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Gestalt-Dialektik

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Mission Statement

The specific purpose of Gestalt-Dialektik is to set up the necessary infrastructure at all levels of society in order to promote the transformational process of the human spirit and consciousness from a lower **dialectical level*** as measured by a specific set of cultural values into the next higher one within the context of child and human development. In other words, via the establishment of philosophical and pedagogical centers worldwide and a special **poetic-music continuum** for every targeted language a specific dialectical pedagogy, **__which integrates different schools of thought__**, will be set in place in order to guide and promote all human beings, beginning as early as possible in the life of a child so that they, as they grow into adulthood, may reach the highest dialectical levels possible in all factors concerning human existence, especially in regards to multilingual-musical education, multicultural understanding and reasoning as well as ethical, moral, character and personality development of the highest spiritual order possible. Therefore, it is hoped for example that all preschool children in our philosophical and pedagogical centers may in due time become the true multicultural-multilingual universal citizens that our increasingly materialistic and degenerating world may need in order to promote peace, justice, human dignity, and happiness in the third millennium vis-à-vis a set of cultural values according to our Judeo/Christian traditions.

Section 1

Gestalt-Dialektik's Pedagogical Philosophy

1.1 The Ends and Means of Gestalt-Dialektik Concerning Education

From a social, historical, psychological, philosophical perspective, “Gestalt-Dialektik” may be defined for all practical and philosophical purposes as the transformation of psychic development and human consciousness into a higher level of awareness, especially in regards to cultural understanding, reasoning, ethical and moral behavior in any human being. Insofar as child development is concerned, the focus of Gestalt-Dialektik may be approached from a pedagogical philosophy that includes at least three major factors:

- A) Individualized Education
- B) Cultural Understanding and Reasoning
- C) Spiritual Development¹

These three factors should be viewed as the three general goals of Gestalt-Dialektik and as the end results of a transcendental pedagogical philosophy and not as the means per se. Furthermore, they are postulated as the corner stones of character and personality development, without which no transcendental education is possible.

However, the means to achieve such “transcendental end results” may be found in a theory of human development based on transformational processes that are dialectical in nature. **In this sense, a human being may be transformed via the internalization of certain culturally bound sign systems.** This is the essence of Vygotsky's dialectical approach (1978, 1999). In other words, the sign systems that humans have developed in order to conduct themselves in a given culturally bound enterprise are the very means of cultural development once they become an integral part of both, the individual and the social consciousness as a whole. Humans, in this sense, construct their own paradigms of social and individual development and as such become the very founders of their monuments.

Under this dialectic perspective in accordance to Gestalt-Dialektik it is the spoken word under which all other sign systems may be reflected. That is to say, the “spoke word” becomes the “measuring device” of the entire phenomenological and dialectical approach to teaching and learning. Furthermore, poetry and music, which are the two most natural allies of the spoken word, become the two most significant vehicles in order to carry out the human enterprise of teaching and guiding a child in his overall education.

It is the spoken word via music and poetry in combination with the three aforementioned factors that allow for the best education to take place. In other words, a) individualized education, b) cultural understanding and reasoning, plus c) spiritual development (ethical and moral education) are best reflected in a pedagogical philosophy in which the spoken word becomes the spirit and the essence of the activities taken place under the guidance of the classroom teacher or tutor. In this case, the dialectical process is in and of itself as transcendental as the very objectives to be achieved. It is important that the children reach higher academic standards, but equally important are the means by which the children achieve them. The ends may or may not justify the means (that depends on a lot of factors that cannot be discussed in this introductory phase of Gestalt-Dialektik), but one thing is sure: as

¹ Issues related but not limited to ethics, morality, education, character and personality of a child, etc.

far as the pedagogical approach is concerned, the means, in this case the power of the spoken word and the internalization of cultural sign systems as a whole, do justify the ends.

This should not be viewed as the negation of any Adlerian teleological perspectives in which for example an objective may become so vital that if not taken into consideration the corresponding classroom or cultural activity may become monotonous, dull or meaningless. **However, when the power of the spoken word becomes the means to an end, that is, the very vital force to reach an objective, then it is not the objective or the goal per se that is guiding the entire learning process, but rather both the goal and its corresponding means, both factors bound together in a dialectical unity that bring forth the dynamics of all paradigms related to teaching and learning.**

At any rate, it is believed that significant approaches have been developed in the areas of initial reading and writing (via a music/poetic continuum that is constantly being enhanced and improved), basic arithmetic instruction as well as foreign language acquisition and early childhood music education. Now, it is a matter of testing these methods in any multilingual-multicultural program and especially via the establishment of magnet and charter schools throughout the USA with a strong focus on the following academic areas (specific goals of the program):

- A) Literacy Acquisition & Development: initial reading & writing and other literacy competencies in English, Spanish and German.
- B) Music Acquisition and Appreciation in several European languages.
- C) Arithmetic Instruction in English, Spanish and German: preschool & elementary school level.
- D) Foreign Language Acquisition: initial, intermediate, advanced and mastery levels of Spanish, English and German beginning at the preschool level.
- E) Literary and Philosophical Acquisition & Development in at least three languages: literature, social studies and history from a philosophical perspective for both the elementary and secondary pupils.

1.2 Definition of Dialectical Levels within a Specific Set of Cultural Standards

In order to understand what is meant by “dialectical levels as measured by a specific set of cultural and academic standards into the next higher one” (see mission statement), let’s analyze some factors concerning psycholinguistic development. For example, one set of “cultural standards” may be defined as the psycholinguistic level of each child, that is, the “age appropriate levels” of the expected syntactical, morphological and semantic levels that a child of any age is expected to master. In this case, it is widely recognized that a child begins to speak his/her first words around his/her first birthday and that there is a general grammatical explosion by the end of the second year of life. By age four the average child should be able to master most syntactic forms of the native language and by age six “psycholinguistic mastery” should be completed by most children. In other words, they may be able to express almost anything they want to say without any syntactical and other grammatical errors.

According to Chomskyan generative grammar (Pinker, S. 1994), all children have an innate instinct for language and if given a normal² psycholinguistic environment (that is, all adults and peers interacting with the child do speak a specific language at mastery level) all children are expected to master their native language within their first years of life. From a psycholinguistic perspective, we may therefore postulate the first three “dialectical levels” in child development:

- A) The first may be defined as that period in a child’s life beginning in the pregnancy period (as of the sixth month) until the first birthday in which the child has not yet “discovered” the symbolic value of the native language. That is to say, the child interacts with the mother without having discovered for example that objects have names. There may be a form of “emotional language,” but there is no symbolic grammar or communication pertaining to language per se.
- B) The second dialectical level may be hypothesized as that level in which the symbolic value of language has been discovered and in which a syntactical and overall grammatical explosion takes place, beginning in the second year of life and ending by the end of the fourth beginning of the fifth year. According to Vygotsky, “the most significant moment in the course of intellectual development, which gives birth to the purely human forms of practical and abstract intelligence, occurs when speech and practical activity, two previously completely independent lines of development, converge” (1978, p. 24).

It is clear and transparent that around the second year of life, there is a “dialectical leap,” that is, a new awareness because the child discovers that objects have names and that language becomes the main vehicle to communicate. In other words, the “spoken language” in effect has transformed the child, which Vygotsky refers as the most significant moment in the child’s life in the course of intellectual development. Consequently, the child is no longer the same: he or she is now a new child from any social and psycholinguistic perspective.

- C) The third dialectical level may be defined as that period of life in which the child learns to express any desire whatsoever through the spoken language and in which the child has attained a certain level of literacy —, beginning with initial reading and writing at the preschool and Kindergarten level and ending with the ability to read and write simple stories typical of the second half of first grade. In other words, the child is in the process of attaining mastery of his/her native language through the spoken and written word. The child for example may be able to retell a story, explain what he or she is doing or simply communicate fluently without any syntactical errors.

On the other hand, this dialectical period is well recognized because it represents the period when formal education begins, that is, when the children begin to learn how to read and write. Furthermore, it is hypothesized that such a dialectical period ends by the end of first grade, once the children have discovered the power of reading and writing.

In essence, as soon as the children realize that the written word reflects the spoken language, then a dialectical level has taken place. In other words, learning how to read and write in and by itself “transforms the psyche of a child.” Once again, the child “has been born again” from a psychic point of view. He or she is a transformed human being if compared to the same child before he/she became literate. In other words, literacy changes the spirit and consciousness of a child.

² and sometimes even with a abnormal linguistic input

1.3 Empowering Children to Become Self-Motivated, Competent and Life-Long Learners

Under Gestalt-Dialektik motivation may become a function of competency. Under this theory, when the children become competent in any academic field, they also become more self-sufficient and thus more self-motivated. Multilingual-multicultural education leads to a life-long perspective of human existence in itself. As children acquire different languages, as they become more competent in music, as they succeed in all academic areas, then their lives do change forever. This is the essence of the dialectical philosophy of Gestalt-Dialektik as an interpretation of the Vygotskian principal of the internalization of sign systems.

Nothing is more transcendental than an open-ended pedagogical philosophy in which, for example, the pupils learn how to become independent from the teacher. As they enter into the higher elementary grades, the pupils shall be given greater domains of self-creativity and self-responsibility for all their academic and social undertakings. However, in order to reach such transcendental dialectical perspectives of self-sufficiency and life-long independence, the proposed program should at first be developed in such a way that upon entering kindergarten, children and parents would be following a philosophical and pedagogical curriculum of learning, living and existing. Thus, we also propose that parental involvement become a fundamental requirement along with a musical and poetic pedagogy in at least three languages (Spanish and English, and the third optional). A “musical-poetic continuum” (as designed by Gustavo Vieyra and Kodaly/Orff-Schulwerk consultants) shall be the heart and life of the entire learning and developmental process in which the mother language will serve as the starting psycholinguistic platform. The starting and ending points however, that is to say, the Alpha and the Omega of the entire philosophical infrastructure, shall be the “spoken word” in all its social, academic, psycholinguistic and last but not least spiritual consequences in which the native language shall become “dignified.”

1.4 “Sacred” shall be the native language of our future pupils

This means that children will be educated within the domains of a “psycholinguistic paradigm” based on the mother language without any exceptions whatsoever. Accordingly, the first language must be enhanced and enriched and therefore, socially promoted until such a time that the child has fully mastered all morphological, syntactical and semantic aspects of his/her mother language. I believe that the child thinks and acts through his/her first language, and therefore it is a fundamental aspect of his/her spiritual development.

In accordance to the philosophy of “Gestalt-Dialektik,” the spoken language is viewed as the reflection of the human spirit. Thus, the “spoken language” is sacred and can not be disposed of or disrupted the way it has been done in most school districts (with the exception of a few of them such as the Calexico Unified School District) in California as far as I’m concerned. For the most part, the school authorities in California have completely failed to see this aspect of culture from the perspective of a transcendental spiritual development. For example, as far as the Spanish-speaking population in the South West is concerned and especially by the third generation of “Latino children,” most school authorities have managed to replace Spanish with the English language, which began as a foreign language and therefore as a foreign aspect to their spirit within the first generation of Latinos.

A similar process of complete linguistic assimilation into the English language occurs with other foreign language minorities in the USA. Most second or third generation German-American children for example do not acquire mastery of the German language. First generation German parents usually do their best so that their children (for the most part from mixed marriages) may acquire an acceptable sociolinguistic level in the German language and culture, but with the weekend language and cultural programs being offered in Southern California by the German-American community or even with their yearly “vacations” to Germany, their children still do not manage to speak German with fluency by the time they graduate from High School.

On the other hand, if we were to respect the natural linguistic characteristics of a child within a philosophical and pedagogical curriculum, then we may be able to break the cycle of poverty and dysfunctional education that is evident in most school districts servicing the two biggest minorities (the Afro-American and Spanish-speaking population).

Furthermore, I believe that all children have the natural potential to master two languages before the age of ten if done properly in accordance to the sensitive periods of Maria Montessori. In my professional opinion, mostly all children have the potential of becoming completely bilingual by the age of ten. With some rare exceptions related to neurological pathologies, I believe that the success rate of becoming bilingual and bicultural by the age of ten is very close to a hundred percent.

On the other hand, it is expected that by the time our future students graduate from High School, at least twenty percent of them (be it from Afro-American, Hispanic or from any other racial and ethnic background such as the German-American community in Southern California.) has a natural potential of mastering at least three languages at an international level. In essence, I believe for example that at least twenty percent of all Afro-American and Spanish-speaking children that may be educated via our futuristic magnet or charter schools and other cultural institutions (such as music and sport schools) will be able to compete in the targeted three languages (Spanish, English and a third one optional) not only linguistically but also academically with any native speakers of the chosen languages. For example, if we were to establish a multilingual multicultural pre-school program in the area known as “Korea Town” (in which Spanish, English and Korean would be the three languages of instruction) in Los Angeles, then it is expected that “the targeted children” who grow up and continue in our programs until they graduate from high school will in turn be able to compete in any academic or cultural field with any student in Korea, Spain or England, for that matter.

1.5 The Socratic School of Thought within a Holistic and Paradigmatic Method of Teaching

The dialog, from a sociological and holistic perspective, is the best means to instill in the hearts of the children the essence of social undertaking. Literacy, therefore cannot be isolated from its social parameters. A fundamental factor of the Kindergarten and elementary school teachers is their ability to communicate with the parents all the academic expectations that they want to accomplish with their children.

Even though some parents (in the case of minority populations) live under very extreme poverty levels, they should be able to follow the homework guidelines if given a very concrete pedagogical format in terms of a practical continuum. Parents do not want to hear anything that is theoretical. They want a concrete and easy to understand “curriculum,” step by step.

Furthermore, the pedagogical continuum should not be made up of synthetic steps. “*The steps*” ought not to be the type that we see all over the world in which the lesson given in any curricular matter (math, reading, writing, etc.) is made up of synthetic and atomistic activities. On the contrary, “*the steps*,” should be analytic in nature in which each step represents a “Gestaltqualität,” that is, a very clear and transparent whole (i.e., a song, a poem, a story, etc. in initial reading and writing) dealing with a particular activity that can be understood and followed by both the parents and the child.

