eastern California since its founding in 1917. Today, Thoreau College stands alongside Deep Springs and several other young initiatives around the world as representatives of a growing movement of microcolleges seeking to reinvent post-secondary education with a human face.³

Although the movement is young and necessarily diverse, microcolleges, as we define them, share elements of at least four characteristics. To one degree or another, they are all humanly scaled, place-based, meaning-centered, and committed to offering a holistic curriculum that goes beyond academics or vocational training.

These characteristics are all strongly manifested in the core program at Thoreau College

“MECHANIZATION OF THE SPIRIT, VEGETIZING OF THE SOUL, ANIMALIZATION OF THE BODY”—THIS FORMULA MAY SOUND STRANGELY FAMILIAR TO ANYONE WHO HAS VISITED A MAJOR UNIVERSITY CAMPUS IN RECENT YEARS.



springboard foundation for whole person learning

With the aim of developing a generation of leaders with meaning, purpose, and the inner resources needed to address the urgent issues of our time, Springboard advances programs that intentionally focus on the personal development of young adults. We do so with the conviction that meaning and purpose can be cultivated, and that they must be for society to thrive. Cultivating meaning and purpose requires opportunities to:

- Work with real stakes, engaging in practical work that directly impacts the community and/or the physical environment
- Experience interdependence
- Form a meaningful relationship to place

In small-scale learning communities like Thoreau College, in which students are given ownership over matters of true consequence, students experience themselves as necessary to a whole. They experience that if and how they show up and engage has real effect. They experience what it feels like to have purpose and to matter.

In addition to Thoreau College, Springboard has identified several other exemplary living-learning institutes, or microcolleges, that help young people develop a durable sense of meaning and purpose. You can find them on the Directory page of our website—www.springboardlife.org.

Springboard has a three-pronged approach to advancing meaning-centered learning programs:

1. Establish a robust field of exemplary prototypes
2. Demonstrate impact and viability through research

3. Develop an ecosystem to support the flourishing of existing programs and deliberate development of new initiatives

We currently track baseline metrics including student enrollment in and capacity growth of identified programs. Over time we plan to capture more sophisticated qualitative and quantitative data.

Springboard needs your help in connecting with:

- Colleges and universities to grow student pipelines through domestic study-away partnerships
- Colleges and universities that want to strengthen their offerings by starting their own living-learning institutes.
- Publishers and media outlets who can amplify the work
- Mission-aligned supporters
- Researchers and facilitators of research-practice partnerships
- Future founders interested in starting a microcollege or living-learning institute in their home places.

If you are interested in learning more or would like an invitation to join the Microcollege Network to keep abreast of developments in the field, please send an email to Executive Director Kam Bellamy (kam@springboardlife.org).

in its Metamorphosis Gap Semester. Beginning in 2019, this roughly four-month-long residential experience for up to twelve students per cohort has brought young people from across the country and around the world together to engage

Growing up on an organic dairy farm in this special corner of the Midwest near the small town of Viroqua (population 4,500), from an early age I was immersed in a unique community of creative and empowered adults. Many of these people

“ WE ENGAGE REAL QUESTIONS AND PRACTICAL PROBLEMS, IN A SPECIFIC REAL PLACE.

in a curriculum organized around Five Pillars: Academics, Labor, Community, Nature, and Art. Students participate in seminar-style discussions of classic texts and natural phenomena, work in our kitchens, gardens, and small farm, and practice a variety of fine arts and folk crafts, ranging from community singing and drama to spoon carving and botanical drawing. They also participate in shared community governance and celebrations of the cycle of the year. And they immerse themselves deeply in nature through weeklong canoeing and hiking expeditions, as well as wilderness solos.

Rooted in Place and Community

A strong connection to place is a key aspect of the microcolleges, including Thoreau College. And this ethos has been deeply shaped by the college's context in the Driftless Region of southwestern Wisconsin.

were members of the back-to-the-land movement of the 1970s, who saw the daunting challenges of the moment and had the inner capacities to respond with new and innovative initiatives. These included numerous organic farms, consumer and producer cooperatives, small businesses, and grassroots nonprofits. They also included what would in time grow to become Organic Valley, the largest organic dairy cooperative in the country, as well as a vibrant rural Waldorf elementary school, Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School, founded in 1980.

In 1996, as a sixteen-year-old high school student, I had the life-altering experience of working alongside these remarkable adult mentors to play an active role in the creation of the Youth Initiative High School (YIHS),⁴ a Waldorf high school that uniquely engages students in core aspects of governance, including hiring, admissions, curriculum design, and fundraising. After college—which included attending Deep Springs as well as stints at the American University in Bulgaria and graduate work at the

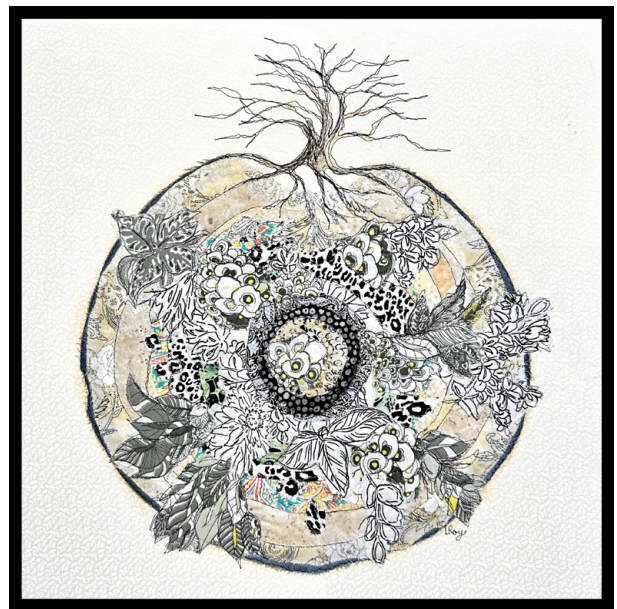
University of Chicago—I returned home to work at YIHS for over fifteen years as a teacher, college counselor, and Faculty Chair. The school is thriving today with a student body of over seventy students, including a household of boarding students from all over the world.

Small is Beautiful

This special rural community of farmers, educators, artists, and social entrepreneurs is the context that formed and nurtured me and Thoreau College.

From the time of its back-to-the-lander roots, this is a community where, alongside such classics as *Silent Spring*,⁵ *Living the Good Life*,⁶ and *The Sand County Almanac*,⁷ one of the key texts found on numerous homestead bedstands was E.F. Schumacher’s *Small is Beautiful*,⁸ first published in 1973. With its catchy title and ringing indictment of what he called “the universal idolatry of gigantism,”⁹ Schumacher’s little book played a big role in shaping the thinking of these young practical idealists as they left the big cities and gargantuan organs of business, government, and mass culture to build lives that were more humanly-scaled, handmade, and rooted in connection with a particular spot on the earth.

Over fifty years later, these impulses towards smallness and rootedness seem more urgently relevant than ever in agriculture, government, and economics, as well as in higher education. In colleges and universities—and education more generally—digital technology, stiff economic and political pressures, and sprawling bureaucracy have manifested the “idolatry of gigantism” at a truly stupendous scale and have contributed powerfully to the deep crises I described above. For many, schools—these essential cultural hubs—have become opaque



“Trust” (TOP) and “Transformation” (BOTTOM), art textiles by Lorraine Roy, www.LroyArt.com

and soul-deadening places where individual students and professors despair of getting their practical questions and needs addressed, to say nothing of discovering and nurturing their unique vocation, sense of purpose, and pursuits of truth, beauty, and goodness. Students—and

the civilization in which we live—seeking intellectual and spiritual nourishment from such places will surely starve, and this feeling of famine is indeed what I experience with many of the young people who find their way to Thoreau College.

Cultivating Meaning and Purpose

In 1919, surveying the ruins of Europe in the aftermath of World War I and considering the spiritual roots of this devastation, Rudolf Steiner declared:

Natural science together with the machine threatens civilized humanity with a terrible threefold destruction...Mechanization of the spirit, vegetizing of the soul, animalization of the body—this is what we have to face without deceiving ourselves.¹⁰

As with so many things, Steiner was prescient in identifying the modern university as a key point of origin and manifestation of this triple threat.