What is proposed is a paradigmatic way of teaching initial math, literacy, music/poetry, foreign languages and other competencies (the sense of time and timing, pacing, self-control, ecological awareness, drawing aptitudes, etc.) via “gestaltqualitäten” (Vieyra, 2004) that in and by themselves could represent simultaneous dimensions in the true interdisciplinary sense (i.e., teaching number sense and literacy skills in the same lesson as if the number --as a math concept-- and the syllable or word in a quantitative or operational format were to belong to the same cognitive reality).

In this paradigmatic spirit, what is being proposed is to teach reading and writing skills via a “poetic continuum” in such a way as to not only being able to teach for example literacy skills, but also music competencies via a music continuum in an artistic paradigm. Children would be learning, for instance, how to recite poems and sing several songs which later could become the building blocks to their literacy skills as well as to their music education. Thus, music, literature, literacy skills, math and social skills become united in the same cognitive and affective reality. The goal is to teach holistically and in an interdisciplinary fashion by all means possible. In this sense, the teachers may cover most areas of the entire metacognitive nature of the child. In other words, when the teachers follow a true interdisciplinary curriculum, they are able to “teach” within at least two academic areas.

On the other hand, the steps cannot and should not be synthetic in nature. Otherwise, the teachers would be making the same mistake of most curriculum developers, namely that of offering nothing more and nothing less than just another commercial and synthetic method, which at times could become a very “prescriptive” methodology. A synthetic and commercial method tends to ignore the creativity of the teachers because the only way to follow it is via a very atomistic and detailed inscriptive teacher's manual. With an analytic system, the method is open-ended, giving the teachers enough freedom to develop and create new approaches in reaching the same objectives. Teachers in this sense are not viewed as passive receptors and followers of a particular and atomistic curriculum, but rather as active and creative agents that may change the “suggested steps” or “curricular guidelines” as needed as long as the objectives are reached.

At any rate, a holistic philosophy along the philosophic lines of the Socratic school of thought should give our magnets or charter schools the broadest sociolinguistic perspective possible, in which the teachers, parents, children, school directors and community agents work in unison for the improvement of our society as a whole via the child’s educational process.

1.6 The Philosophy of Gestalt-Dialektik

Gestalt-Dialektik –via the foundation of learning programs and institutions such as the proposed multilingual, multicultural magnet or charter school– seeks to develop a holistic philosophical approach to teaching and learning through certain visual, performing, musical and pedagogical paradigms based on several schools of philosophy, __beginning with the Berlin School of Thought in gestalt psychology at the turn of the Twentieth Century, then the Kodaly and Orff holistic methodologies in early childhood music education, the Cartesian “Discourse of the Method” . . . , followed by “the Sensitive Periods” of Maria Montessori, the Socratic Oral Tradition and certain Vygotskyan, Adlerian and Jungian principles (i.e. Vygotsky’s law of proximal development). All of these schools are meant to function within an interdisciplinary scholarly methodology to be elaborated and elevated by the teacher via a specifically dynamic and aesthetic “poetic-music continuum,” which in turn assures the mastery of an x-number of corresponding paradigmatic levels of learning and development in a certain field of knowledge. At the end of the educational process I hope to be able to finally transcend into the Kantian Transcendental Idealism, especially in regards to ethical and moral human development vis-à-vis the Categorical Imperative.

1.6.1 The Kantian Categorical Imperative

Furthermore, a fundamental aspect of the proposed pedagogy is to establish a philosophical school of thought in order to create social, ethical and moral values. A pedagogical program would in effect be counterproductive if the children were to be raised within the domains of a “purely materialistic world.” What I basically claim is that character development is intrinsically related to the spirit, and the spirit is in turn intrinsically related to a life perspective. Children should not just become competitive in an academic and materialistic setting, but also compassionate and morally responsible to our society and to life as a whole. We must find answers to our ecological, economical and social dilemmas that our modern civilization is facing, and we therefore must establish not just an academic but also a philosophical pedagogy. In order to reach such an objective, I therefore propose the philosophy of Immanuel Kant as the philosophical foundation of our futuristic schools, especially in regards to the Kantian “Categorical Imperative,” the guardian of all our moral values.

Any moral and ethical practice of living (sharing a social environment of any kind) and of learning (such as a school environment) shall consider all the social and individual consequences of one’s actions vis-à-vis the universality of intrinsic philosophical values. For such a purpose, the “categorical imperative” of Immanuel Kant shall be firmly established and internalized by all pupils and scholars associated with Gestalt-Dialektik in order to oppose and to counteract any materialistically and thus superficially motivated behaviour such as rewarding pupils with any “material value” for any targeted “x-units of perceived or measured good behaviour.” Thus, the Kantian “categorical imperative” and its philosophical counterpart, the “Critique of Pure Reasoning” shall be the cornerstone and the transcendental moral philosophy of Gestalt-Dialektik. Furthermore, any other academic effort, such as the proposed “intensive multilingual, multicultural academic magnet or charter school,” shall also consider the Kantian principles of “Practical Reason.”

Accordingly, being centered in the Kantian practical reason for ethics, Gestalt-Dialektik has happily rescued Descartes’ Method without taking into account his metaphysical meditations for this matter. Nevertheless, Gestalt-Dialektik is aware of the fact that merging the Cartesian and Kantian philosophies does not function without certain basic contradictions

such as the concept of “clarity and distinctiveness” in René Descartes or the final access to the “noumenon.”³ In such a case, Gestalt-Dialektik will favour the transcendental philosophy of Immanuel Kant, who widely represents the entire philosophical system.

1.7 The Cartesian Principles of Gestalt-Dialektik

René Descartes’ basic methodological principle, which is holistic and thus analytic in nature, shall always be one of our guiding principles of all methodological efforts of Gestalt-Dialektik. Let’s review for example the four precepts of his “Discours de la Méthode” in his own words translated from French:

1. The first was never to accept anything as true that I did not evidently know to be such: that is to say, carefully to avoid precipitation and prejudice: and to include in my judgments nothing more than that which would present itself to my mind so clearly and so distinctly that I were to have no occasion to put it in doubt.
2. The second, to divide each of the difficulties that I would examine into as many parts as would be possible and as would be required in order better to resolve them.
3. The third, to conduct my thoughts in an orderly manner, by beginning with those objects the most simple and the most easy to know, in order to ascend little by little, as by degrees, to the knowledge of the most composite ones; and by supposing an order even among those which do not naturally precede one another.
4. And the last, everywhere to make enumerations so complete and reviews so general that I were assured of omitting nothing.

Descartes, R., 1994, p. 35

Furthermore, under the Cartesian method, any phenomenon must be “clear and distinct.” Otherwise, the basic objective is to undertake an analytical approach to the targeted problem in order to arrive at its synthesis, all done in a very careful and orderly manner. Thus, first comes clarity of purpose, then analysis, then synthesis and finally a careful account of the entire process in order to eliminate possible errors.

³ Noumenon: In German, “das Ding an sich,” in Kantian terms means the very essence of each entity, that is to say, the intrinsic essence of a “being” in specific terms related to any living or non-living existence in the past, present and future within the realm of any universe; in other words, the “thing in itself” without any form of categorization applied onto it. Consequently, it is “the of itself unknown and unknowable rational object, or thing in itself, which is distinguished from the phenomenon through which it is apprehended by the senses, and by which it is interpreted and understood; -- so used in the philosophy of Kant and his followers” (Webster’s 1913 Dictionary). Thus, according to Kant’s transcendental philosophy, the noumenon represents the very object of knowledge free from the pure intuitions (i.e. time and space) and categories that the “knowing subject” has to apply to it in order to built any objectivity and therefore become capable of knowing the object, after which it becomes phenomena, for the noumenon is unreachable for any rational being in “any possible world” or universe known or unknown. In essence, “cognition” as a constructive operation is contradictory to the possibility of ever knowing or reaching the noumenon.

1.8 **Alfred Adler: A Teleological Perspective of Child's Behavior in Accordance to Gestalt-Dialektik**

Hereby the broadest perspectives of life are at stake. Under such perspectives, a psychoanalytic view of the child as proposed by Alfred Adler will be fundamental to Gestalt-Dialektik.

According to Adler (Lundin, R. W., 1989), behavior deals with the personality in the first place. In the second plane, it deals with genetic dispositions. Therefore, behavior deals with the psychological as well as the biological and physiological make up of the child. However, from a teleological perspective, a child must also be understood in the affective domain: what the future intends to be or to become is the primary force, the *élan vital*. According to Alfred Adler, a child is first and foremost future-oriented in his/her affective constitution and secondly a product of his past biological and physiological process. The past and the future — the genetic and the future-finalism — function as two sides of the same psychic reality.

Cognition in its purest sense is safeguarded with its genetic infrastructure, with its past experiences, with its biological and physiological growth and thus with its inner tendencies. Therefore, cognition deals with the interactive processes of past domains that affect the present psychic state of being which includes intelligence. However, the spirit of the child is not so much caused-oriented, but rather mostly futuristic in accordance to Adlerian theory. Therefore, motivational factors in the classroom must, in most cases, reflect a futuristic view of life: what turns on the child's vital energies is to know that tomorrow shall be brighter, that the party on next Friday or next month is a life's imperative — that well, "I shall study so and so because I want to save the world from a future catastrophe."

Nevertheless, the nature of the goal very much depends on the ontogenetic and phylogenetic make up of the child. What occurred in the past is very much a part of the present sub-consciousness. In some instances, Adlerian theory may leave a lot to be desired. For example, one is part of a family and a society with their own pressing needs and if the family happens to be so poor so that there isn't enough food for every one, then a future goal will most likely be to satisfy one's hunger and instincts in the Freudian sense, and not in some futuristic day, but rather in the now and here, in the most pragmatic present tense. In this sense, a social and subconscious displacement may indeed be the case for a poor child in South Central Los Angeles, which thereafter becomes the anti-vital force, the anti-goal oriented psychic process. In such cases, the teacher must assess the individual psychological make up of every child in order to figure out what kind of goal making strategy will be most successful and productive.

On the other hand, in accordance with Adlerian deep psychology, it may be transcendental, suffice it to say, that the teacher and children together shall construct a make-believe world of their own, a fictional paradigm out of which the desired future-oriented energies shall flow. In that sense, the view of the teacher is one of an architect, one who's able to "produce magic," just like the author of the Harry Potter phenomena. As magician/architect, a teacher ought to know that children's motivation relies not so much in what the children did yesterday —, not even what they do today, but rather what they are capable of doing in a future full of magic. The teacher must be able to portray the "potentialities" of every child, not just of the "rich and famous" within the classroom, but of every single child, so that each one can view him- or herself in light of what he/she's capable of doing at least in a fictitious world. That is the reason that children love magic! Some children may even be able to see it as a form

of compensation for the cruel and cold realities of their lives: the poorer and the cruelest that their situation may be, such as in the case of the children in the third world, then the more reason to create a magical and spiritual world of “magical spirits” of many a kind vs. the cold and sometimes inhumane realities of our capitalistic world.

The magical world has been hidden for most of the children of the first world, but alas, one person took notice and likewise took advantage of the “magical vacuum” of their materialistic oriented reality in which they live and thus betook herself to create the Harry Potter phenomenon, which surprised the entire pedagogical community _ for who would ever believe that an 11-year old girl would read and reread the same thick book over and over again? This Harry Potter phenomenon is proof that our genetic and empirical world is far away from the psychic nature of children. Now, finally, one may try to synthesize “the empirical powers that be” with those of the unknown side of our sub-consciousness, but at the end, we may find ourselves in a magical world which we cannot control consciously, as in the case of Harry Potter, and thus we may end up as slaves of our own creation that may lead to psychic slavery. In all matters related to a “magical world,” we need to be very precautionous and above all, know what kind of a world we want for our children.

1.9 Pedagogical Objective

Under Gestalt-Dialektik, the pedagogical objective is to seek and discover paradigms of learning in a given academic field such as in initial reading and writing for the K-1 elementary school curriculum, arithmetic instruction in the lower elementary grades (such as but not limited to number sense, the algorithms of addition, subtraction, multiplication, division), etc. These so-called paradigms of learning are then systematized into “dialectical steps” of learning. Furthermore, these “dialectical steps” are to be “mastered” by the students via “units of learning” known as “gestaltqualitäten” that due to their dynamic analytic nature are to be considered not as “isolated phenomena,” but as “dialectic wholes” within a specific pedagogical paradigm. In other words, the “dialectical steps” are in effect “gestaltqualitäten” that due to their own analytic nature represent clear and transparent wholes (i.e., a song, a poem, a story, etc. in the mastery of “initial reading and writing “ in the K-1 curriculum).

According to gestalt psychology, a “gestaltqualität” is to be defined as a “whole” in accordance to the Berlin school of thought of Gestalt psychology at the turn of the twentieth century, which in essence is to say that “a whole is not just greater, but different from the sum of its parts.” Under such a principle, Gestalt-Dialektik must never start with the parts (of any given whole) as a basis of any learning process. Consequently, it must start not just with a whole, but such a whole ought to be socially dynamic and interrelated with other wholes. Furthermore, these “dynamic wholes” ought to become interrelated with their respective parts, and the parts in turn with one another in such a dialectical and therefore philosophical approach that the entire learning process becomes internalized via interdisciplinary paradigms of learning and development.

In such paradigms of learning and development, the child as an “individual human being” may also be the subject of investigation within the realms of a “supra-paradigm” as a socially, psychologically and metaphysically given entity.

1.10 The Polarization Effect: Three Hours of Intense Concentration

Another pedagogical objective is for the child to concentrate at least three hours of “intensive concentration” at the individualized level. Children with the help of the teacher, tutors and parents will be guided to concentrate on certain cognitive strategies (i.e. an hour or two of daily reading with a specific objective). As such, I would like to postulate the following hypothesis:

The rate of learning is a function of the transformational processes that take place during those periods of time in which a child is extraordinarily concentrated in any mental or artistic activity.

Reading books, writing essays and illustrating stories with an intense level of concentration will certainly transform the child’s psychic energies into higher levels of psychological development. This postulate correlates completely with the Vygotskian dialectical philosophy. In other words, a child is transformed as he or she internalizes any cultural set of abstract systems. Acquiring foreign languages, mastering a music instrument, learning the decimal system, learning how to read and write, etc. certain qualify as “abstract cultural systems,” which in effect become the basis of all transformational and developmental processes as the pupils master and internalize such systems.