The research university, in its modern form, originated in Germany, and Steiner’s life path brought him into intimate contact with this paradigmatic modern institution, which he elsewhere characterizes as “a pickle factory” for the fruits of the human spirit. “Mechanization of the spirit, vegetizing of the soul, animalization of the body”—this formula may sound strangely familiar to anyone who has visited a major university campus in recent years. Academic work is often formulaic and dispirited and is now often literally mechanized, with the advent of widely accessible artificial intelligence (AI) text generators. The animalization of the body is also disturbingly literal, manifested in, for example, feedlot-style cafeterias. And surrounding it all, occasional

outbursts of political unrest notwithstanding, there is an atmosphere of general emotional withdrawal and anesthesia—“vegetizing of the soul”—as students and others pull back from embodied community life into screens, substances, and deepening cycles of depression and anxiety.

Thoreau College and our fellow explorers in the microcollege movement are engaged in an effort to develop and model an educational community that is diametrically opposed to the form that the modern university has taken. Organically and experimentally, we are striving to craft a context in which our students can be physically, spiritually, and intellectually engaged in vital and meaningful ways with real questions and practical problems, in a specific real place, and with one another as members of a real, embodied

a deeper dive

Check out the following sites for more information about this dynamic and forward-thinking movement:

Thoreau College

– thoreaucollege.org/

“Microcollege” podcast

– thoreaucollege.org/microcollege-podcast/

Microcollege Network

– thoreaucollege.org/microcollege-movement/

– www.hylo.com/groups/microcollege-network

Nordic Bildung

– www.nordicbildung.org/

Springboard for Whole Person Learning

– www.springboardlife.org/

dreaming of a new microcollege

A red sun rises, and we can see by its light that the world is afflicted. The climate becomes increasingly erratic as our resources deplete, and an industrial growth economy charges on. Everyone seems a little bit lonelier. What is an appropriate response?

When a hard wind blows, it's time to kindle the hearth. Breaking bread together around the stove is how we terrans have always convened amidst turbulent change. In the short history of the United States, many schoolhouses, churches, and kitchens have stoked their flames to radiate generosity in barren climes.

Where else do small hearths arise? They can spring up as academies, folk schools, gap programs, and microcolleges, in communities dedicated to resilience, in homesteads and farmers markets. Across the world, we've seen a blossoming of programs that seek to engage intergenerational cohorts in circles of community that think outside the box. Hearth trees sprout myriad branches, and microcolleges are the limb I'm going out on these days, inspired by the Highlander Folk School,¹ Deep Springs,² and Thoreau College.³

In the Upper Arkansas River valley of Colorado, I dream of one day starting a school, but with so many inspirational models out there, it's hard to know where to begin. I think of my twenties as a time for gathering inspiration and a space for sketching designs out in the sand. Here are some of those sketches as they presently sit.

Local food production is a core element of the work we do at Thoreau College, and a thread that runs through many of our sister organizations as well. When a community can learn how to orchestrate their food systems sustainably, the restoration of land, body, and spirit is sure to follow. As research continues to marvel at the microbiomes of our soil and our stomachs, nutrition and food security take on redoubled importance. I believe any academy wishing to keep the small hearth for its community ought to consider a large garden and some livestock.

Expeditions are an exercise in getting more from less. With just a pack of food and some warm clothes, humans on the move are re-embodied and reminded of their dependence on companions in interrelation with nature. Gap year programs like the High Mountain Institute,⁴ Kroka,⁵ Outward Bound,⁶ and the National

Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS)⁷ offer stellar examples of expeditionary learning. Those who have not undertaken journeys of powerlessness are often unready to responsibly wield power, and meeting the voices inside yourself on a challenging expedition can be an important rite of passage in this regard. The small hearth burns all the sweeter when kindled in remote places.

An active life of the mind is central to any school, and drawing threads of truth from the written word can be accomplished by any group of dedicated students with access to a library. "The academy is not paradise," bell hook wrote in *Teaching to Transgress*. "But learning is a place where paradise can be created."⁸ To engage new ideas and intentionally expand one's mind is a definitive practice of freedom, and microcolleges sprouting up around the country continue to prove that an encounter with the liberal arts need not cost a quarter of a million dollars. Complementing academic discourse with embodied experiences such as butchery, gardening, carpentry, and cooking tethers floating ideas into lived experience.

Contemplative practice is an ancient tool for the cultivation of attention, wisdom, and compassion. Consistent meditation anchors awareness into a home such as breath or body, allowing us to weather the machinations of "monkey mind" and bring greater presence into our relationships. In a world where attention is extracted and exploited at every turn, learning how to skillfully inhabit consciousness is of the utmost importance for any group of changemakers.

Diversity is another key ingredient for brewing solutions to the problems of our times. Cultural difference and neurodivergence widen the aperture of collective perspective, as does variety in discipline and skill. Trades, crafts, and arts are increasingly undervalued by our primary education system yet in demand throughout society. I dream of a school where everything from the architecture and artwork to the woodwork and welding is infused with intentionality. Where abstract political dialogue and ideological wrestling can be backgrounded by the need to bake delicious bread and weave elegant furniture. With more diversity of upbringing, there

is likely to be better storytelling around the hearth.

Singing is another ancient practice for cultivating belonging in community. At the Driftless Folk School⁹ and surrounding Midwest, satchels of songs are co-remembered without any sheet music. Every voice, no matter how trained, can contribute energy to the intentions and evocations stored within a song. The hearth resounds with voices singing their way back to hope.

What I hope to accomplish with starting a school is something radical, something that returns us to our radix, our roots. No small hearth can be the same because each takes on the character of its place, just as plants, when rooted, adopt a terroir. While I can anticipate some of the contributing elements—pinon nuts, bicycles, horses—I will only know the full flavor as it comes. When we walk on the roads to which we're called, they rise up to meet our feet.

How do you see a small hearth kindling in your community?

— Sam Kearley

NOTES

- 1 Wisconsin Historical Society, "Highlander Folk School—Image Gallery Essay," <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS3956>.
- 2 www.deepsprings.edu
- 3 thoreaucollege.org
- 4 hminet.org
- 5 kroka.org/
- 6 www.outwardbound.org
- 7 www.nols.edu/en
- 8 bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994).
- 9 www.driftlessfolkschool.org

Sam Kearley hails from the high desert valley of Salida, Colorado where he grew up ranching, running, and rafting. He majored in neuroscience in Sewanee, Tennessee, studied Buddhism in Thailand, walked across Spain, biked down Wyoming, and has driven through almost all the states. He is currently a Teaching Fellow at Thoreau College in Viroqua, Wisconsin.

community of shared striving and responsibility. With a student body of a dozen students or less, everyone's insights, talents, effort, and challenges matter, and nothing can safely be taken for granted in a generic or formulaic way.

If we hope to cultivate a world and a society with the capacity to address the challenges we face today, it seems essential that our educational institutions seek to embody Rudolf Steiner's "Social Motto":

A healing social life is found only when, in the mirror of each soul, the whole community finds its reflection, and when, in the whole community, the virtue of each one is living.¹¹

There is a deep yearning for this kind of community among young people—and people of all ages—in our time. I believe that microcolleges can be one of the most effective ways to address this longing and plant seeds of healing social renewal for the future. 🌱

NOTES

- 1 www.meaningcrisis.co
- 2 www.deepsprings.edu
- 3 For information about other members of this movement, tune in to "Microcollege: The Thoreau College Podcast" (www.thoreaucollege.org/microcollege-podcast) or visit www.thoreaucollege.org/microcollege-movement.
- 4 www.yihs.net
- 5 Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962).
- 6 Helen and Scott Nearing, *Living the Good Life: How to Live Sanely and Simply in a Troubled World* (New York: Schocken Books, Inc., 1970).
- 7 Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac: And Sketches Here and There* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949).
- 8 Ernst Friedrich Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful: A Study of Economics As If People Mattered* (New York: HarperCollins, 1973).
- 9 Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful*, 45.
- 10 Rudolf Steiner, *Education as a Social Problem* (New York: Anthroposophic Press, 1969), 10. Lecture 1, Dornach August 9, 1919.
- 11 Rudolf Steiner, "Reordering of Society," in *Understanding the Human Being: Selected writings of Rudolf Steiner*, ed. Richard Seddon (Bristol: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1993).

Jacob Hundt is the founder of Thoreau College and the Executive Director of the not-for-profit that includes Thoreau College and the Driftless Folk School. He was born and raised in rural southwestern Wisconsin, where he attended Waldorf schools as a child before studying at Deep Springs College in California, the American University in Bulgaria, and completing a Master of Arts in Social Science from the University of Chicago. He has worked as a Waldorf high school teacher and college counselor for nearly two decades, and lives with his wife Sofya and four children on a ten-acre farm which they operate alongside the students and fellows of Thoreau College.

a holistic understanding of
the biodynamic farm organism

“A Self-contained Individuality”

REBECCA BRIGGS

Now, a farm comes closest to its own essence when it can be conceived of as a kind of independent individuality, a self-contained entity. In reality, every farm ought to aspire to this state of being a self-contained individuality. This state cannot be achieved completely, but it needs to be approached. This means that within our farms, we should attempt to have everything we need for agricultural production, including, of course, the appropriate amount of livestock. From the perspective of an ideal farm, any fertilizers and so forth that are brought in from outside would indeed have to be regarded as remedies for a sickened farm. A healthy farm would be one that could produce everything it needs from within itself.

— RUDOLF STEINER
*Spiritual Foundations for the Renewal
of Agriculture*¹

In so much of Western society today, we tend to focus on the parts. We take a pill to alleviate a symptom or pain in our bodies. We spray chemicals to eradicate a pest on our crops. We add individual nutrients to deficient soil. But what if we stepped back to look at the health of the whole system? This is a unique insight of biodynamics—and still a bit radical even today, 100 years after Rudolf Steiner gave the lectures that form its foundations.

In biodynamic agriculture, farmers and gardeners recognize that the farm is made up of many interrelated aspects, much like our own bodies. Like a human being, the farm or garden is an organism. And like our own bodies, each farm or garden is unique, or an “individuality.” By observing carefully and attempting to understand the many connections and interrelationships, we can help them to interact in a healthful way.

Every farm or garden has its own unique soil, natural features such as wetlands or forests, native and cultivated plants, domestic and wild

perennial roots farm

At Perennial Roots farm, we try to bring everything into a closed loop. While we do not grow grain for our animals, we focus primarily on grass-fed animals, rotational grazing, and making our own compost on the farm. There's more orchestration involved in a living farm organism, but in the end, good ecology is good economics. We produce less than a high-intensity farm, but our profit margins aim at being a bit better by reducing overhead costs.



Alan Chadwick liked to point out that a garden should become *more* fertile every year—not less so. If you are pulling up plants and immediately planting something behind that, most of the plants' root structure remains behind in the soil, which instantly starts feeding soil life for the next wave of plants. As long as plants aren't allowed to flower or go to seed and another crop promptly replaces it, you can build soil with each crop succession. Plants that are big, sweet, or are prized for their fruits or seeds tend to be heavy feeders—taking more organic matter out of the soil than they give back. There's nothing wrong with these heavy feeders, but to restore fertility to the soil, successive crops of light feeders can quickly bring back organic matter into the soil as long as you pull them before they can produce seeds. Once a plant starts to “bolt,” much of the photosynthesis is directed to producing seeds and the plant begins to consume its own roots, sacrificing itself for the next generation.

As we've learned to plant crops the same day as we pull out a previous crop, our garden beds have grown progressively more fertile.

[Photo: Perennial Roots Farm Photo 3 is first choice here so it fits with text about planting — although may want to adjust color.]

— Stewart Lundy
Perennial Roots Farm, Accomac, Virginia
www.perennialroots.com



blossom's farm

Blossom's Farm is extremely diverse, growing medicinal and culinary herbs, vegetables and fruits, and a myriad of other species of plants that are part of our research efforts. We also keep smaller numbers of cows, sheep, goats, and fowl.

Living in a Mediterranean climate as we do raises many questions as to how to farm most appropriately with a winter wet/summer dry rain pattern. This climate factor leads us in many exploratory directions and also helps us in creating a dynamic farm organism.

Rather than only following “normal” farming practices of sowing and harvesting typical crops, we seek to grow longer-term, perennial crops that are adapted to our climate. And from these, crops that can contribute in multiple ways to the farm organism are most sought.

One example we are currently exploring is Showy Milkweed, *Asclepias speciosa*. Perhaps best known as a host plant for Monarch butterflies, it has also been used as a food (young shoots steamed remind some of asparagus), has traditional medicinal uses, makes a wonderful cut flower, and is simply stunning—all of this on a plant that can tolerate summer drought and winter wet. With a farm filled with other personalities such as this one, there arises a farm individuality that is truly of the place.

— Delmar McComb and Carin Fortin
Blossom's Farm, Aromas, California
www.blossomsfarm.com

“ ALTHOUGH WE MAY NEVER TRULY REACH THE PERFECT IDEAL OF A SELF-CONTAINED INDIVIDUALITY, OUR EFFORTS CAN HAVE TREMENDOUS IMPACT WELL BEYOND THE BORDERS OF OUR PIECE OF LAND.



Cows at Perennial Roots Farm

animals, and climate, as well as cosmic influences from the sun and stars. The human beings who live and work on it are part of the story—the history they bring, the buildings they construct, the community relations they foster, and so much more. The farm or garden is influenced constantly by forces from both inside and outside its boundaries.

While we look to the natural world for guidance, a farm or garden is a very unnatural space. As Anthony Mecca, Co-Director of the Biodynamic Association, explains:

Part of the farmer or gardener's role is to help harmonize and bring all those things together so they can work to their highest ideals. As farmers or gardeners we make this special place and cultivate it in a special way. We separate off a little part of the natural world and cultivate it. And so we actually have to give a certain attention to bring it into a harmonious balance.²

What does this mean in practice? The insights shared here by three farmers from across the

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meadowlark hearth

Meadowlark Hearth, a certified Biodynamic farm in western Nebraska, rides on a body of water called an aquifer. Annual moisture is twelve inches, yet the area was host to an inland sea in past history. Winged creatures vary in spring and autumn: migrating geese, pelicans, eagles, and a great blue heron. The song of the meadowlark rings out as we plant our vegetables for seed in three to five isolated gardens over our 540 acres of trees, hay, and pasture of sandy loam soils.

This land was donated by the Everett/Clark family to the nonprofit Meadowlark Hearth Living Environment Foundation with twelve board members (www.livingenvironmentfoundationne.org). In keeping with Rudolf Steiner's vision framing allowing land as an organism rather than a commodity, steps were taken to establish covenants with land deeds continuing in organic/biodynamic cultivation. Meadowlark Hearth's specialty is learning to grow biennials, selecting for taste, storage, and replanting a second year. Our grass-fed/finished closed cowherd offers compost for the Meadowlark Hearth vegetable seeds, as well as meat for the region.

In our fifteenth season, we remember people, received with grace by the farm, who helped grow and gradually store a couple hundred varieties of seed here in this Zone 4-5 climate. Nathan Corymb, trained at the Swiss Sativa Biodynamic Company, is Meadowlark Hearth's seedsman. Matt Barhafer, with the farm since 2018, is expertly cultivating the seed work into the future. Beth and Nathan, still involved, intend to teach from their forty years of experience.

Planning ahead, Meadowlark Hearth is seeking applications from people interested to join Matt in the spirit of community, nurturing the future of Meadowlark Hearth: learning to grow, process, and sell open-pollinated seeds in the context of a biodynamic organism as well as learning Ancestral Skills, furthering the lively aspects in the middle of this continent.

— *Beth Corymb*
Meadowlark Hearth, Scottsbluff, Nebraska
www.meadowlarkhearth.org



US provide inspiration, as well as small windows into how they each think about it and how it is expressed on their land .

However, the idea of the farm organism is not only applicable to a farm or large piece of land; it is something toward which even the home gardener can work. Even if a piece of land is too small for a cow, or indeed any livestock, we can consider what we can actually care for. Whatever is within our boundaries—even a small suburban plot or a community garden space—is within our influence and something we can observe, approach thoughtfully, and strive to bring into stronger holistic health.

Mecca advises trying to let go of preconceived ideas so that you can truly connect to the place. Ask questions. What is your organism? What can you affect and care for? What wants to grow there? Live there? What is the community of human beings associated with it?