In academic terms, it is my belief that there is nothing more powerful and effective than a child who is passionately reading a certain book for hours and hours. For example, the child will never be the same after he or she reads a Herry Potter book five to ten times. These extreme levels of extraordinary concentration in a particular mental or artistic activity (i.e. reading, writing, drawing, singing, etc.) is what Maria Montessori would call “polarization.” In other words, a child becomes “polarized” as he or she reads a book with a high degree of intensity. In my opinion, this strategy is more effective and powerful than any other methodology that any pedagogical authority may be able to establish worldwide.

1.10.1 Individualized Education and the Power of the Spoken Word

Under Gestalt-Dialektik the spoken word becomes transformed into one of the most powerful means of teaching when it is focused within a pedagogy based on “individualization principles.” A simple fact of life is that a child needs individualized attention in all matters concerning his/her cultural development. If that is the case, then we must realize that a teacher with 20 plus pupils is not able to individualize most areas of the curriculum (with some exceptions such as sports and other “group activities”).

Under Gestalt-Dialectics, the following hypothesis is postulated:

In order to individualize the school curriculum, the “teacher or tutor” would have to spend anywhere from 3 to 6 hours a day with each pupil within the realms of “intensive instruction.”*

(*see previous section)

Notice that I said “teacher or tutor” in order to make the point that individualized education must not necessarily be taught by a credentialed teacher. Under this thesis, a curriculum activity may also be taught by a tutor, that is, by any individual who is capable of inspiring and motivating any pupil in the mastery of any skill whatsoever. In this regard “individualized education” may become “**infinite**” as far as the spectrum of possibilities is concerned such as but not limited to the following cultural activities:

- A) A grand mother teaching her grand daughter how to sew a skirt or do any other needle work.
- B) A grandpa teaching his grandson how to play guitar.
- C) A mother teaching her son how to cook or how to decode the sounds of letters.
- D) Big brother teaching his little sister how to draw a horse or any other animal or object.
- E) The local church pastor teaching a child (under the auspices of the church's children ministry) how to recite a bible verse so that he may recite it before the church congregation.
- F) Homework Assignments: Parent or tutor helping out with the homework assignments.

On a daily basis, the parents or tutors will meet with the teacher in order to discuss the specific homework assignments based on the individual needs of the pupils and in accordance to the principles of Gestalt-Dialektik. Thus, homework will be tailored to the needs of the individual pupils according to their potential and academic abilities.

Notice that the education process is a function of all interpersonal learning possibilities within a community. It should not be viewed as a direct consequence of learning within the four-wall environment of the classroom, but rather as a function of all social interactions taking place with all adults that interrelate with the child in any social or academic context. Most of all, learning takes place at an optimal level either within a small group or within a one-to-one ratio. For this very reason, Gestalt-Dialectics postulates the following hypothesis:

Learning is optimized in small groups consisting of seven children or less guided by either a teacher or a tutor.

In most cases, small group and individual experiences for all practical purposes become equivalent in their function. That is to say, learning in such a small group environment is equivalent to learning in an individualized format because the teacher or tutor is still capable of meeting the needs of each individual child. With 5 pupils for example, the tutor does not lose sight of every child, but in a larger group context, such as trying to teach phonemic awareness to 20+ pupils even the best teacher is, in most cases, not capable of remedying the deficiencies or teaching to the capability of each specific child. Teachers in such cases do not teach to the individual, but to the theoretical average child. That is absurd from the sociological and anthropological point of view.

With a group of 20 children or more, a teacher may spend a couple of minutes with one particular child, but we know from experience that the "rest of the pupils" need constant attention. Thus, it becomes increasingly difficult to spend quality and individualized time with children in groups bigger than seven. Thus, Gestalt-Dialectics postulates individualized education in the form of a 1-to-1 ratio (pupil-tutor or pupil-teacher), a 1-to-5 ratio (likewise pupil-tutor or pupil-teacher) and a 1-to-7 ratio (pupil-teacher or highly qualified tutor-pupil). Each minute spent in either of these three forms is defined as "individualized education" for all practical and functional purpose. Thus, all efforts must be made in order to fulfill the time-requirements (anywhere between 3 to 6 hours of daily intensive individualized instruction) related to any cultural activity in which the aforementioned three factors become the ends to the powerful means of the spoken word and of other significant sign functions that need to become internalized in order to elevate the human spirit to the highest possible levels ever achieved by any human enterprise.

Section 2

Multilingual Education and Early Childhood Music Education

2.1 Maria Montessori and the Sensitive Periods of Child Development in Relation to Multilingual and Music Education

Our philosophical and pedagogical centers may include private or public multilingual-music preschools around the world as the foundation towards the establishment of higher learning institutions such as but not limited to private or charter schools in the USA or “staatlich anerkannte Schulen” (semi-private schools) in Germany. I propose to start as early as possible in the life of a child in accordance to the sensitive periods of Maria Montessori such as but not limited to the following issues:

- 1) **Linguistic Potential at an Early Stage of Life**--- Children will be exposed to a second language as early as possible. For example, all Spanish-speaking children in the USA are expected to fully become bilingual in English and Spanish after the fifth year of the proposed project. Also, at least 20% of the children would become fully trilingual in a third language of their choice once an appropriate academic and multi-linguistic pathway is followed into the High School years. Highly gifted children could of course learn more than three languages at an international level by the time they graduate from high school in the USA or for example from “das Gymnasium” (university-bound high school) in Germany.
- 2) **Music and Poetry**--- Efforts will be made to give high priority to piano, violin, vocalization, music instrumentation as well as poetry from the psycholinguistic and artistic developmental perspective. Music, poetry and drama will be the most important media through which the musical and poetic talents of the children will be exposed. Children will participate on monthly plays and other public presentations so that all community agents may see for themselves the effectiveness of a socratically-based philosophy in terms of real and transparent competencies (music, poetry, foreign languages, literacy skills, etc.).
- 3) **Academics**---Linguistic and academic comprehension through literature, foreign language acquisition, drama, poetry and other language arts plus music education, artistic awareness and excellent methods of reading at the early stages of life will be the means to reach knowledge in all areas of the curriculum.

In terms of the first issue, that is, in terms of the linguistic potential at an early stage of life I postulate language acquisition based on natural approaches, especially those based on music and poetry. However, I am also in the process of evaluating a method of teaching English as a second language based on the “concrete social setting” (see next section).

2.2 English as a Second Language in the Life of Spanish-speaking K-pupils

The Concrete Social Setting

In order for Spanish-speaking K-pupils to learn English as a second language, I propose a new **social and psycholinguistic order** in the daily life of the children. This requires the **transformation** of all social and psycholinguistic interactions from a monolingual format into a bilingual mind-set. With the help of the teachers, tutors, parents and adults Spanish-speaking children should realize the potential of communicating in English in all possible concrete social instances.

Essentially, all socially concrete interactions should be transformed into the English language. For example, if a teacher wants a K-pupil to act out certain social expectations, such as drinking water, sitting on a chair, etc., then in all such concrete social cases the interaction between the adult and the child should be in English:

- ___ Stand up please! (“¡ Párate por favor !”) and go to the door (“y ve a la puerta”).
- ___ Sit on the chair please! (“¡ Siéntate en la silla por favor !”).
- ___ Drink water! (“Toma agua”).
- ___ Do you want water? (“¿Quiéres agua?”).
- ___ Do you want to play? (“¿Quiéres jugar?”)

Thus, a {set of concrete social directives} such as the ones above shall become the order of the day in the school and home setting. This means that in all cases dealing with very concrete “social undertakings” the language of communication shall be in English. This means for example that every time that a child wants to drink water or go to the restroom he-she shall be guided by the adult to communicate these and other similar actions in English.

These “social directives” help children acquire a certain level of syntactic development. However, in order for a child to start thinking and speaking in complete sentences I would like to formulate the following hypothesis:

There is a sequential linguistic and literacy development:

- A) First, a child begins to understand complete sentences or words in a social context. Thus, “linguistic comprehension” comes first.
- B) Second, a child speaks what he or she is able to understand.
- C) Third, a child is able to read, what he or she is able to speak.
- D) Fourth, a child is able to write, what he or she is able to read or speak.

According to this hypothesis, the first stage of linguistic development is oral language comprehension. That is, before a child begins to speak, he-she begins to understand language. This means that children go through a period of silence before they can communicate orally. This also means that the teachers, tutors, parents and all adults shall take every opportunity in order to communicate in English with the children whenever “a socially concrete setting” arises out of the daily school and home activities:

- 1. Peter, sit down please! (“Peter, ¡ siéntate por favour !”).
- 2. Drink water! (“Toma agua”).
- 3. Open the door please! (“¡ Abre la puerta por favour !”).
- 4. Close the door please! (“¡ Cierra la puerta por favour !”).
- 5. Stand up quickly! (“¡ Levántate rápido !”).
- 6. Stand up slowly! (¡ Levántate despacio !)
- 7. Etc.

During the silent period, this means that the child is able to comprehend and act out such “linguistic undertakings” in a given concrete social situation. The teacher, tutor, parent or adult must consciously search and define such natural teachable moments. Thus, it is not a matter of preparing a lesson or design certain learning materials for a particular school period, but rather a matter of becoming aware that such “socially concrete moments” are given on many occasions during the normal curricular activities.

While the pupils learn a certain school subject, such as math for example, he or she will interact with the teacher in very concrete terms:

Pupil: Ms. Johnson, ¿puedo ir al baño?
Teacher: OK, but how do you say it in English?
Pupil: I do not know!
Teacher: May I go to the restroom?
Pupil : (with the help of the teacher the child repeats
the question in English very slowly).
Teacher: OK, now it is time to go to the cafeteria. Let's go to the cafeteria!, "¡Vamos a la cafeteria!"; ¡Vamos, vamos, vamos ! Let's go, let's go, let's go!

This means that throughout all school activities, certain concrete social settings will arise in which the teacher will interject the English language in a very comprehensible manner. The teacher, tutor, parent or adult may say something very concrete in English along with its Spanish correspondence. It must be very clear to the pupils what the teacher is trying to say in English. In this sense, the best learning material is not a teacher's guide or even certain didactic materials, but rather the concrete environmental setting in and of itself along with a very creative and inspirational teacher, tutor, parent or adult.

In essence, what we are doing is taking the pupils back to the very concrete stage of a two-year old child. At this early stage, children live in "the here and now." The immediate surroundings play a greater role in the psychic existence of the child. This is the stage in which children discover that objects correspond to a certain name at the lowest level of abstraction. In essence, some people may argue that we are dealing with a zero level of abstraction, but according to Vygotsky (Mind in Society: 1978; Denken und Sprechen: 2002) we are dealing with the very first level of abstraction. By age five and six as we know it from Vygotsky, children enter a stage of higher abstraction, but relatively very concrete ("concrete operational"). In terms of second language acquisition, I will recreate these very early stages of child development via a **poetic-music-social continuum** to be developed.

2.3 Early Music Education as the Cognitive Foundation of Child Development

Early childhood education in music and poetry __as viewed from the perspective of Maria Montessori's pedagogical philosophy (1966, 1997)__ is interpreted as being one of the major sensitive periods of life and as such it shall become a cornerstone of any learning center sponsored by Gestalt-Dialektik around the world. The hypothesis for example that music stimulates the brain in all cognitive areas will be reviewed in light of new brain research. It is said for example that music improves mathematical reasoning and long term memory. As a matter of fact, people may be able to memorize immense amounts of songs in relation to the amount of text they may be able to memorize that is read out of books, newspapers or magazines. It is also said that music helps the child to achieve intellectual maturity.

From the sociological point of view, music is recognized to be a central factor of all cultures of the world. It is a true universal language. In this respect, music along with the theory of Gestalt-Dialektik will become the most important vehicles for literacy and foreign language acquisition. Thus, a music/poetic curriculum for the preschool, kindergarten and primary school shall be further enhanced using the most effective methods of teaching known today. Factors such as rhythm, vocalization, melody, drama, dance, movement and so forth will be cultivated in a music/poetic continuum starting as early as possible in the life of a child.

Music and poetry shall then become the core of the preschool and elementary school curriculum for all practical purposes. CDs, music books, music games and musical instruments, books on poetry and short but poetic stories in different languages shall then be developed and tested in a classroom or in a therapeutic situation. Poetry and drama in this sense shall thereby go hand in hand in the development of a music curriculum. All music/poetic activities and objectives shall be organized in a child-friendly continuum beginning with very simple forms of poetry and music, and increasing gradually in their complexity in accordance to the laws of proximal development from Vygotsky (1978).

2.3.1 The First Three Years of Life: “Love and Music” as the First two Muses of Life

First and foremost within an all-integrating metaphysical approach, the first order of business is to avoid any possible problems that may rise under the auspices of child development. Thus, a prophylactic approach must be followed in order to avoid as many “human problems” as possible. Furthermore, from the time of conception until the child is about three years old, such a prophylactic, all-comprehensive approach shall promote “love and music” as the first two muses corresponding to the earliest life experiences of a child.

During pregnancy, especially after the 6th month of conception, the baby (otherwise known as a fetus by the cold scientific community) needs a lot of love and (classical) music. Yes!, the baby is capable of hearing, but what does he/she hear? He/she lives in a world of water and sound. He/she listens to mother talking and to any surrounding voices and noises. His/her heart beats rhythmically and mother’s voice is experienced holistically as waves of sounds, rather than waves of words. The baby is sensitive towards the intonation of the mother’s native language and toward other supra-linguistic elements on a very holistic level such as the mood of the mother, her psychic state of being and other psychological traits. In most cases, it is a world of intonations and rhythms. Viewed from this interpretation, it is a world closer to music than to language in its deepest sense.

We might as well define the first stage of life as musical love. The child lives in a world of rhythms, intonations and affects that surround the child as a whole. Anything that affects one part of the child affects the entire child. Neuron cells are developing in an astonishing speed and up to the fourth month of life (after birth) the child is a universal phonetician: he/she is capable of discerning any phoneme of any language of the world (Pinker, 1994).