Biodynamic practitioners often speak of “striving.” Although we may never truly reach the perfect ideal of a self-contained individuality, our efforts to do so can have tremendous impact well beyond the borders of our piece of land.

To find out more about the farm individuality and the principles and practices of biodynamics, visit the Biodynamic Association at www.biodynamics.com. 📍

NOTES

- 1 Rudolf Steiner, *Spiritual Foundations for the Renewal of Agriculture*, (Junction City, OR: Bio-Dynamic Farming and Gardening Association, Inc., 1993), 27.
- 2 Anthony Mecca, interview with Rebecca Briggs, May 22, 2024.

Rebecca Briggs is passionate about communicating and sharing the stories of the vibrant individuals, groups, and organizations that are making a difference in the world and challenging our ideas of how things need to be. While pursuing a degree in environmental studies at the University of Oregon, she discovered the potent intersection of food and environment. She has worked in communications, editing, and outreach for sixteen-plus years within the biodynamic movement, where she enjoys the challenges and creativity of working with folks across the US and internationally. She is grateful to live in the beautiful southern Willamette Valley in Oregon and loves to get out on the trail, spend time discovering ever more about her local landscape and flora and fauna, and expand her culinary horizons.

Biodynamic® Certification

The farm organism is also a unique and core concept in Demeter Biodynamic certification. As explained in the Biodynamic Farm Standard:

Biodynamic farming involves managing a farm utilizing the principles of a living organism. A concise model of a living organism ideal would be a wilderness forest, where there is a high degree of self-sufficiency in all realms of biological survival. Fertility and feed arise out of the recycling of the organic material the system generates. Avoidance of pest species is based on biological vigor and its intrinsic biological and genetic diversity. Water is efficiently cycled through the system.

While agriculture takes nature to a state that is one step removed from wilderness, the wisdom of the farmer that guides its course can reflect these ancient principles of sustainability. The view of the farm organism extends beyond the fence line and includes the tangible and intangible forces that work through it. ... The food that results is very pure and true to its essence and provides deeply penetrating nutrition that is essential to an increasingly unhealthy human population.

Sections of the Biodynamic Farm Standard include necessary elements of the farm organism, soil fertility management, crop protection, greenhouse management, animal welfare, and the use of the Biodynamic preparations. Biological diversity within the farm landscape is emphasized and requires that a minimum of ten percent of the total farm acreage be devoted to biodiversity preservation and enhancement. That may include but is not limited to forests, wetlands, riparian corridors, and intentionally planted insectaries. Diversity in crop rotation and perennial planting is required: no annual crop can be planted in the same field for more than two years in succession. Bare tillage year-round is prohibited so land needs to maintain adequate green cover.



Visit Demeter USA at www.demeter-usa.org to read the Standards and find out more about Biodynamic certification.

the legacy of Alan Chadwick

Growing Food as a Sacrament

The following excerpt is from a talk given by Alan Chadwick to apprentices working with him at Carmel-in-the-Valley, Virginia, September 3, 1979. It is entitled "Introduction to Biodynamic French Intensive Horticulture." Many thanks to the Alan Chadwick Living Library and Archive for access to this transcript.

“It’s all a mystery. That grass is grass. It’s a secret and it’s a mystery. You can’t know it and you can’t understand it and you mustn’t try because the moment you try you can’t perceive it and when you stop trying to understand it in words, you will begin to perceive it. You do begin to perceive it. The whole of color comes from the planets. The whole of music, the heavens, comes from the planets, the stars into this world. How incredible was this statement of Paracelsus.

“Within our forms, already going out in tangibilities, are all the glands and nerves connected with the vertebrae. And you must in some way comprehend that, within those glands and nerves are connected...the opening of a petal to a certain light, the interval there...There is a relationship.

All of those are maneuverable...If you do not use them, if you do not remain aware of them, they must become atrophied. They must, like an athlete’s muscles, become absent, even deformed and almost non-existent. One presumes that they couldn’t become non-existent, but that they must become intangible. The whole relationship of that which I am referring to is already becoming invisible. In fact they are invisible, but they are tangible invisibles and they cooperate in the whole sense of this maneuverment of perception and comprehension in the invisible world.

“Therefore, you must perceive that when, as a destiny as a gardener, as a horticulturalist, you are putting your hand into paradise and taking the secrets through seed which are a part

of your relationship to the horoscope also, that you are bringing to this world a gift that only you can bring out of paradise into this world. What secrets are these that you possess, each individual of us? What incomprehensible secrets? This is where all of the great and beautiful fruit trees and forest trees and garden trees and shrubs and flowers and vegetables and grasses and cereals have all been born from. They didn't come through a ministry of agriculture and they never came, certainly, from a commercial seed nursery, for they had no such attribute or focus. They were brought by the will of the angels through an individual because he was an artist

in the performance of his destiny in paradise on earth. And these things, then, have excellent nutriment and they were grown in fertile soil and the soil was produced fertilistically, and the whole attribute and focus was one of beatific.

“Paracelsus also said in this matter that all of this plucking from heaven and bringing through seed into the earth is, in a sense, one. All birth comes out of one. But the moment it's born, it is two. The darkest shadow inside the highest highlight. But that, in origin, everything comes out of one, and that out of paradise into this world it is not possible to bring the malefic. The malefic is like a performance of misconception.

the alan chadwick living library and archive*

The Alan Chadwick Living Library and Archive was created to share the life, work, vision, and legacy of English master horticulturist Alan Chadwick (July 27, 1909–May 25, 1980) for historical, education, and research purposes.

In his youth and middle age, Alan apprenticed with world class gardeners, horticulturalists, and designers in Europe. According to Alan and his family, both he and his brother Sedon were tutored and influenced personally by the creator of biodynamic agriculture, Rudolf Steiner. Chadwick's artistic and cultural background, world travels, theatrical experience, and extensive training aided him in creating one of the most prolific environmentally sensitive, efficient, and beautiful horticultural approaches in the world.

Alan visited the West Coast beginning in 1967 at age fifty-eight. Over the next thirteen years, he created garden projects at the University of California Santa Cruz, and in Saratoga, Covelo, and at Green Gulch Farm in Marin County, California. His final garden project was in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley.

Alan once said, “In the garden, we are re-investing in simple garden tasks a sense of their true, deep significance.” Alan's entire gardening approach and his myriad techniques are

artistic craft and handiwork, thus using no fossil fuels or machinery.

Alan's vision for the future is critical. The archive includes core Chadwick principles that one finds nowhere else. An example is that he spoke of “varietal disintegration,” pointing out that most domesticated plants are growing weaker and weaker in vitality. Hence, humanity needs to reach back into the wild and select seeds of what he termed “wild origin force and strength... thus creating stronger and healthier cultivars and varieties...or crossing these ‘wild origin’ seed plants back into our weakened varieties...”

In 1977, Alan Chadwick was called by *Small is Beautiful* author E.F. Schumacher “the finest teacher of intensive horticultural, agricultural methods that I think the world possesses today.” Alan Chadwick was much more than a superb gardener. He was ahead of his time, and his time has now arrived.

For more information or to make a non-deductible donation, contact thealanchadwickarchive@gmail.com.

*Excerpted from the website pages <https://chadwickarchive.org/archive-purpose/> and chadwickarchive.org/about

Therefore, in a sense, it's like a shadow behind all the time. But it can grow into a parasite. That shadow can require feeding. And the physical development that is happening in the beatific can, through malformity of performance, sense the requirement of the malefic and, because of an unbalance required to feed it, will feed the shadow of the parasite and it can become a mania. It can become a total magnetic performance of requirement. Not only in an individual, but it becomes a mass. And what else has it done? Exactly what else has it become? What is it but that? It is so obvious, it is so clear. It is one huge mass of deformity. Where at one time everything would be thought of putting any gratuity into building a cathedral, and how all those cathedrals were in parks, how they must be in parks again. How we must build cathedrals in great gardens and never allow car parks and city tar and shops around them.

“Oh, sirs, do you see what we're looking at? We said we were going to study horticulture. And what is horticulture? You see how we've been caught? An incredible destiny, a new vision that includes the visible and the invisible, the spiritual and physical all at once. Not separate, no separation whatever but living together completely. You

cannot separate them. If you separate them, it can't work. There isn't any balance to work on. And the whole secrets, the whole mystery is in the leadership and is in this law of nature. It can't be found in the education of today. It can't be found in the verbosity of the mind. And you can't think that you're going to lead the mind into spiritual living and activity and vision by thinking in words. This is the huge thing of all the gurus tearing about in airplanes screaming their heads off. It's there all the time. It's terribly simple and it's right in front of the nose. This huge matter that one is talking about—the ritual of day and the ritual of the cycles of the year and the revolutionibus of the planet which we're going to discuss and go into—is exactly what we are. Poise. It's what everything is first. Poise. Balance between luciferic and ahrimanic. And within that poise is breathing. What is this huge thing, breathing? Who comprehends breathing? To some degree we have to because we're so gone. You can't study breathing, but you can perceive breathing. This whole thing of birth, of aurora, this great ritual that takes place. Breathing in and breathing out, that the whole of tides do, that the whole of earth does, that is summer and winter, the two opposites.

“ THEY DIDN'T COME THROUGH A MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE.... THEY WERE BROUGHT BY THE WILL OF THE ANGELS THROUGH AN INDIVIDUAL BECAUSE HE WAS AN ARTIST.

“ IT’S A SECRET AND IT’S A MYSTERY.
YOU CAN’T KNOW IT AND YOU CAN’T
UNDERSTAND IT.

“So it is that, in this madness of talking about the garden or the farm, we have come into this to think of food. Then you think of the emporium that sells it all in bags at a profit. And this food is what? It is exactly the same as breathing in and out. It is change. You stop breathing in and you breathe out. It will completely go to the opposite. And what is food? It isn’t what you eat that feeds

you at all. In a certain sense, not at all. It’s the metamorphosis. It’s what the bee does when it lives in the Venus, the love life of all of the flowers collecting the nectar and everybody thinks the bee collects honey...They don’t, of course, they collect the utmost bitterness and their acid blood then eschews with a saliva and metamorphoses that together and creates honey. This is exactly



PHOTO COURTESY OF CRAIG SISKI & THE ALAN CHADWICK LIVING LIBRARY & ARCHIVE

The Alan Chadwick Carmel-In-The-Valley Garden Project New Market, VA 1978-1979.

varietal disintegration

When Craig Siska of the Alan Chadwick Living Library and Archive was an apprentice with Alan Chadwick at Carmel-in-the-Valley, Virginia, Alan shared with him the following in a personal conversation, predicting what we now experience as so prevalent—"varietal disintegration":

"Take for example a wild pyrus (pear) in China, or the wild malus pumila or domestica in Asia (the apple). They are small, hard bullets, and almost inedible. Yes?

"Then humanity enters the scene and over eons of time brings them into what we call 'domestication' or 'under cultivation' and they slowly, over time, turn into large sweet balls of exquisite juice. Divinely edible. Pears sink and apples float: What does that tell you? However, there is a downside to that temporally bound gift from nature: It has lost its 'wild origin' strength, and we give them all sorts of names and call them 'cultivars,' and so forth. We graft. We employ vegetative propagation. Weakness enters the scene now. Always remember: Your strongest and best plants always come from seed, as the cosmic forces re-enter the flow of each species through seed. 'Idee!' Goethe, again!

"Do you now see our task as human beings 'WITH- in' the garden? We must supplicate once again, and ask nature to 're-give' a gift: we must be open to the angels and elemental beings showing us which specimens to select from the 'wild' as we call it and begin all over again to create new varieties for all of our 'domesticated' plants! All stone and pip fruits, all vegetables, herbs, ornamental plants, and, indeed, flowers! This is a huge vision and great work and a huge joy, and in some cases, as with certain trees, even multi-generational from the get-go!

"Let us cease talking and get busy."

what the whole procedure of food is. It is turning it from one live spiritual thing into another, that is angels, the hands of God. What an immaculate thing is food. How can you turn food into a utility? You can feed by breathing the ozone. You can feed by breathing when listening to music. You can feed by observing color. All of this is a form of food because it is a form of metamorphosis that is connected with the whole of the systems of the diaphragm and these glands and their relationships that one is talking about.

"So, you can no longer talk about having to grow something for utility. It's gone. I'm sorry. It's holy. It's a sacrament. The whole food and the whole idea of growing food is a beatific matter. Just as you grow a flower to love looking at it, so you grow a beautiful strawberry to exquisitely eat it. And the whole performance of a bee flying towards the sun because it has to go to the toilet. And the whole performance of the dew and the atmosphere of the whole earth going to the toilet. And you breathe it and you say, 'Oh! How exquisite is it all!' And how not only is deformity and unbalance not plucked from paradise, but is a shadow. It doesn't exist in totality at all.

"This whole attitude to the garden goes with that. The garden is for the garden. The garden is to the whole of nature. It is a reflection of man's exquisite performance of his directing of around him, and his influence is the whole environment. You can't see what is going to happen. Don't try. Dream, yes. Perceive the miracles, the stars that are going to happen. They will...You must realize that all of those things that we call thorns—like on thistles, like on gorse, like on blackberries—they're all part of what we're talking about here. When a cow goes along and does a cowpat on a thistle, the thorns of that thistle soften and start to become parts of the leaf. There is really one only, those other things are part of this ordinance." 🐾

the promise of community acupuncture

Together in Wellness

ZACHARY KREBS

The question “What is health, and how do we create and sustain it?” has interested me for over a decade. After graduating from a community health undergraduate program and later an acupuncture school, becoming a licensed acupuncturist, and speaking with numerous experts, I have settled on the idea that healing is closely coupled and co-produced with biological, environmental, and social influences. Becoming healthy is something that is nuanced and contextual—and oftentimes a radical act—for a person or a community.

I have come to appreciate healthcare options that are simple, elegant, and layered with principles and evidence about how healing takes place. And this is where community healthcare comes into the picture. My experience is with community acupuncture, a healthcare modality that has a long history of providing an accessible way for people to heal together. It comes out of a movement to bring healthcare to disadvantaged and vulnerable communities in need. By creating a space for every socioeconomic class to mingle and receive regular treatment together, many established social norms are challenged and visions of new arrangements for oneself and society can be accessed. The successes and lessons of community acupuncture, along with other sliding scale



“Our patients love community acupuncture, as it is an affordable way to get amazing healing! Everyone can afford it and thus come frequently enough to actually get completely well, as opposed to getting their pain levels low enough to tolerate it and then stop due to expense. They also like spending time in a calm and healing environment where they are not judged in any way.”

— Allyndreth Stead, MACOM, L.Ac.,
owner of White Phoenix Acupuncture
in Portland, Oregon

models found in Western medicine, can serve as an inspiration for how we think about healthcare more broadly.

A Radical, Transformative Approach to Community Health

The history of community acupuncture in the United States is one of necessity and radical action to help heal, transform, and sustain communities in times of need. During periods of social and political turmoil, people tend to benefit from having stable access to community-owned and -operated medical resources that can help keep them relaxed, out of pain, and regulated. At a glance, community clinics are relaxed places to go, hang out, and get the therapeutic and scientifically proven benefits of acupuncture. But they are so much more than that; they are places you can find inspiration to change yourself and the world around you.

By softening your muscles, behaviors, worldview, and most importantly your expectations, everything around you can make space for something new. As we slowly regain our experience of health, our renewed connection and health also affects and helps those in need around us. This is the original method of healing, as it was taught to me: simply by learning how to learn, how to sense the world in a distinctly natural and human way again, we can transform ourselves and everything around us. It is easier and more effective to realize this and maintain changes when you are seen, supported, and integrated into your community. Just like you can relax a muscle in a well-structured posture held for a sufficient amount of time, you can relax into a chair or table in a safe acupuncture session.

This style of acupuncture represents a place where you can be yourself, yet still receive help

with dignity. While I am also a proponent of many parts of the Western medical model, the lengthy intakes, high costs (even when insured), and brief conversations with busy and overworked clinicians can leave some of us feeling unheard and stressed—not to mention the racism, sexism, and prejudice inherent in many of the systems available to us.