Thus, as part of Gestalt-Dialektik the Mozart Effect should be advocated. The child shall be surrounded with classical music as much as possible. The mother should speak to her baby in a musical tone if possible. A harmonious musical environment should be at the heart of the affective domain of the baby. Neural activity should be supported by as many musical experiences as possible.

According to Gordon Shaw at UC Irvine (Newsweek 19, 1996, p. 57), all higher-order thinking skills may be characterized by similar patterns of neural firing. Music is the most pattern-like sound phenomenon that naturally exists. For example, children not only learn to sing a song, but while learning to sing, the corresponding syntactical features of the song are being reinforced. It is thus expected that children who sing a lot will naturally possess higher orders of syntactic features in their speech patterns. On the other hand, Gordon Shaw was able

to prove that by giving preschoolers piano and singing lessons in an 8-month pilot program, children's ability to perform in many curricular areas dramatically improved:

After eight months, the researchers found, the children "dramatically improved in spatial reasoning," compared with children given no music lessons, as shown in their ability to work mazes, draw geometric figures and copy patterns of two-colour blocks. The mechanism behind the "Mozart effect" remains murky, but Shaw suspects that when children exercise cortical neurons by listening to classical music, they are also strengthening circuits used for mathematics. Music says the UC team, "excites the inherent brain patterns and enhances their complex reasoning tasks."

Newsweek, February 19, 1996, p. 57

Early child music education is therefore a must. Music enhances the intellect and in many cases, it is the very therapy that a child may need for the many complexities of life. Let us take for example a child with a speech problem. Under Gestalt-Dialektik, the best speech therapy is one based on singing and music in general terms because a music based therapy is the most holistic approach that one may be able to develop in order to cure or control most speech problems. Any speech therapy that does not take singing seriously may be too limited in its scope. The notion that one may be able to cure a speech problem by manipulating the phonemes in any form or fashion is just too short sighted.

2.4 Kodaly and Orff Principles of Early Child Music Education vis-à-vis the Multilinguistic Potential

Therefore, early childhood music education in accordance to Kodaly and Orff principles and a poetic continuum in at least three languages will become the foundation of the artistic part of any learning center worldwide. At this point I am capable of designing such a continuum in English, Spanish and German, but if any citizen is interested in a third language other than German, then I would be happy to promote such a language provided that I get institutional support for such a targeted third language. For example, in Korea town just West of Los Angeles most likely the citizens in such a beautiful Korean community will want to support a trilingual Korean-English-Spanish music program for any of their public or private schools. In such a case, I would be working very diligently with musicians and artists from Korea in order to establish a poetic-music continuum for the Korean language. Likewise it is known that in some parts of Los Angeles such as around Hollywood there is a large number of Russians. In order to meet their linguistic needs, I would gladly develop with their community support a poetic-music continuum for the Russian language. The point should be very clear: Once children have mastered two languages at an international level, then they are capable of mastering a third language. Unfortunately "the powers that be" have neglected the immense linguistic potential of the bilingual student by not promoting trilingual education.

However, at the beginning of the poetic-continuum we should concentrate in two languages. For example during the 2003-2004 school year at 75th Street Elementary School in South Central Los Angeles (Los Angeles Unified School District) a wonderful pilot Spanish-English Music program based mainly on the principles of Zoltan Kodaly was implemented by Anna Klimala, a Polish expert on early childhood music education,. The results attained by Anna Klimala in such a one-year pilot program with K-1 Spanish-speaking children were extraordinary. A DVD is available based on the testimony mentioned underneath. For any more information, please refer to Gestaltdialektik@hotmail.com.

Gustavo Vieyra, K-1 Teacher at 75th Street Elementary School, LAUSD May 7, 2004

Prof. Dennis Trembly
USC Thornton School of Music

Dr. Rousseau
District 1 Superintendent

Miguel Campa, Principal
75th Elementary School

Testimony on Anna Klimala's Early Music Education Program

Dear Prof. Trembly, Dear Dr. Rousseau and Dear Mr. Campa,

During the past academic year, Anna Klimala has been teaching a music program to three different groups of children, Kindergarten to third grade at 75th Street Elementary School, Los Angeles Unified School District. Her own interpretation of the Orff and Kodaly early childhood music education and her entire program is, __in the words of Mr. Campa, the school principal__, **“phenomenal.”**

In essence, Anna's music program is extremely precise and effective. Her command of the Kodaly and Orff-Schulwerk principles is exceptional. For example, the K-1 children in my classroom learned with ease and enthusiasm: the activities were dynamic, challenging and inspiring, leading the children to sing and perform over 30 songs along with the corresponding music skills and abilities, which included the mastery of two music notes (/so/ and /mi/), leading up to a third note, namely /fa/.

Also, from the testimony from the other teachers, it was obvious that the children loved Anna as teacher and as a caring individual, enjoying every second that they experienced with her wonderful personality and music program. Anna Klimala became a blessing from the sky!

As far as my own classroom is concerned, she also became so to speak the “talk of the town.” **“Ania,”** as the children preferred to call her, became the central theme on many a day, allowing me to emphasize several topics such as the days of the week or the sense of time, i.e. “O.K, children, sorry, but Ania is not coming today; she comes on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 12 to 1:00 P.M., etc.” Thus, “Ania” became the inspiring figure of many classroom discussions dealing not just with music, but also with many related factors in the social and affective domain.

During the course of the program, especially in the last days, I was able to video-record a couple of her lessons. Thus, we now have some of her lessons recorded on a DVD format for your own pleasure and appreciation.

Please let me know if you are interested on viewing Anna's “phenomenal” music program on a DVD. I will be happy to provide you with a copy.

At any rate, as a teacher in several low socioeconomic areas over the last decade, I have never seen a music program accomplish such deeds. The most that I have ever seen amounted to no more than a sort of “chanting” of some traditional songs, without a transcendental music education such as the one that Anna is offering. In fact, Anna's program is so precise and effective that allows the children to master many other abilities indirectly related to music such as “number sense” or “phonemic awareness,” which has become the focus of so much worldwide research and attention on initial reading and writing.

Anna's program is a testimonial of the greatness and universal potential that music education has for the core of curricular research and application and as such deserves to be promoted not just at 75th Street Elementary School, but also throughout the world.

Most Sincerely,

Gustavo Vieyra

cc: parents, community leaders, school authorities and government officials

Furthermore, the teaching principles according to *Orff-Schulwerk* will be a major part of the music curriculum at any Gestalt-Dialektik learning center. The Orff-Schulwerk is regarded as a musical system of education known around the world. In accordance to the Orff-Schulwerk philosophy, the unity of rhythm, language and movements will become the first cornerstone to musical education. Movement of the body and the body itself as the first music instrument (hands clapping, finger snapping, feet stamping, patting on one's knees, etc.) in unison with language development are essential to early music education. In general, the Orff-Schulwerk may be defined as follows (as a direct quotation from Keller's book, *Orff-Schulwerk: Introduction to Music for Children*, 1974, pages, 5-6):

1) The *Orff-Schulwerk* is a musical contribution to the establishment of a modern system of general education. As such it assumes in students neither special musical ability, nor previous training. On the other hand, it does not restrict genuine talent. Instead, in the variety of its activities, it allows children to try out and confirm their own abilities without sacrificing a common source of musical sound and means appropriate to childhood. Correctly used, the *Orff-Schulwerk* offers worthwhile activities for children with greater and lesser gifts, so no individual is pushed ahead too fast or held back unnecessarily. The real goal of the Schulwerk is attained in one's enjoyment of the fruitful combination of personal and interpersonal resources. Creating, reproducing and listening to music are not separate and exclusive areas of work, but are presented as one entity in the elementary musical experience of all participants. The *Orff-Schulwerk* is not a method; rather, it is an indicator, a signpost. Everything we shall discuss about methods should be viewed according to the principles set out (above) and understood to represent only a few ways among the many which exist. All our suggestions may be altered at any time to adapt to the circumstances at hand.

2) The *Orff-Schulwerk* is primarily intended for group work. There are exercises for individuals and "soloistic" passages within the pieces, but there are never soloists who force all the other music makers into the role of accompanying one single predominant voice. The smallest possible group consists of two players who take an equal share in performing or improvising a piece. It is impossible to determine a maximum size for group musical activity. Because this depends on the number of instruments available, the spatial situation, and other circumstances, it can only be stated relatively. It is possible to work equally well with both small and large groups if the musical result of the combined instruments is well supervised and the resulting dynamic level appropriately adjusted. The over-populated school class of today, (about which teachers so often and justly complain) is no obstacle for using the *Orff-Schulwerk* if it is handled correctly according to the size of the group. One prerequisite is indeed indispensable: the availability of a room which allows all the participants enough freedom to clap, stamp, snap their fingers, and play instruments, and, not least important, which permits the whole group to move and dance. Whenever new schools are built, a special music and gymnastics room should be included in addition to the gymnasium to meet these requirements. If such a room is not already available, the gymnasium or a large all-purpose room can be used; at the very least, the classroom should be transformed into a temporary music room by clearing the largest possible floor space.

3) Elementary music-making is possible at every age; differences according to age group will be noticed only in the choice of song texts, voice parts, and musical and technical demands. The series *Music for Children*, which we discuss here, is primarily intended for children from six to fourteen years of age. It need hardly be mentioned that it is possible to make music in *Orff-Schulwerk* style with pre-school age children and those beyond age fifteen if the form is appropriately simplified or made more complex. Within the schools, grouping is usually according to age level, since most classes contain children of equal age. Outside of school and at home children will also be able to make music together with the *Orff-Schulwerk*. Moreover, there are completely new possibilities for "Hausmusik" within the family where the parents can also participate.

4) **The Instrumentarium:** From the start we use the musical instrument for its original purpose: to provide the rhythmic components of music, combined with the singing voice (the original source of melody). Every person brings natural instruments with him into the world: *hands* and *feet* with which he is able to clap, stamp, and pat on his knees. The limited range of sounds produced by clapping, stamping and knee-patting ("patschen"), finger-snapping, etc., which can have some variety or gradation, is refined, broadened, and liberated when the instrument group of *small percussion instruments* is called into use. In this group we find the rattle, claves, large and small cymbals, triangle, castanets, different kinds of wood blocks and skin drums, bells, and related instruments.

In addition to these instruments which lack adjustable pitch and function as pure sound and rhythm producers, there are percussion instruments with adjustable pitch: small drums, kettledrums, timpani, bar instruments and tuned glasses. The bar instruments (glockenspiel, metallophone, and xylophone, plus the tuned glasses) constitute a bridge between melodic and rhythmic instruments, and, thus, form the core of the whole body of instruments.

Stringed instruments, bowed and plucked, form a third group: gambas and “fidels” (six-stringed instruments in different voices), psalteries, lutes, and guitars. The tenor and bass fidels, gamba, ‘cello, and contra-bass function as bass instruments along with the drums (and) bass xylophone.....

Wind instruments form the last group to be mentioned: recorders and bamboo flutes, sordune, krummhorns, rauschpfeifes, and others.

Keller, W., 1974, ps. 5-6

It should be noted that for any learning center with Spanish-Speaking children in the USA what is important is to use the Orff instrumentarium as well as those music instruments known in Mexico and Latin America. On the other hand, it is my opinion that music in general and especially early childhood music education under the auspices of Orff-Schulwerk and Zoltan Kodaly does transform human existence. The overall objective is to prove once and for all that music should be at the core of any curricular decision making process in the early years of education.

Schools nowadays prefer to cut out any artistic programs, including music activities, during a budget crisis. For example, most schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District share a music teacher among several elementary schools. However, the indifference towards music does not stop there! In my opinion, the cultural upbringing in many parts of the world is very deficient in terms of music education. Nevertheless, Gordon Shaw (2000) was able to prove the significance of music in the cognitive development of preschoolers at 95th Street School. Thus, what is proposed under Gestalt-Dialektik is to do further research in music as a must in early childhood education in order to find out what happens to the general cognitive and psycholinguistic development as a child develops.

2.5 Holistic Learning and Total Awareness Through Music

Music is not only another “good tool” for learning or developing special skills, but it is essential to holistic human development. In essence, children will develop a good musical ear that may allow them to be in the “here and now,” helping them to develop a sense of self-confidence. Most likely, music also helps children to increase their intelligence so that they could learn anything they want to. In this sense, music is a need, a must and not a luxury. One can support this with the well-known concept of the Mozart effect based on scientific research. But it is time to go further in the concept of a holistic education with music as the base of instruction. Now it is time to make implementations, create very flexible music programs and work hard on them to see results even in a short period of time.

According to Jose Antonio Espinal (a former classic pianist at the National Institute of Fine Arts in Mexico City and now the music director for the Catholic Cathedral in Los Angeles), music (specially classical music) benefits everyone at any age, but at the early ages (starting even *in utero*) may bring greater results:

A home whereby music is not only heard by recordings, but played *in live* (a piano, a guitar, or just singing), is a home in which the musical effect will enormously create strong affective ties among the family members. A mother or father playing classical tunes, even the most simple melodies, will increase musical interest in their children because music is a language (and a very powerful one, by the

way) that is strongly *inductive*. There's no better way to talk about beauty to kids than by playing wonderful music to them. They will immediately perceive beauty and love. It's like being on Christmas time, where the sounds of the bell ringing, the carols we hear, the live red, green and white colours we see everywhere, the games we play, the Christmas tree, the smell and taste of the delicious and non-common food and dessert, the gifts, and the rest of things that we see, hear and touch__, create that special "magic" we experience every Christmas time. We don't need to be explained that Christmas time is wonderful, beautiful and special. We know it because *it's an experience!* The same thing happens with music when we use it as a way of communication with children: a song played or sung by our mother will affect the rest of our lives.