Public health offices and the biomedical healthcare system are doing this to a certain extent, but they are struggling as well. There is a healthcare personnel shortage that will continue to grow every year. “The Association of the American Medical Colleges (AAMC) predicts a shortage of anywhere between 37,800 and 124,000 physicians in the US by 2034,”¹ leaving us with gaps in coverage. Gaps tend to affect the poor and disenfranchised at a disproportionate rate. In addition to this, recent data shows that changes in eligibility policies will lead to an increase in how many people are uninsured over the next decade to 8.9% from 7.7%.² This is something community acupuncturists are extremely interested in.

Many people struggle to pay their premiums and co-pays, or simply do not receive enough acupuncture treatments from their plans to reach therapeutic efficacy. This gap is what community clinics try to fill, operating as safety nets for people who can’t afford their medication, suffer from side effects, or simply have chronic conditions that respond better to regular acupuncture than other interventions. Also, some people genuinely love acupuncture and just prefer it over other treatment options.

Community acupuncture clinics provide treatments that keep you well and help reverse or slow many existing disease processes. What if we had a clinic in every neighborhood, like a local market or convenience store? Community clinics are like keystone species, an organism that helps hold the system together. They also have a general template for how they operate. In this practice style, one or many practitioners treat groups of patients

at once, often in the same room, and charge for the service on an affordable sliding scale. This might seem like a privacy violation to the skeptical, but in practice it makes the clinic safer, because there are more eyes on a given situation than in a private practice setting. Practitioners typically adhere to trauma-informed care standards of safety, cultural respect, and trust and transparency, and they seek to treat everyone as a whole person and not simply a list of symptoms. You get in, pay, and get to receive acupuncture in just a few minutes without a ton of fuss.

The concept and practice of people receiving acupuncture together in a room at a low cost or for mutual aid originates in China and was brought to the US by the activists at the Lincoln Detox Clinic at the Lincoln Hospital in the South Bronx in the 1970s. There they used a simple and effective five-needle ear protocol to help reduce withdrawal and craving symptoms, alongside other community services.³ In addition to this history, many pioneering Chinese-born and Chinese-American herbalists and acupuncturists like Dr. Ing Hay and Miriam Lee brought Chinese medicine and acupuncture to their communities at their own personal and legal risk,⁴ before the acupuncture profession had implemented the regulation of the filiform needle and the education and testing system we now have.⁵

Inspired by the work of the Young Lords and the Black Panthers at the Lincoln Detox clinic, Lisa Rohleder and Skip van Meter, founders of Working Class Acupuncture, began to adapt the group treatment model to the wider American audience in the 2000s by utilizing La-Z-Boy recliners instead of massage tables in their treatment rooms. This allowed them to work with more patients, eliminate barriers to care, lower the cost of treatment, and fine-tune the financial model.⁶ They were guided by the idea that we should use what is available to us to help people. They taught around the country (and still teach at POCA Tech, which offers a three-year, master's-level program),⁷ sharing their insights

with people wishing to help their communities. Also, interestingly, their model closely matched the understanding in the science of acupuncture that treatment frequency is a large and important variable in a patient's recovery.⁸ What is the use of the best acupuncture in the world if someone cannot afford it, get it regularly, or gets hurt in the process of doing so?

The volume of community clinics exploded in the 2000s and peaked as COVID-19 struck in late 2019–2020, and they have been adapting and evolving ever since. There are hundreds of clinics providing this style of medicine across the country, each with its unique flavor and nuance. For instance, many of my favorite clinics also offer Japanese acupuncture, herbal medicine, facial rejuvenation acupuncture, massage, reiki, hypnotism, and group exercise classes in addition to community acupuncture. The economic shift after COVID caused many clinics attached to the traditional business model to shut their doors or change the way they operate.

Healing Ourselves, Each Other, and Our World

I see community acupuncture as a beautiful innovation and a balancing act that brings other forms of Chinese medicine to people in the community at affordable rates. Community clinics provide a way to help people regularly access healthcare and oftentimes meet other people struggling with similar health concerns. Many health conditions can be so chronic and debilitating that depression and other mental health problems accompany them as comorbidities, leaving many people stuck and unsure of what to do next. Barriers to care can be extremely high, and even higher for people in constant pain. But in this model, healthcare is something we all participate in together, and we are not seen as failures for experiencing illness, nor for needing help to recover. There is a

“Community acupuncture, to me, is making acupuncture accessible. So many times during a shift, people tell me they couldn’t get it if they hadn’t found this model or my clinic. It does create some unique challenges, though. We need bigger spaces, more supplies, and the ability to communicate and schedule a lot of people per day. It can also be physically demanding. I think that, working within the pandemic and economic challenges that we face in 2024, clinics need to be able to adapt and change some things while maintaining the core values of keeping things affordable.”

— Mayo Mercedes Wardle L.Ac,
Owner and Acupuncturist, Herbalist at Phoenix
Community Acupuncture, Arizona

purposeful reduction of barriers to care, to make it easier for you to come in and come back. The reality and basic assumption that underpins the philosophy of many clinic owners is that we live in an illness-producing and oftentimes toxic economic system that triggers, exploits, and harms us—and it is far too easy to blame ourselves for everything that has gone wrong in our lives, especially our health. In the back of our minds, we may guiltily ask ourselves: *If we’re not healthy and productive, do we have any value?*

There is a desperate need for community-based healthcare options in the US that recognize the social determinants of health are a major factor in our health outcomes. Pain is felt more in isolation and mitigated in community and shared spaces. While our choices influence our health outcomes to an extent, we live in a greater ecosystem and experience the advantages and disadvantages of the terrain. We inherit the powers and poisons of the world around us. As many of my friends from the biodynamic farming and gardening world tell me, the farm is a living organism that responds to the influences from above and below. Likewise, we as humans exist between the influences of heaven and earth, with

an interchange and connection between all three. In other words, the things that are going around inside and outside of us affect us, *all of us*. Having access to a form of medicine that can allow us to regain function and participate in our lives again gives us all a better chance to heal and face the issues coming our way.

Community acupuncture—with the elegance of gentle medicine, the low cost, the ubiquity and availability of the offering, and the ability to connect and rest with your local community—is a boon in a world that can feel isolating and painful to connect with.

If you’re interested in learning more about acupuncture, and especially community acupuncture, the POCA Coop website (pocacoop.com) is a wonderful resource. If you were inspired by this article and want to have a try at becoming a community acupuncturist, please check out my alma mater, POCA Tech, where Lisa Rohleder and Skip van Meter still teach (www.pocatech.org). 📖

NOTES

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Zachary Krebs is a Licensed Acupuncturist at White Phoenix Acupuncture in Portland, Oregon, as well as Co-Director of the Biodynamic Association. He enjoys spending time in nature, practicing Chinese martial arts, and drinking as much Taiwanese oolong tea as possible. His belief is that a truly integrated health model needs to combine science with tradition and cultural competency to fully uplift a population to sustained wellness.

choosing to see through the ‘observer self’

“I Can See Clearly Now”

ROBERTA NELSON

Imagine starting up your motor vehicle discovering accumulated grime on your windshield. Your vision is impaired. What’s your response? Do you drive anyway?

Windshields are akin to our field of consciousness. How so? Both accumulate matter. Both collect stuff. Windshields pick up all that the environment produces—rain, sunshine, dust, sleet, snow. Everything the windshield comes across collects on the windowpane, impacting the driver’s vision of the road ahead. Our field of consciousness builds up content, too. It absorbs all sensory experiences.

Sensory data extends beyond touch, hearing, smell, taste, sight. It also includes:

- your sense of well-being
- your body or sense of life
- the warmth present in the environment or projected towards you from others
- language spoken
- your sense of movement or positioning of your body
- your faculty to sense your inner thoughts

- the aptitude to truly sense the individuality of another, to genuinely listen to or see the other without your assumptions and projections.¹

What collects in our field of consciousness includes all things beautiful, pleasing, hurtful, wounding, threatening, violent, joyful, delightful. Sensory information builds up, affecting our vision, our perceptions, our biases, and our three soul forces of thinking, feeling, and willing/doing.

Once aware that vision is compromised, I can imagine that you turn your windshield wipers on. If the wipers fail, I picture you getting out of your vehicle and doing whatever necessary to ensure that you can see clearly. Why clean your windshield? Undoubtedly because you want to protect yourself and others before you drive, and that requires unobstructed vision.

Whether it’s a vehicle’s windshield or the field of consciousness, both need watchful attention to what has been built up on its surface—or, in the case of consciousness, what has been picked up and stored. Real caring for self and for others depends upon clear vision. Surely, we do not want to only clear our windshields; whatever we

have gathered in our consciousness is just as likely to obscure our vision as the environmental accumulation on our windshields.

What is an example of “obscured” and unnoticed components muddling up consciousness, preventing our ability to see a situation—or another person—clearly?

Take a moment to honestly review your personal or professional life. Do those around you say that you often state what they should or ought to be doing? Do you experience resistance or dismissal from others after you have stated what you see as necessary changes or activities? Do you experience frustration with others who assert that you are misusing your power and authority, that you are misguided? Do others speak out against your demands, resulting in conflict and tension? Do you know someone like this?

This person is unaware of what has accrued on their psychological windshield, affecting thoughts, feelings, and actions and, in this case, leading to “Top Dog” and “Under Dog” scenarios. These are internalized psychological parts—a.k.a. subpersonalities, roles or parts coloring our viewpoint, attitude, feelings, and actions. “Top Dog” and “Under Dog” were coined by Fritz Perls, father of Gestalt Therapy. In relationships, the “Top Dog” makes demands often dictating how one should act in a certain manner. The “Under Dog” resists the orders or claims. Dynamics between these two “identifications” set up sabotaging behaviors; a deadlock happens. Both parties are unconscious of their “installed” filters contributing to a dysfunctional cyclic relational pattern.

If you are identified with either part—“Top Dog” or “Under Dog”—a psychological filter develops. All sensory information, not unlike a windshield, will flow through this filter. In this case, you would think, feel, and act out the Top Dog role, experiencing the consequences, the frustration, while sincerely believing that the Under Dog is the problem—unable to discern, or take responsibility for, your own thoughts or behaviors in the conflict.

Whether driving a vehicle, or navigating life, clear seeing helps! We can learn to recognize, and then experience, that we possess an ability to create an inner “gap” between what we take in and our subjective personal feelings or opinions. In psychosynthesis—a spiritual psychology, founded by Roberto Assagioli—experiencing this “gap” is achieved by activating the “Observer Self”² and is a starting point for recognition of content stored in our consciousness.

Recognition requires more than turning on the windshield wipers. Since we humans resist waking up to unbiased vision, all sorts of psychological and relational storms are frequently the prelude to attaining clear vision. Hurt and suffering are often the gateway to the ancient adage “Human: Know Thou Thyself.” When you recognize that your vision is impaired, you enter into the possibility for seeing clearly, for real freedom.

With recognition comes choice: *Do I accept and transform what I “picked up” from my environment? Do I clear my windshield, i.e., my point of view, and improve my capacities to see truly how I operate and who I am? Am I committed to freeing myself of self-absorption or egotism, of internalized roles, biases, preconceptions, prejudices that cloud my vision of myself and others?* If the answer is “yes,” awakening the “Observer Self” gets you there.

Try this exercise from psychosynthesis called “Who Is Aware?”³ Look about you. Take in the place where you are sitting and ask yourself: “Who is aware?” Again: “**Who** is aware?” What do you experience? What is your reply?

I have facilitated this simple yet significant activity numerous times with a variety of groups. It confuses and mystifies some participants. Rarely do I hear: “I am! I am attentive. I am mindful.” If you can achieve this inward experience to the question “Who is aware?” then you are in the “gap,” the space of awareness, *not* in the content of your consciousness. You are in an unbiased position of witnessing the field of consciousness, presenting

you with the power to analyze the content. When employing the “Observer Self,” genuine choice arises.

If we long to put a stop to relationships controlled by our personal feelings, likes and dislikes, our viewpoints, biases or opinions, it is essential that we become attentive to what has accumulated in our field of consciousness. Once aware of the content of our consciousness, choice arises—a soul-spiritual position that is uniquely human. When we grasp that we have choice around what we think, feel, and how we act, then freedom begins.

Then we can sing:

*I can see clearly now the
rain is gone*

*I can see all obstacles in my
way*

*Gone are the dark clouds
that had me blind⁴*

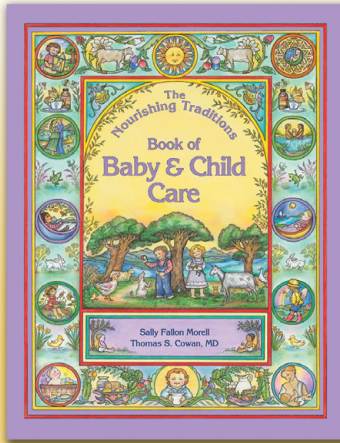


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It's a Sign

MARY LOU SANELLI



On a bright September morning, I drove out to Rob Satterwhite's shop on Bainbridge Island, Washington. Rob is a metal artist. The first time I viewed one of his sculptures, I felt a sensation, something akin to seeing a dogwood in bloom, but more unexpected. It made me wonder if I could combine the beauty of his work with my writing, a question I'd been asking myself almost daily since receiving an Individual Artist Grant from Arts & Humanities Bainbridge—a grant to create a sign.

A sign!

Wonderful because, frankly, when else would I find the time to create a sign? It's not like me to get up in the morning and ask myself, *What will my next sign be?*

And not just any sign. A beautiful sign. A sign that takes a little time to read and absorb. A sign that talks up to you, not down. A sign that reminds us that there is something larger than us. Because there is. And I'm relieved about that. A sign that has nothing to do with a culture shaped by people like Bezos and Zuckerberg and Musk (so that you feel despair after reading it, drained of your vigor and privacy and sense of purpose). A sign that is not more than what it is. That is, nothing pretentious. Positive but not pretentious. A sign that could be fun

to notice on your way to god knows where, and think, *What's that?* before you walk over to read it.

Remember the word *fun*.

The day was warm, and the view from Rob's yard was spectacular. In terms of the island, where nearly fourteen percent of the land is protected open space, Rob's lot is relatively small. But Eagle Harbor stretches far as one can see. In a world that is reeling from the result of human endeavor, it's a comfort to stand where nature still reveals its full range of splendor. I register these places on the island the way one would this year's seventy-degree mid-March days: startling but wholly appreciated. From this vantage point, I could picture the island not as it appears on the maps—small, inhabited, full of parks, roads, and woodland—but as it might appear to one of the herons flying overhead on their way to the rookery across the harbor.

It wasn't all that long ago when bird flocks were so large they blocked the sun. That might not be true today, but herons did seem to be everywhere—standing in the mud on shore, in the trees nearby, soaring above. But honestly, even when I'm in the presence of only one heron, it is enough.

And why, when Rob showed me the shape of a heron cut into red steel, it made everything, yes, and every way forward clear. I love these moments of clarity that take me by surprise. They trigger an eager mix of feelings: possibility and want. I wanted that heron. And I wanted that red. "I love the red," I said.

Rob raised an eyebrow. He smiled. And what his smile said to me was, *I love red, too*.

That was part of the problem. In the Pacific Northwest, people don't often wear or decorate in red. One of my favorite moments occurred right then: Rob didn't care what most people do any more than I did. He freely paints cold, hard steel a

soft, warm red. On my drive home, I could hardly contain my excitement.

When my husband and I bought our first house in Port Townsend, Washington, I wanted to paint it red (Caliente by Benjamin Moore), but he insisted "gray was better."

"For whom?"

"Well," he hesitated, "for resale." When I reminded him I wasn't planning on selling anytime soon, he said, "even so . . ." and that was that. He painted it gray (Benjamin Moore Edgecomb Gray). For the record, this would not happen today.

I don't know the word for this refusal of red. Reserved, probably. But it could just as well be inhibited. "We like muted tones," my neighbor once said about her new welcome mat, and that seemed about right. My mat, directly across from her door, is a garland of red radishes in a yellow setting. I think it bothered her. She's since moved to Canada, and the new renter put down a brown rubber mat.