Espinal, J.A., 2002

For this and other reasons, Jose Antonio Espinal completely agrees with the holistic philosophy of Gestalt-Dialektik. Thus, he makes the same proposal as Gestalt-Dialektik in regards to a holistic program for early child development via music and the arts:

The music-based program I propose has to do with involving children and parents in the whole process. Children need music, but parents need it too. It's a holistic process. Parental involvement in regards to singing together with children, playing and dancing with them, will create the strongest affective ties. For example, the power of the endorphins on our body is well known, especially for health reasons, self-motivation and peak performance in every aspect of our lives. Likewise, playing, singing and dancing are excellent ways of stimulating endorphins in our body. Children don't know about difficulties in "music harmony," or "difficult melodic intervals." They just imitate and do it. Even a very difficult song like "Supercalifragilisticoespialidoso" becomes a funny challenge to them so that some children may practice it until they reach a certain level of expertise! Children will amaze adults. If they have the "whole" song, for example (the "total" as stated in the **Gestalt-Dialektik's** philosophy), they will look at it carefully in the same way they take a look at anything. At first, they may be surprised, attracted to it, and then they may analyze it, "breaking it in pieces" in order to come back with the whole song again. Thereafter, they may sing the entire song at their own pleasure. The process seems to always be analytic: from the "whole" to the particular in order to come back to the "whole." The children know the song is there and complete. This is the essence of the gestalt philosophical approach.

As a piano teacher for 6 years at the National Conservatory of Music in Mexico City, I had many experiences regarding the best way of learning. Those students for example that almost succeeded were those with a good "spatial intelligence" (as Dr. Howard Gardner named it in his multiple intelligence theory): that is, the ability to see the "whole" in order to avoid getting lost in the process of dealing with the particulars. Traditionally, students deal with a piece of music from the particular to the whole: from a small amount of bars to phrases and then to pages of music, until the whole is completed. But unfortunately (it's my own experience), a student needs a very strong commitment with himself or herself with music if he/she wants to succeed using only this synthetic approach. If the student doesn't have the "whole" inside his/her mind at all times, he or she will have trouble mastering the entire musical arrangement. Most likely, he or she will be learning music in a boring and frustrating way. It is my professional opinion that the very synthetic essence of our music pedagogy explains why most students end up dropping out of the program at the National Conservatory of Music in Mexico City. That's why I became very interested on the analytic process of learning.

Music must be an enjoyable experience. I've taught piano and singing lessons to people that already sing or play "by ear" with great success. I always take advantage of their self-confidence and high level of motivation. But I never limit myself by trying to force them to learn to read notes. Most teachers do it. As a consequence, drop-out students normally say that they left that teacher because it was too boring trying to learn the notes. Under my holistic approach, I first try to elevate the degrees of difficulty in the music they learn, continuing to teach them little by little until they get a *feeling of urgency in regards to the notes*. Sooner or later, they want to learn how to read the notes because they want to play more music, and they know they can't do it without reading the notes. One cannot play a Chopin just by ear! That's why my method works! I never lost the "whole" from my mind, and I encourage students to keep the whole as the main "goal" in their mind. But most professional music institutions have lost this holistic philosophy. In my opinion, the synthetic orientation to music learning may be the main reason that classical music is losing its audience.

Espinal, J.A., 2002

Thus, Jose Antonio also subscribes to the pure holistic approach to teaching music to university students. Why then, do we still have the old debate between a holistic and synthetic approach to initial reading and writing? Have the so-called experts in literacy development not realized that in terms of music education, the holistic approach is the best approach? Why is it then that the holistic philosophy from Kenneth Goodman has not been taken more seriously? Where, for example, does one find in the phonemic awareness movement any references to the affective and social domains? At least in music education, the social factors are taken into full consideration:

In working with families, we need to keep in mind that our goal is not necessarily forming professional musicians, but creating the best environment in order to develop a total music awareness not only in children, but particularly in the entire family and community. Working on a family oriented musical program will create a better quality of life for the entire family, whose members usually just sit for hours in front of the TV after a busy day. We need to work harder today if we want to create a better environment for our children. **We need to re-educate the family.** As Albert Einstein used to say, "There are two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle." Music has that power because it "surprises" and fills our lives with beauty and higher values.

Therefore, one of the best ways to teach children about morals, values or positive attitudes is with songs that deal with social issues. For example, a very energizing piece of music like Beethoven's ninth symphony is great for the spirit. But we can add the benefits of music if we ask children to sing songs with positive messages on it. Every language and every culture has many profound song-writers who write deep poetry in the form of songs. And these songs will remain in our hearts forever. Personally, as an international conductor and pianist who travels extensively, I have in my heart a very famous Spanish ballad which remains with me on my trips. Composed by the Spanish songwriter Joan Manuel Serrat, it uses fragments of lyrics by Antonio Machado, one of the best known Spanish poets. The song is "Cantares" (more or less "songs") and this particular song makes a profound statement, namely:

"Traveler, there's no pathway: one makes one by way of walking ("caminante no hay camino, se hace camino al andar. . ."). and when you turn your head back, you'll see the path you'll never walk again."

A song like this has encouraged me hundreds of times to go on, even when I've been far from my land for years. So, there are positive songs for almost every situation in our lives. We need to sing such songs and particularly we need to teach our children to sing them. There's no better way to learn about life than by experiencing it and songs make our life experiences more dynamic.

If we want our children to love and respect other cultures, then it is better not to talk about cultures per se (i.e., how to love a different race). Rather, it is a lot more effective just to sing songs from that land or culture! Thus, let us sing with the children negro spirituals and they will understand those deep feelings hidden in that culture. Let us teach them to sing Mariachi songs, (specially the highly energetic ones) and they'll love Mexico. Let us teach them to sing "God bless the USA" and they'll become patriotic. Let us teach them to sing African, Indian, Peruvian songs and they will respect those cultures! The world will become friendlier. Thus, my proposal includes choirs with special arrangements with a wide array of songs from the world. Children will learn languages in a natural way. Now that the world has become smaller and the globalization is a general topic, we need to affirm our roots at the same time we learn how to respect different ways of living, different ways of thinking and music, because of its universality, is the best way to achieve this goal.

Espinal, J.A., 2002

2.6 The Case of Music and Memory vis-à-vis Literacy Development

In terms of the poetic-music continuum, the objective is to have the pupils memorize hundreds of pieces of poetry and music. Music by its own very nature requires short and long term memory at its most optimal level. That is to say, in order for the pupils to sing a particular song, the children must memorize not only the text, but also the music (tone, rhythm, melody, etc.) itself. Following this “music-memory-principle,” children will be guided to memorize hundreds of poems during their pre-K and Kindergarten experience. Also, the dramatic arts (i.e., role playing, improvisation theater, etc.) will be integrated in order to bring forth a social context to the songs and poems that the children will be mastering as we progress year by year.

What I postulate is that short and long term memory basically represents the building block and thus the very essence of the reading process.

As the children memorize hundreds of poems and songs, they will also be learning hundreds and thousands of words as “sight vocabulary.” Reading a word, a sentence or a full text implies that the student has stored certain phonological, morphological and syntactical structures of the written text. In effect, the memory processes that take place during music and poetic education will be transferred into those similar memory processes required during initial reading and writing, especially in terms of the decoding skills.

Therefore, as we advance during the pre-K, Kindergarten and especially during the 1st – through 8th grade curriculum, the children will be guided to “memorize” hundreds of books and stories, which they will be able to dramatize and present during specific events (i.e., monthly presentations, national festivities, etc).

Section 3

Gestalt-Dialektik and the Math Curriculum

3.1 Gestalt-Dialektik and the Math Curriculum in Grades K Through 5 via Open-ended Didactic Form-Systems or Theoretical Wholes

It should be noted that I am the author of Gestalt-Dialektik, which represents a holistic pedagogical philosophy and as such intends to meet and in many cases supersede the California content standards from Kindergarten through fifth grade. In order to master and in most cases supersede the California content standards, it is theorized that under “Gestalt-Dialektik” as far as the science of teaching is concerned, the teacher should actively “seek, discover or invent” open-ended didactic form-systems, in order to solve a particular problem or in order to clarify any phenomenon, any aspect of life not well understood or any concept not clear enough in the minds of any students, particularly those dealing with the processes of learning in the math, science or English-language arts curriculum. Once such didactic form-systems are “found, discovered or invented,” one should analyze them in accordance with the hypothesis of “Gestalt-Dialektik” into subsystems of patterns.

Therefore, the overall purpose is to discover entire Gestalt configurations that are useful in the science of teaching. Although the teacher may teach through methods already known, his/her main purpose is to discover new ones that can replace or revolutionize the old ones. The art of teaching becomes one in which the teacher “**actively**” through experimentation tries to find the most natural and appropriate “**theoretical wholes**” or **open-ended** system(s), form(s), pattern(s) or whole(s), all of which depend on the objectives within a learning situation.

Take the example of Number Sense in the Kindergarten math curriculum. How should it be mastered and even superseded into higher levels of abstraction? In order to do it, we need to look for the answers in the new pedagogy proposed under Gestalt-Dialektik. This pedagogy is an all-comprehensive holistic view of teaching under the auspices of Gestalt theory from the Berlin school of thought at the turn of the 20th century as well as other schools of thought (Vygotsky, Maria Montessori, etc.). Under its most general perspective, the teacher must analyse any phenomenon as a whole in order to discover the underlying principals of its parts in relation to one another and in relation to the whole. Under such a premise, the whole is more and likewise different than the sum of its parts. Thus, the whole plays the more transcendental role while the parts must always be viewed from the perspective of their “above-lying” corresponding whole.

The main objective of Gestalt-Dialektik is to discover the essence of such “theoretical wholes” in order to make a plan of attack as to the mastery of its particular parts in question. If for example, the children are to learn a certain skill related to number sense, such as to add one digit numbers, then it would be “unnatural” to view such number as “wholes.” Take, for example the following additions:

$$2 + 3 = 5; \quad 4 + 5 = 9; \quad 6 + 2 = 8; \text{ etc.}$$

What could one deduce in terms of “whole to part relations”? Which digits are said or theorized to be parts and which ones correspond to a whole? In “ $6 + 2 = 8$ ” the 6 and the 2 could be said to be parts of 8, but can the 8 really be viewed as “transcendental whole” or as the “theoretical whole” that we are seeking to discover? Of course not!

3.2 Definition of a “Transcendental Whole”

In order to be viewed as a whole, such entity must have the quality of being transcendental in terms of its pedagogical long term practicality towards its corresponding parts. It may be said that 6 and 2 are parts of 8 in arithmetic terms, but from a long term pedagogical perspective the 8 is a very weak “whole” if at all. Thus, the role of the teacher in “Gestalt-Dialektik” is to “discover or to invent” transcendental wholes that can be systematized into pedagogical strategies that bring forth light to the inner relations of their corresponding parts. In the case of the three above additions, the teacher should place the three “relative wholes,” the 5, 9 and 8 under a higher entity as a whole such as the decimal system, which in turn can be pedagogically systematized into strategies that in the long term will make the understanding of such underlying parts a lot more transparent. However, under Gestalt-Dialektik, a pentagonal strategy based on the Maya number system in terms of its optical configuration is hereby proposed. The objective of this Maya-based optical configuration is to replace the decimal system at the outset of arithmetic education for the three, four, five and six-year old child.

Therefore, as far as Gestalt-Dialektik for the K-1 math content standards is concerned, a Maya based pentagonal system has been developed. Such a system serves as the “transcendental whole” out of which initial “number sense” and simple additions can be more clearly and effectively taught in comparison with the decimal system. In the pentagonal system the number five is the king and through several holistic activities the pupils become aware of its dynamic force. The pupils will little by little be able to master the “one-to-one correspondence” between numbers and real objects, such as in the following example:

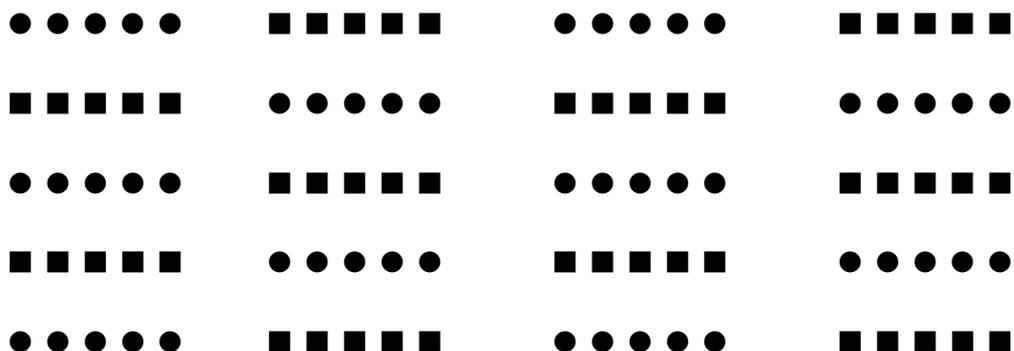
X X X X X	0 0 0 0 0	X
1 2 3 4 5	6 7 8 9 10	11

Such a system may at first seem to be trivial, but viewed from the Gestalt school of thought, it is much more transparent and easy to understand than its decimal counterpart:

X X X X X X X X X X X X
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

The number five becomes a true Gestalt in several optical forms, such as the ababa-pattern:

The ababa-Form



The ababa-form serves as one of the first major objectives that pupils must first master before they are introduced formally into the Gestalt-forms under the decimal system. It is indeed a true optical and cognitive challenge for the children to follow the pattern, XOXOX whereby X or O are made up of five different but repeating units.

However, the very first lessons of the pentagonal system deal not with the ababa-patterns but rather with the notion that the number 5 and 6 fall into two different groups. To instil such a notion into the consciousness of each child, several activities and strategies have been developed.

3.3 Analytic vs. Synthetic Processes of Teaching in Particular Learning Situations in the Arithmetic Curriculum K-1

A simple illustration in arithmetic can be used to analyze whether a teacher is teaching synthetically or analytically. For instance, let us say that a teacher introduces the facts of addition in first grade. The teacher writes $13 + 8$ and explains the answer by adding $8 + 3 = 11$. However, she/he writes 1 under the 8 and explains that the other 1 is carried away and written above the other 1.

$$\begin{array}{r} 1 \\ 13 \\ + 8 \\ \hline 1 \end{array}$$

Then those two “1s” are added to give us 2 and the answer is 21.

$$\begin{array}{r} 1 \\ 13 \\ + 8 \\ \hline 21 \end{array}$$

If the teacher had explained on previous occasions that the column to the left of a two-digit number represents the “tenths,” then the synthetic process is not at all that bad. At least there is a “clear and distinct” albeit synthetic system. Obviously, instead of saying, “we carry one above the other one,” she/he can emphasize that “we carry a tenth above the other tenth; thus one tenth plus one tenth are two tenths, meaning 20 units and then 20 plus one unit equals 21 units or two tenths and one unit” (content standard for first grade under **Number Sense: 1.4 Count and group object in ones and tens, e.g., three groups of 10 and 4 equals 34, or $30 + 4$**).

This process is known as “carrying out” in arithmetic instruction. It is accepted by most teachers as a natural higher step as soon as the pupils understand the concept of “place value.” It is very interesting that having introduced an “analytical process,” that of place value, the teacher may resort to a synthetic process, that of “carrying out” as if there were not enough “conceptual tools” or strategies such as those postulated by Gestalt-Dialektik in order to “seek, invent or discover” more analytical methods or transcendental **“theoretical wholes.”**

The “synthetic methods” in the math curriculum are part of the traditional pedagogy, a way of doing things as if that way was the most logical consequence of the previous steps. Teachers that adhere to such synthetic methods do not take into account the possibilities that exist in a holistic pedagogy as a sequence of events and insights within a paradigmatic,

conceptual, systematic and philosophical approach. In light of the Cartesian philosophy, resorting to formulaic synthetic tool of “carrying out” after learning about place value does not fit the profile of Gestalt-Dialektik.

The system of carrying away (which at some point in the algorithm of teaching addition is based on the notion of place value, which is a rather holistic notion) a tenth from the units column into the tenth’s column (in $13 + 8$ one adds $8 + 3$, thus carrying a tenth from the resulting 11) becomes a synthetic closed-ended and formulaic system. “Carrying out” a digit into the next “place value column” is a “one way street.” It does not leave much room for real and dynamic thinking. The pupils follow a formula and the teacher leads blindly without much of a philosophy to say the least.

Thus, the reality inside many classrooms may reflect a synthetic methodology without much of a system. Little by little, the teachers and the pupils may never realize that there may be other more “holistic patterns” that could be used to construct dynamic systems of learning. Instead, sooner or later teachers and pupils get involved into too many rules in which numbers become less and less meaningful. By the time the pupils enter the facts of multiplication, they have to be reminded of the multiplication tables in a memorized format outside of any connections to the previous facts of addition and subtraction. Plain analytical logic is no longer sought, but just facts!

The synthetic and thus atomistic conditioning that takes place in the classroom can be easily observed with just about every adult dealing with basic arithmetic facts:

1. The cashier who cannot add 35 cents for a cake and 55 cents for a soda in his-her head. He/she must use a pencil or cash register to do the simple addition.
2. The salesperson who cannot multiply simple numbers with two digits such as 12×13 .
3. Etc.

In the case of 12×13 , a simple analytical and holistic process will give the answer: $(13 \times 10) + (13 \times 2) = 130 + 26 = 130 + 20 + 6$, etc. Very few elementary school pupils would use this strategy because they have been conditioned to “think synthetically.” Thus, when it comes to a nationalized standardized test, some schools may hire experts and train the pupils in test taking strategies, which gives the wrong idea of the overall objective of teaching (teaching to the test), instead of helping the pupils to use their “analytical minds” which in the long run would get even greater results in any testing situation.

The objectives of training pupils in test-taking instruments are not in themselves wrong. However, on test taking strategies the emphasis is not on “holistic logical-thought processes,” but on pure knowledge such as how the test may look like. Knowing how and why one should skip certain questions, why to mark either the longest or the shortest answer on a multiple choice test-format, is important and should be taught just like any other concepts. Nevertheless in some schools test-taking preparation is given top priority, which in the final analysis is not transcendental, except to raise the test scores a few points here and there, whenever a teacher is willing to convince the pupils that “taking the pain” in such and such a test is just a matter of knowing certain tricks. A temporary solution may have been sought just to cover the deficiencies or in some cases the total absence of a “philosophical pedagogy” and thus, the surface structures of our classical teaching methods may eventually fail the majority of our students.

What is needed, to start with, is a full understanding of the basics of “analytical processes” just like Rene Descartes proclaimed in the 17th century and the Berlin school of thought postulated at the turn of the 20th century. Along with Gestalt-Dialektik and the basics of the Maria Montessori pedagogy, the Cartesian and Vygotskyan philosophies should open new windows and doors to any musically inclined teacher willing to go the extra mile in order to revitalize a bankrupt system of teaching in almost every country of the Western civilization.

3.4 Definition of a Learning Situation

Furthermore, within the all-integrating metaphysical method, certain paradigms in the math curriculum are developed in accordance to the principles of Gestalt-Dialektik. One of these principles is the concept of a “**learning situation.**” A learning situation is the precise context in which a teacher needs to teach a certain skill. That skill should become part of a broader didactic process or paradigm. In other words, one cannot introduce a skill to a group of children or to a particular child if the teacher has not figured out a way to systematize such skill within a broader system of learning. Such systems of learning are the basis of the context-imbedded process of any skill whatsoever.

Thus, a skill must be part of a particular paradigm, that is, an overall system of learning under which such a skill can be related to other similar skills and to a particular “bigger whole” or picture. If such a system of learning or paradigm is not in place, if the teacher is just introducing the math content standards in the form of a skill after skill, lesson after lesson, without a clear overall perspective of the subject matter, then the teacher may be following a very synthetic pedagogical process at best or a very poor way of teaching at worst.

3.5 Clear Delineation of Subject Matter: The First Cartesian Precept as Defined in the Multiplication, 12 x 13, as a Learning Situation

When a teacher deals with any phenomenological, philosophical or metaphysical order, in accordance with Cartesian thought, he/she must see that it be “clear and palpable” in order to find its deepest truth. From this precept, one can hypothesize that the targeted subject matter must be so tangible that one can **clearly** define it against any imaginable competing stimuli within a visual, mental or cognitive map or within any other imaginable phenomenological system. The clarity of such an order or subject matter must leave nothing to doubt about its existence.

All stimuli must be as “clear and distinct” as the basic Cartesian method postulates. Similarly the objective in the theory of “Gestalt-Dialektik” is to seek out such clear and tangible forms and to discard those that do not fit the profile. In the case of “12 x 13” the usual synthetic algorithm on a parts-to-whole process does not fit the characteristics of “clarity and distinction.” The connecting bonds between the parts and its whole suggest an atomistic character. The practice becomes a hazy drill almost blind to the nature of the end result.

$$\begin{array}{r}
 \text{[a) } \quad 12 \\
 \quad \quad \underline{x 13} \\
 \quad \quad \quad 6 \\
 \\
 \text{b) } \quad 12 \\
 \quad \quad \underline{x 13} \\
 \quad \quad \quad 36 \\
 \\
 \text{c) } \quad 12 \\
 \quad \quad \underline{x 13} \\
 \quad \quad \quad 36 \\
 \quad \quad \quad 12 \\
 \\
 \text{d) } \quad 12 \\
 \quad \quad \underline{x 13} \\
 \quad \quad \quad 36 \\
 \quad \quad \quad \underline{12} \\
 \quad \quad \quad 156 \\
 \text{]}
 \end{array}$$

Such synthetic algorithms are abstract in nature dealing with parts as a matter of convention and not on a clear, holistic and logical format. Therefore, the traditional algorithm for the facts of multiplication is rejected. The teacher would have to find or discover more holistic pathways, those with a clear view of the total problem and process at hand, in order to proceed with the arithmetic instruction and in order to cover all the math content standards of the state of California.

3.6 Looking for the Bigger Parts within a Gestalt: A Cartesian and Gestalt Perspective

It is up to the teacher to “find, discover or invent” new strategies in which the greater “Gestaltforms” of the given “learning situation” become the focus of attention. In the case of “12 x 13,” it is obvious that 13 is bigger than 12. Thus, we are dealing with a new way of thinking: “Look, find, discover on your own the bigger picture of any given situation.”

Thus, we need to know how much is 13 x 12 instead of 12 x 13, but how? The teacher must find ways in which pupils see for themselves that in this case, the twelve can be broken into two parts in accordance with the logic of a decimal system. Therefore, 12 becomes 10 + 2. This “broken-down process” is the essence of analytical psychology. Now the answer to “13 x 10” becomes an easy solution that most pupils can follow. There we have 130 which is added to the answer of the two remaining variables, “13 x 2 = 26.” The logic becomes clear. From the analysis, we were able to arrive at a synthesis: The addition of 130 + 26. In a process of analysis-then-synthesis, just like Rene Descartes had prescribed over four hundreds years ago, we arrive at a solution.

The essence of Gestalt-Dialektik is to “find, discover or invent Gestalt-frames that can be manipulated, transposed or transformed” in a particular teachable situation. The Gestalt-frame is basically any “clear and distinct form” in Cartesian terms that is used as an “all-encompassing” tool in order to come to a particular solution or in order to teach a certain skill, strategy or ability. In the case of “12 x 13,” it is decided that “13 x 12” becomes the Gestalt-frame that is used to solve the problem in which the “analytical process” is as important as the

solution itself. The Gestalt-frame “13 x 12” was chosen over “12 x 13” simply because 13 is bigger than 12. As a matter of practice, the pupil is trained to look for the “biggest pictures” of any scene.

Looking for the biggest number, for the broadest picture corresponds with the nature of mental work. Katz (1950) reports of experiments in which subjects were to add sequential numbers such a $1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5 + 6 + 7 + 8 + 9$. In about half of the reports, the subjects preferred a top down approach to the addition. Thus adding $9 + 8 = 17 + 7 = 24 + 6 = 30$ etc. is a lot more natural than its synthetic counter part, starting with the smallest numbers, $1 + 2 = 3 + 4 = 7 + 5 = 12 + 6 = 18 + 7 = 25$ etc.

Holistic processes are not rigid in nature and do not consist in most cases of any single approach to a problem. Even the method of starting with the biggest numbers in the aforementioned example is not a one way street. It is reported that a tenth of the subjects followed the Gaussian method. For example given the series presented to the children 1 to 5 ($1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5$), what Gaussian strategies could be discovered? Katz reported that some children added $4 + 1 = 5$ and $3 + 2 = 5$, thus obtaining 10 which then was added to 5, the last number of the series to get 15. Theoretically, it is quite possible that another subject may find a more direct Gaussian approach such as adding the opposing ends: 5 and 1, 4 and 2 and adding the 3, as the middle number to get to the end result.

Finding the inner structures of these types of series is very clever, just like young Karl Friedrich Gauss at age 6 is said to have astounded his school teacher as per the addition of sequential numbers one by one from one to nine. In essence, he discovered 4 pairs of numbers adding to 10 each with the opposing ends, $9 + 1 = 10$; $8 + 2 = 10$; $7 + 3$ and $6 + 4$ with a total of 40 which was added to the middle factor of the sequence, in this case the number 5, to get to the answer.

However it may be done, holistic approaches are open ended in nature. They depend on the manner a subject is able to see the structure of the parts in relation to themselves as well as to the whole. According to Katz (1950), *genuine work processes are goal-oriented, meaningful, and have the characteristics of structured whole.*

3.7 Meeting and Superseding the California Math Content Standards K-5 Through the Paradigmatic Approaches of Gestalt-Dialektik

Under Gestalt-Dialektik, all California content standards Kindergarten through fifth grade shall be met within its paradigmatic holistic principles. A point in case would be standard 1.0 to 1.5 in Algebra and Functions of Grade 3:

Algebra and Functions

- *1.0 Students select appropriate symbols, operations, and properties to represent, describe, simplify, and solve simple number relationships:
- *1.1 Represent relationships of quantities in the form of mathematical expressions, equations, or inequalities.
- *1.2 Solve problems involving numeric equations or inequalities.

1.3 Select appropriate operational and relational symbols to make an expression true (e.g., if $4 \quad 3 = 12$, what operational symbol goes in the blank?).

1.4 Express simple unit conversions in symbolic form (e.g., inches = feet x 12).

*1.5 Recognize and use the commutative and associative properties of multiplication (e.g., if $5 \times 7 = 35$, then what is 7×5 ? and if $5 \times 7 \times 3 = 105$, then what is $7 \times 3 \times 5$?).

As with the aforementioned principle of marking the standards with an asterisk or of underlining them such 1.3 and 1.4 above, a commitment is made with its two options. If, as explained above, a standard has been underlined, then it means that it shall be included in a **“SPECIAL DEVELOPMENT OF MATHEMATICAL CONCEPTS.”** These means that standards 1.3 and 1.4 as mentioned above shall be given special attention because they refer to very specific concepts that usually do not fall into the classical paradigms of Gestalt-Dialektik.

3.8 A Classical Paradigm of Gestalt-Dialektik

In order to illustrate a classical paradigm of Gestalt-Dialektik the standard 1.5 in Algebra and Functions of Grade 3 shall be specified in detail. First it has been marked with an asterisk, which means that it is fully reflected and refracted in the entire supra-paradigmatic philosophy of Gestalt-Dialektik. This means that this specific content standard is not only met and mastered, but furthermore it is also superseded by other higher forms of abstract thought, resulting in an interdisciplinary approach that reaches down to other domains of cognition.

Thus, looking at standard 1.5 in Algebra and Functions in Grade 3 is not just a matter of mastering this particular skill, but rather of reflecting a new form of thinking and a new intellectual perspective. Let us look at it in detail:

*1.5 Recognize and use the commutative and associative properties of multiplication (e.g., if $5 \times 7 = 35$, then what is 7×5 ? and if $5 \times 7 \times 3 = 105$, then what is $7 \times 3 \times 5$?).

In the case of Gestalt-Dialektik, it is not enough to recognize and use the commutative properties of multiplication. The pupils may indeed become skillful in flipping factors from $7 \times 5 = 5 \times 7 = 35$, but that doesn't mean that they understand the deep structures involved in such manipulations. Indeed we may start with such steps. Under Gestalt-Dialektik for example, the pupils are trained to rephrase 12×13 as 13×12 as a general Gestalt-rule of starting with the biggest entities of any phenomena that needs to be resolved. However, the pupils need to understand which factors represent the multiplicand and which ones the multiplier and why. For this they need to understand the difference between conventional and logical properties.