There's an old, red farmhouse overlooking Puget Sound. The last time I rode past it, I jumped off my bike to gaze at it. When a car turned into the drive, I didn't wave or even smile. I don't know why I didn't. I don't know why I just stood there as if possessed. That house—well, really, it was more than the house. It was the woman who lives deep inside of me who loves the Northwest, then can't bear it, then loves it, then longs for somewhere redder—the earth, the sky, the lipstick! *Va bene! Il rosso è bellissima!*

I can tell you that creating a sign is nothing like you think at first. Like most collaborations, ours was a long series of unforeseen challenges that felt like landing in a foreign land without a map. A creative effort has its own ideas, except they are also your ideas, so there is an integral push/pull. In this kind of process, I think you have to go through a lot of concessions before you are rewarded with that feeling of triumph. Turning a

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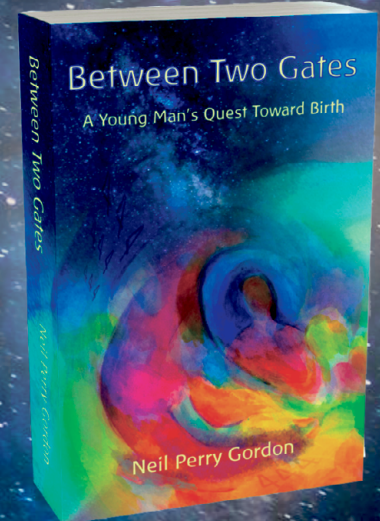
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sheet of raw steel into a sign stable enough for public display takes a lot of forethought, time, additional money, and faith. But I've learned that the best thing about teamwork is that you don't have to figure it out alone; you figure it out together. And if you keep your eye on the goal, something amazing eventually happens.

Something did. Our sign is sturdy. Red as heat. And *bellissima*, no question.

I nevertheless did not know where it would go.

Someone told me to contact Steve Rabago, the new director of Arts & Humanities Bainbridge, so that's what I did.

Timing is everything.

Steve told me that the new ferry terminal on Bainbridge Island was looking for an installation, and, well, one thing led to another in terms of paperwork and meetings on Steve's part because we were dealing with the *state* here. A few months later, I received an email with approval and a contact name. Our sign was to be installed in that little circular area off to the left of the remodeled Bainbridge ferry terminal.

I called Rob. I opened champagne.

A good example of the other shoe dropping: When it was near time to install our sign, our ferry contact said, "We decided to move in a different direction."

Those words, strung together in that order, can make you cry, and I cry easily.

"What direction?" I asked. But she didn't hear me, or didn't want to hear me, I couldn't tell which. I pretended to have some trouble hearing her, too, so she wouldn't be able to tell how upset I was. I felt powerless. I was standing in line at the Post Office. And the thing about cell phones is that your emotions are aired in the most public places. I began to feel my head spin—not from disappointment, though I was certainly disappointed, but from the disturbing sense of what is all too familiar and tedious: bureaucracy. It sounded too

common to be untrue. "When were you going to let us know?" I asked.

"Someone should have called you by now." I was not surprised that she said this. I was even less surprised that she didn't admit that that "someone" was her. It's a lot easier to say that someone else should have done the right thing than it is to take responsibility. And right then, my dislike of bureaucracy grew second only to my disdain of art-by-committee, a process that is never about passion but red tape.

If you ever find yourself on the ferry from Seattle to Bainbridge Island, I hope you'll stop and look at the commemorative bust of Walter Keys that went up at the ferry terminal instead of our sign.

The first thing I thought when I saw it was, *Now, how can a red steel sign with a heron and a lighthearted message compete with a memorial bust of a civic leader and "veteran of the Spanish-American War" cast in bronze (bronze!)*.

It cannot.

And it's important to note that Walter is appropriately muted in quality and color. Walter is the real thing, which is to say he is the real thing to a public committee: a local businessman with a cigar and a fedora, while our sign would be considered . . . hmm. What is the word I'm thinking of here? Imaginative? Maybe. Whatever that is.

Walter's sign is informative, though not inspiring, not like an amazing work of art, which people stand in line to see, for good reason. Walter doesn't stir your imagination; he states the facts, which isn't the same as imaginative. And our sign, well, our sign makes people smile, and this makes me happy because I like when my work does that.

My point is: memorial statues are not meant to make anyone happy, they are meant to inform. And to be fair, this is, and should be, the first concern of any administration.

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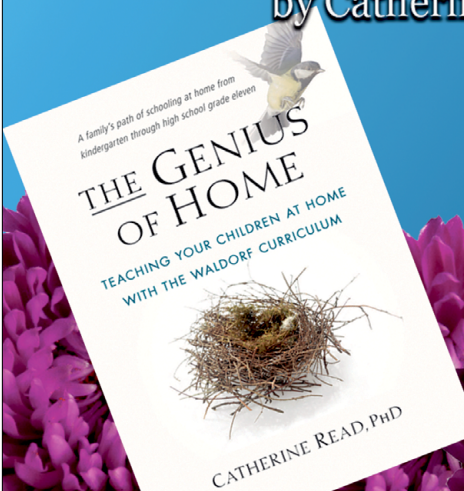
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What happened next may have occurred simply because I was so determined. I asked the kind owners of our island's Town & Country Market if they'd consider our sign, and they said they'd love to have it. Actually, I don't think they used the word "love." That's me. That sounds more like me.

The day our sign was hung, I walked the entire length of the sidewalk in front of the market—starting at the real estate office to the east, to the Eleven Winery tasting room to the west. I was suddenly aware of how our grocery store always makes me feel more attached to my community, welcomed, moored.

It was a sign.

Whenever I get a sign like this—and this sign was *about* a sign, so there's that—when things seem to come together and my life and work are back on track (which is always temporary, so best to celebrate at once), when it feels as if all moments from here on in couldn't possibly be better than this—the same way you might feel on a glorious day if, say, you are on a picnic with the love of your life *and* your closest friends—I always wish my mother was alive and could share in my happiness. I wish she could read our sign or sit on the bench across from it and watch others read it. I don't need to make her proud; she was always proud of my accomplishments. I just want to remind her that it's possible to get what we need when we need it. Forbidden to study art by her parents (who insisted on hairdressing school,

and she didn't fight them on it; she was never powerful), I'd like her to see how their denying her dream helps motivate me to just keep at it.

Fatima, my friend who lives in my building, smart about all things artistic, says that our sign "got the better spot." Which is why I love Fatima. She always says something uplifting. I didn't ask her to say something to make me feel better. I wasn't fishing; she just knew what I needed to hear. We laugh a lot. Trust arrives as soon as I'm in her company, the second we start talking, and I know how lucky I am to have met her. We were sitting at an outdoor café, people watching and enjoying the warmth. It's spring now, and the sun hits our sign at a different angle, but there it is, looking as if it was designed for the very spot it now hangs.

Over the last year, I've told everyone in my inner sphere this story. I've even told innocent bystanders waiting for the ferry. I've told anyone who would listen. And now I'm telling you. Because every reader makes a difference. Because I'm comfortable with you. God, I am so grateful to you.

But readers, let's be clear, it was less a choice than a matter of grit. Our sign had nowhere else to go—I did it for the sign. 📌

Mary Lou Sanelli is the author of *Every Little Thing*, a collection of essays that was nominated for a recent Washington State Book Award. In *So Many Words*, her newest collection of essays about living in the Northwest, is due out in September. Other titles include poetry, fiction, nonfiction, and a children's title. A professional speaker and a master dance teacher, she lives with her husband on Bainbridge Island, Washington. www.marylousanelli.com

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THE IN/VISIBLE EYE

close our eyes and
the Great Veil recede into the Earth
our Mother's consciousness vibrating

across parallel lives
across Universes
with whispers of history and

spoken in the human
that multi-shaded rainbow
of meaning and experience

find a pool and dive in
the sorrow and joy of all the ages
of those among us yet invisible

tap your forehead thrice and
through interstellar
to a future bright and warm

where all
come true and
becomes the universal dream

open your eye and
it is all within
it is all possible

see
and feel
together

interconnected
possibility

language
an ocean

share
stories

transport
time and space

dreams
reality

see
you and everyone
together

— NICO HAVEN

Nico Haven (they/them) is managing editor of *LILIPOH*. They are queer, trans nonbinary, and autistic, and they write novels, poetry, essays, and memoir. They are based in Philadelphia.

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