That the first or the second factor in “A x B” becomes a multiplicand and not a multiplier in a simple multiplication such as 12×13 is a matter of convention and not of logic. Therefore, in view of the sequencing as to which factor within the multiplication should be the multiplicand and which one the multiplier, an arbitrary Gestalt-convention has been chosen in which the first factor becomes the multiplicand and the second one the multiplier contrary to the classical convention (first the multiplier and then the multiplicand). In the classical convention, we think that in 13×12 , the last factor 12 becomes multiplied 13 times because this “second factor” (A x **B**) is conveyed at the multiplicand, that is the objects to be multiplied: “I see 12 apples; then these 12 apples are multiplied 13 times. These means that we have the following sets:

[12 apples (one time), 12 apples (two times), 12 apples (three times), . . . , 12 apples (13 times)]

or: [12 + 12 + 12 + 12 + 12 + 12 + 12 + 12 + 12 + 12 + 12 + 12 + 12 apples]

This may seem to be a very long rout to take in order to exemplify what it means to deal with multiplicands and multipliers and what it means to express them in terms of this or that convention. Thus in the typical $ab = ba$ commutative law, the results are the same, but in the mental structures, that is, in their corresponding psycholinguistic process “**ab is not equal to ba**” because the cognitive process is different. Let us take the same example just to demonstrate the different psycholinguistic process that takes place under the commutative law, but in this case under a different convention. In the classical convention the second factor becomes the multiplicand so that in 13×12 the 12 becomes the target of the activity because as the above example shows we are dealing with a set of 12 apples that is multiplied up to 13 times. However, if we were to state that as a matter of a new convention (say the proposed **Gestalt-Dialektik’s convention** as opposed to the classical convention in the commutative law), the first factor of any multiplication shall for all practical purposes become the beneficiary of our multiplicative activity, that is, the “objective target” of our actions, then the entire “**psycholinguistic process in `13 x 12`**” has been dramatically changed. Now, instead of the above state of affairs in which we had set of 12 apples repeated after one another, we have an entire new situation in which we are dealing with sets of 13 apples being repeated, because the set of 13 apples in 13×12 is now the new multiplicand under the Gestalt-Dialektik convention. Thus:

[13 apples (one time), 13 apples (two times), 13 apples (three times), . . . , 13 apples (12 times)]

or: [13 + 13 + 13 + 13 + 13 + 13 + 13 + 13 + 13 + 13 + 13 + 13 apples]

Following the “conventional logic” in 3×4 the 3 is seen as the multiplier, a pure abstraction, although it may appear first in the visual field and the 4 is seen as the multiplicand, as the real substance, the items that need to be multiplied. Thus, the way to illustrate it is as follows:

$$4 + 4 + 4 = 3 \times 4$$

However, under the principles of Gestalt-Dialectics, it is claimed that whether the first factor should (and that would depend on the philosophy of the teacher) become a multiplier or multiplicand is a matter of psycholinguistic convention and not one based on pure logic. Therefore, Gestalt-Dialektik reserves its right “so to speak” to set its own “Gestalt convention” in which in “ 3×4 ” for example the first factor, that is the number 3, “becomes the multiplicand.” In this case it is a matter of “becoming” in the sense of having “invented” rather than having discovered or found a “Gestalt-form.” Consequently, under Gestalt-Dialektik, 3×4 is visualized as follows:

$$3 + 3 + 3 + 3 = 3 \times 4 \text{ instead of}$$

$$4 + 4 + 4 = 3 \times 4.$$

Using dots, one could illustrate it as follows:



It is believed that this “**Gestalt-Dialektik’s convention**” in which the first number of a multiplication “becomes” the multiplicand (let us call it the “**Gestalt-Multiplicand-Convention-A x B**”) is as good or better than the classical “math-convention” in which the same first number is “taught to be” the multiplier. At worst, one could argue that both are conventions and as such neither represents the “purest form of logic” and both need to be clearly applied and integrated into the classroom math activities as a matter of reinforcing and superseding the aforementioned standard 1.5 in Algebra and Functions in Grade 3.

However, one should teach one convention before the other one, and once the first convention has been established and mastered by the pupils, then the second one can be introduced as a form of reinforcing standard 1.5 in Algebra and Functions for grade three. This is where a philosophical approach is needed. One must have at least a metaphysical reason to choose one of the two conventions in terms of a specific hypothesis or theory regarding child development. Therefore, it is hypothesized that if one were to investigate whether a visual field is seen as multiplication in terms of the “Gestalt-Multiplicand-Convention-A x B” (in short, the “G-M-C-A x B”) some evidence may be found in order to operate under this convention rather than on the classical one. For example, it is hypothesized that the following field is one in which the majority of the individuals or at least those without much academic background (that is those without the effects of the conditioning effect that might had taken place with the math convention in which the first factor is seen as a multiplier) will think of the first factor as the multiplicand:



Indeed it is hypothesized that the columns of dots will have such a force (a visual vector going downwards, vertically as opposed to one from left to right, going horizontally) that the “non academic subjects” will reply that such field is viewed as follows:



Thus: $3 + 3 + 3 + 3 = 3 \times 4 = 12$

As opposed to: $3 + 3 + 3 + 3 = 4 \times 3 = 12$.

However, if the subjects were to choose 4×3 , then it means that under most circumstances, the first number of the multiplication represents the multiplier. At any rate, once one of the two conventions has been established, then the second one shall be likewise mastered and applied. In this respect, the California content standard 1.5 in Algebra and Functions for Grade 3 would have been achieved and superseded under the application of the above two aforementioned conventions, one representing the classical math and the other one the Gestalt-Dialektik’s convention.

Now the question may be asked as to how to meet other California math content standards dealing with the facts of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division? Consider the following standards:

Grade 4

Number Sense

- *3.0 Students solve problems involving addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division of whole numbers and understand the relationships among the operations:
- *3.1 Demonstrate an understanding of, and the ability to use, standard algorithms for the addition and subtraction of multidigit numbers.
- *3.2 Demonstrate an understanding of, and the ability to use, standard algorithms for multiplying a multidigit number by a two-digit number and for dividing a multidigit number by a one-digit number; use relationships between them to simplify computations and to check results.
- *3.3 Solve problems involving multiplication of multidigit numbers by two-digit numbers.
- *3.4 Solve problems involving division of multidigit numbers by one-digit numbers.
- 4.0 Students know how to factor small whole numbers:
- *4.1 Understand that many whole numbers break down in different ways (e.g., $12 = 4 \times 3 = 2 \times 6 = 2 \times 2 \times 3$).
- 4.2 Know that numbers such as 2, 3, 5, 7, and 11 do not have any factors except 1 and themselves and that such numbers are called prime numbers.

As seen above, the ones with an asterisk fall under the general paradigmatic principals of Gestalt-Dialektik and the one underlined need to be taught within the format of **“SPECIAL DEVELOPMENT OF MATHEMATICAL CONCEPTS.”** This strategy is followed not only for all the math standards, but also for all other standards in the K-5 curriculum. The above stated standards 4.0 and 4.2 are underlined because they need a very specific focus which otherwise they would not be able to acquire under the general principles as explained in Gestalt-Paradigms in the next section. The standards 3.0 through 3.4 and 4.1 under Number Sense of Grade 4 have been marked with an asterisk because as we shall see in the next section they are a direct consequence of holistic paradigms of Gestalt-Dialektik, especially those related to the Gestalt-Paradigms.

3.9 The Gestalt-Paradigms of Gestalt-Dialektik Related to Number Sense

Under Gestalt-Dialektik, the first number of a multiplication becomes the multiplicand as a matter of convention. This convention has been literally invented as a matter of “sequencing of forms” from the previous steps into a “Gestalt-Paradigm” that in itself forms the basis of a system of thought: In philosophical terms, “Gestalt-Paradigms” are a form of “synthesis,” but not a synthesis of atomistic parts, but of “Gestalt-Forms,” or “Gestalt-Frames” as sub-wholes that are used as reference in relationship to particulars, skills, part-to-parts systems, part-to-whole systems, or the most basic units of any phenomenon.

Gestalt-paradigms as defined in the nature of Gestalt-Dialektik, the theory hereby proposed, are specific “learning entities” and in effect, could be found in nature or invented through systematization of strategies. In the case of language, one could frame one paradigm under the auspices of a good literary work. Such a work, say a specific poem, could be systematized into as many “clear and distinct” sub-wholes and parts as possible in order to

make a subsequent synthesis of such sub-wholes and/or parts back into the literary nature of its paradigm, in this case the particular poem that was chosen as such.

In the case of arithmetic instruction, a natural paradigm such as the one found in a poem in the learning or reading and writing is a very rare phenomenon which may be found only in the case of the aforementioned proposed Maya-based pentagonal system. In that case, one could postulate the number five as an anthropological phenomenon because of the five fingers in a human being. Otherwise, paradigms of a different “psycholinguistic order” are hereby postulated for the rest of the Number Sense concepts as required by the California math content standards, Kindergarten-Grade Five. These new paradigms need to follow the nature of good “productive and genuine thinking.”

Productive and genuine thinking should not be confused with traditional logic, even if such logic could be as perfect as a machine could be. It is not a question of syllogistic thinking in which two propositions seem to be associated, but rather of a process dealing more with the nature of symmetry, of holism, of genuine interlockings among the targeted factors, etc. Using Max Wertheimer’s own words, one should be able to differentiate between associative, add-connective traditional logic with genuine and productive thinking:

In comparison with actual, sensible, and productive processes, the topics as well as the customary examples of traditional logic often look dull, insipid, lifeless. To be sure, the treatment is rigorous enough, yet often it seems barren, boring, empty, unproductive. If one tries to describe processes of genuine thinking in terms of formal traditional logic, the result is often unsatisfactory: one has, then, a series of correct operations, but the sense of the process and what was vital, forceful, creative in it seems somehow to have evaporated in the formulations. On the other hand it is possible to have a chain of logical operations, each perfectly correct in itself, which does not form a sensible train of thought. Indeed there are people with logical training who in certain situations produce series of correct operations which, viewed as a whole, nevertheless form something akin to a flight of ideas. Training in traditional logic is not to be disparaged: it leads to stringency and rigor in each step, it contributes to critical mindedness; but it does not, in itself, seem to give rise to productive thinking.

Wertheimer, M., 1959, p. 10

At any rate, dealing with the teaching of arithmetic in the elementary school curriculum, grades K to 5, a process of holistic thinking in terms of “Gestalt-Paradigms” is hereby postulated in an effort to improve “genuine and productive thinking “ according to Wertheimer, one of the founder of Gestalt psychology. A specific arithmetic paradigm in terms of number sense for example has three levels, A, B and C:

A-level:

The particular “Gestalt-Paradigm” in question. In the case of arithmetic, the “Gestalt-Paradigm” represents the entire system of interrelated factors as “sub-wholes” (namely “Gestalt-Forms and/or –Frames”) involving the facts of addition, multiplication, division and subtraction in order to master most of the concepts related to number sense (some specifics shall be given below in terms of the facts of addition and multiplication as a function of addition).

B-level:

The factors are taught through interrelated systems or “Gestalt-Forms”: First a system for the facts of addition must be established and not just the skills in order to be able to do additions. Thus, the additions are not taught in isolation from one another, such as:

$$1 + 4 = 5; \quad 4 + 3 = 7; \quad 8 + 7 = 15 \text{ etc.}$$

which is basically what most teachers use as the strategy to get mastery of the facts of addition. Those additions are plain repetitions of the same skill without much of a system or patterns of thought.

However, under the B-level of a particular Gestalt-paradigm, in this case the all-encompassing umbrella as a dynamic system dealing with the basic facts of arithmetic, we should “find, discover or invent” such “Gestalt-forms” that lend themselves more easily into “clear and distinct” and therefore predictable patterns of thinking. The following patterns of thinking represent such forms:

1 to 100 (horizontally, $1 + 1 + 1 \dots$ up to 100 and vertically in multiples of 10

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70
71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80
81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90
91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100

2 to 200 (horizontally, $2 + 2 + 2 \dots$ up to 200 and vertically in multiples of 10

2	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20
22	24	26	28	30	32	34	36	38	40
42	44	46	48	50	52	54	56	58	60
62	64	66	68	70	72	74	76	78	80
82	84	86	88	90	92	94	96	98	100
102	104	106	108	110	112	114	116	118	120
122	124	126	128	130	132	134	136	138	140
142	144	146	148	150	152	154	156	158	160
162	164	166	168	170	172	174	176	178	180
182	184	186	188	190	192	194	196	198	200

3 to 300 (horizontally, $3 + 3 + 3 \dots$ up to 300 and vertically in multiples of 10

3	6	9	12	15	18	21	24	27	30
33	36	39	42	45	48	51	54	57	60
63	66	69	72	75	78	81	84	87	90

93 etc. all the way to: 300

Similar “Gestalt-Frames” are used for the numbers that follow: For the 4, the sequence starts with four and ends in 400; the 5 ends in 500, etc. until the pupils try out more challenging ones like the 12 up to 1200, the 16 up to 1600 or even the 99 up to 9900, and so forth indefinitely. These “Gestalt-forms” become Gestalt-systems once the pupils see the logic behind them.

Under Gestalt-Dialektik another Gestalt-Frame has been found to be very practical. Once the pupils see its logic, it becomes a very productive system in the “decoding” so to speak of the facts of *addition, multiplication, division and subtraction*: **mastery of such a system “becomes” the mastery of such facts**. In these Gestalt-Forms, the pupils are asked to do lots of “mental gymnastics” with a simple pattern, namely that of reciting with their eyes closed particular sequences of numbers forwards and backwards in a certain temporal and rhythmical format. Example:

- a) Reciting the numbers 1,2,3 . . . up to 10 and back to zero in less than 5 seconds.

This Gestalt-Form becomes a race against the clock and in a way the dynamics of time and timing (rhythm) become very important if the pupil is to be able to recite such a sequence “so quickly.”

- a) Reciting the numbers 2,4,6 . . . up to 20 and back to zero in less than 7 seconds.

Again, the dynamics with the clock lets the pupil know whether he/she has reached the objective. The pupil is trained to control his own pace. It is no longer a competition against fellow peers, but rather a challenge to him/herself.

- a) Reciting the numbers 3,6,9 . . . up to 30 and back to zero in less than 9 seconds.

At first, even with the number 1, the pacing is very slow. Instead of doing it at the targeted timing, most pupils would do it in 30 or even more seconds. However, on a daily basis, taking just about a few intensive moments of this mental training (or mental gymnastics), the pupils see “real progress.” This is one of its dynamics. They are willing to do such “hard mental work” because they see that there is momentum. Besides, learning the time tables in the usual monotonous format would be even less dynamic as through these “Gestalt-forms.”

The repetitive format of the time tables used by most teachers does not lend itself to any form of dynamics:

$3 \times 1 = 3$
 $3 \times 2 = 6$
 $3 \times 3 = 9$
etc.

Besides, the connection between the facts of addition and multiplication is not very clear. If pupils have to memorize the time tables in the usual classical and monotonous format,

then the logical insight of a multiplication as a function of addition is lost. Isn't a multiplication a short form, i.e., a short cut to and a function of an addition? Thus, when the pupil is repeating:

$$\begin{aligned} 3 \times 1 &= 3 \\ 3 \times 2 &= 6 \\ 3 \times 3 &= 9 \\ \text{etc.} \end{aligned}$$

where or how does the pupil "clearly and distinctly" see that in reality, what he/she is doing is adding the number 3 in a sequence?:

$$\begin{aligned} 3 \times 1 = 3 &\text{ is the equivalent of:} && 3 \\ 3 \times 2 = 6 &\text{ is the equivalent of:} && 3 + 3 \\ 3 \times 3 = 9 &\text{ is the equivalent of;} && 3 + 3 + 3 \\ \text{etc.} \end{aligned}$$

However, under the "Gestalt-Forms," the pupils are taught to restructure the sequences so that the bonds with the basic facts of arithmetic become apparent. Added to such sequences are other factors such as the rhythm, that is, the pacing vis-à-vis a time format. Time control and rhythmic sequencing become bonded. This helps in the dynamics of the mental gymnastics as the following examples suggests

3-6-9-12-15	(pause to breath)	18-21-24-27-30
30-27-24-21-18-15	(pause to breath or to think)	12-9-6-3-0

(Objective: to do it in less than 6 seconds)

Likewise:

4-8-12-16-20	(Pause to breath to to think)	24-28-32-36-40
40-36-32-28-24-20	(Pause to breath or to think)	16-12-8-4-0

(Objective: to do it in less than 6 seconds)

5-10-15-20-25	(Pause to breath or to think)	30-35-40-45-50
50-45-40-35-30-25	(Pause to breath or to think)	20-15-10-5-0

(Objective: to do it in less than 6 seconds)

6-12-18-24-30	(Pause to breath or to think)	36-42-48-54-60
60-54-48-42-36-30	(Pause to breath or to think)	24-18-12-6-0

(Objective: to do it in less than 7 seconds)

7-14-21-28-35	(Pause to breath or to think)	42-49-56-63-70
70-63-56-49-42-35	(Pause)	28-21-14-7-0

(Objective: to do it in less than 7 seconds)

8-14-24-32-40	(Pause)	48-56-64-72-80
80-72-64-56-48-40	(Pause)	32-24-16-8-0

(Objective: to do it in less than 7 seconds)

9-18-27-36-45	(Pause)	54-63-72-81-90
90-81-72-63-64-45	(Pause)	36-27-18-9-0

(Objective: to do it in less than 6 seconds)

10-20-30-40-50 (Pause)		60-70-80-90-100
100-90-80-70-60-50 (Pause)	(Pause)	40-30-20-10-0

(Objective: to do it in less than 5 seconds)

Etcetera up 12 or to whatever number that the pupil is capable of mastering in terms of such metal gymnastics.

In order to reach the objective, it takes a lot of patience, but also depends on the age and maturity of the pupils. However, once the objective has been achieved, then it is very obvious to a pupils that “ $3 \times 4 = 12$ ” because $3 + 3 + 3 + 3 = 12$ as per the aforementioned **“Gestalt-Multiplicand-Convention-A x B.”** The pupils understand that $3 \times 4 = 12$ because of the ability to recite the sequence so quickly that it takes a fraction of a second to get to the answer, namely: 3-6-9-12, which is the obvious equivalent to the addition, $3 + 3 + 3 + 3$. Not only do the pupils see the connection of the additive sequence to the multiplication facts, but also the refined logic dealing with division and subtraction, which is implied when the pupils work with the sequence of numbers forwards and backwards.

On the issue of the above stated hypothesis, let it be known that on “3 x 4” the 3 “becomes” the multiplicand, that is, the orientation of all Gestalt-Forms towards its corresponding paradigm based on systems that can move either upwards towards the totality of an all-encompassing paradigm or downwards towards its corresponding interrelated and interdependent “Gestalt-Forms” along with their corresponding parts.

C-level:

The C-level refers to the analytical strategies chosen by a particular pupil for a particular problem. For example, faced with the multiplication, 12×13 , the C-level is defined as the precise analytical strategy chosen by the pupil. If he/she so chooses to take the 12 as the first factor and multiply it by 10 (answer 120) plus the answer to 12×3 (36 to give 156 as the total answer), so be it. If he chooses to follow the strategy in which the problem is seen from its biggest and broadest picture possible as in 13×12 as explained above, then fine too. Let it be known that the C-level represents the particular details dealt with strategically and analytically within a particular problem. The end result to a problem may be a particular one, but the process, the means to the end, may be multiple, depending on the thought processes of the pupil.

Dealing with analytical thinking, there is no single way of solving a problem and in many cases it just might depend on the creativity of the pupil. For example, how would a pupil go about solving the following addition?

$$\begin{array}{r} 368 \\ +466 \\ \hline 542 \end{array}$$

Synthetically, there is usually only one rigid way, drilled into the mindset of a pupil who just repeats it without much deeper thinking. The parts are treated almost as equal in the process of “carrying over” to the next column:

$$\begin{array}{r} 11 \\ 308 \\ +466 \\ \hline 542 \\ 1316 \end{array}$$

Arriving at the solution, there is no real clarity whether the solution makes sense or not. However, if done analytically, if one starts from the column dealing with the biggest pictures, namely with the 100ths column, one can almost sense the flow of the quantities, taking for example $500 + 400$ as being 900 and then $900 + 300$ as being 1200. Then, taking a look at the tenths columns one sees a 6 and a 4, which represent 60 and 40, an easy addition, making 100 which if added to the mentally retained sum of 1200, the pupil can almost sense the “1300.” Having 1300 inside the mind, one sees the 8 in the one’s column and readily transforms the 1300 into 1308 and likewise 1308 into 1310 with the number 2 and 1310 into 1316 with the last digit of the addition remaining in the one’s column. It all becomes “one mental flow, directing itself under a mental vector.” Having reached the final destination, one has a feeling of having ascended a road, but a road with fluency, **with a clear view of what is happening in each transformation.** The mental vectors may be described as follows:

$$\begin{array}{r} 3 \quad 0 \quad 8 \\ +4 \quad 6 \quad 6 \\ \hline 5 \quad 4 \quad 2 \end{array}$$

a) 500 d) 1300 e) 1308
 b) 900 f) 1310
 c) 1200 g) 1316

Of course the pupil could have seen the 3 and the 4 on the 100ths column as 700 adding to it 500 and so forth taking a different but similar analytic road.

However, most teachers don’t realize the damage done to the “mindset” of the pupils when all they do is just plain “**drill & kill**” in their synthetic methods, which are in essence blind to the overall structure to of the problem. **Superficial and synthetic thinking is the end result instead of a deeper understanding of the problem at hand.**

In the analytical psychology as postulated by Gestalt-Dialektik, the **process is more important than the answer,** but the process must be analytical in nature. That is one of the principles of “Gestalt-Dialektik.” In practical terms, this means that the pupils in a second or third grade classroom would not be doing algorithms of the facts of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division the way they are taught in most schools worldwide. Instead, the pupils and teachers will be using a limitless amount of analytical strategies to arrive even at the same answer.

Therefore, one could then argue that there are many ways to get to Rome if the pupils and teachers are given the freedom to think logically and analytically for themselves. There are no easy to follow analytic formulas to get to the final destination. The process to “get there” must be individually sought, taking advantage of the potential and creativity of the human being. An “Albert Einstein” was definitely not the product of Germanic dictatorial ways of learning at the High School level of his academic years. It was more than likely an analytical process only known to him that brought about his special theory of relativity. Who knows?

Section 4

Literacy Development According to Gestalt-Dialektik

4.1 “Early Childhood Literacy Education”

Under Gestalt-Dialektik, several methods of initial reading and writing have been promoted. The methods depend on the age of the child. Above all, Gestalt-Dialektik takes into account the sensitive periods according to Maria Montessori. If we seriously take the notion that “written language” may be part of a linguistic continuum that starts in the womb of the mother, then we should view “literacy development” as part of the natural process of “linguistic development.” From the Chomskyan regenerative grammar (Pinker 1994) we know with certainty that children follow very specific stages of language development. At around the age of two children’s morphology and syntax begin to explode. From this age on, the amount of words that children master is astonishing. The question then may be asked: is it possible that the “written text” could be part of the linguistic experiences of a two or three year old child?

As far as Maria Montessori is concerned, initial reading and writing belong to a sensitive period of life which corresponds more to the four- to five-year old child rather than to the age of six or seven when children as in the case of some European schools that start formal education. For example, Hans-Jorgen Gjessing (English translation, 1986) reports that children in Norway start with initial reading and writing when they enter first grade at the age of seven. Promoting initial reading and writing at such late age runs contrary to Montessori principles and in my opinion may be one of the causes of some forms of dyslexia. We may never prove the point that teaching children how to read and write outside of their window of opportunity causes some forms of dyslexia or not, but in accordance to Maria Montessori it amounts to teaching a skill that children could have naturally acquired during their most optimal stages of sensitivity before the age of five. In other words, why wait until a child is seven in order to teach him-her reading and writing when the same child could have acquired such ability via a more natural approach to learning?

In the famous “explosion of writing” Maria Montessori reminds us how her preschool children in La Casa de Bambini in Rome began to read and write spontaneously and without direct intervention from the educator. She compared such an explosion to a volcano, whose inner force could only be deduced from what was visible. Thus, Maria Montessori became one of the most ardent and vehement proponents of what I would call “early childhood literacy education.” Do we have any other evidence that initial reading and writing does belong to a sensitive period before the age of six? According to a personal report, the following is an explanation of how a mother in Los Angeles described phonological awareness with her two-year old daughter:

Once I was reading a book from one of my college classes and then my baby-child (age: one year and eight months) Elisabeth⁴ approached me and asked me: “What is this?” (pointing to a letter of the book). I told her that it was letter “s” (the name). Two days later I went to the Vons supermarket and she said: “Mira mami la –S–” (“Look mom the S,” pointing to the final letter of the name “Vons,” the name of the supermarket in super big letters).

Myriam Ayala (Teacher Assistant at 75th Street Elementary School, LAUSD)

⁴ The child’s real name has been changed.

Therefore, any learning center based on Gestalt-Dialektik should integrate whenever possible formal and informal methods of exposing the children to literacy development in a natural social setting and as early as possible in the life of a child.

4.1.1 The Discrimination Approach of Initial Phonemes

The approach described above relates to a particular mother with a particular child in a particular social setting. It was the mother who realized that her daughter Elisabeth could memorize letters and their corresponding phonemes. Myriam Ayala as the mother had never studied theoretical approaches of initial reading and writing, but she exceptionally used her own mother-instincts and realized that her child could memorize letters and their corresponding phonemes. Psycholinguistically speaking we may be dealing with a special case in which a child develops a special sensitivity towards “letters” because of her attachment to the mother. At the age of two we know from linguistic research that children’s native language is extremely sensitive toward lexical knowledge. In other words, the children naturally want to know the names of the objects in their environment. In my opinion, somehow Elisabeth developed a similar sensitivity towards letter because of her attachment to her mother who would do a lot of reading for her college courses. A mother who reads books may become spark the interest of a child to the point of wanting to know the names of some specific letters such as “s” and “o” because of their special configurations. For two-year old child who see mother or father reading and reading every day, then such “funny-looking” figures must have a name. Thus Elisabeth turned to mama and asked her for the name of the letter “s.”

To the great surprise of the mother, two days later Elisabeth remember the name of the letter “s” at the end of the name of a Vons supermarket in Los Angeles. This is evidence that the child had internalized the name of a letter as if it were a name of any other normal object in the child’s physical surrounding. In my opinion, learning the name of letters at a very early stage of life has nothing to do with “learning how to read and write” in an academic setting, but it does prove the point made by other authors such as the **Nikitini** family in Russia that children are capable of reading at the age of two or three.

However, in my opinion, proponents of initial reading and writing at the age of three or younger such as the Nikitini family in Russia miss the point. It is not a matter of teaching children how to read and write, but rather of exposing the children to written language within the aspects of linguistic developments in a social setting. That is to say, learning the names of the letters and their corresponding sounds by a two year old may become a special sensitivity to some children when and if the children are genuinely interested because of their parents or older siblings who enjoy reading for social pleasure or for academic reasons.

Upon entering the fourth or fifth birthday, the educator must not assume that all children will love any exercise that deals with phonological awareness in terms of initial reading and writing. Thus, one always take into account any initial reading and writing activity as a function of social undertakings. That is to say, the first and foremost objective for the educator is to help children become sensitive towards the names and sounds of the letters in terms of some social function. While a two-year old child may want to learn the names of the letters because letters for that particular child have become part of their lexical sensitivity towards environmental objects (that is, “letters” become real objects in psychological terms), forcing such names and their corresponding sounds to four-year old children may be done out of a social context. If the social context does not exist, if the four-year old children are not sensitive toward letters and sounds, then it is up to the educator to create such a social world in

which the written language become a integrated into the social values of the child and particular into the child’s family. If mama and papa play with rhymes, clap to syllabic sounds, help their children to memorize poems and sing songs, then little by little a sensitivity towards the corresponding sounds and syllables of such oral language phenomena may be developed.

In such an approach the educator may direct the children’s attention toward certain initial phonological features of specific “key-words” that should be part of the social experiences of the children such as:

/ S S S o l / for the word “sol” (sun) in Spanish

/ k k k a s a / for the word “casa” (house).

/ o o o s o / for the word “oso” (a male bear⁵)

/ o o o s a / for the word “osa” (a female bear)

After a couple of weeks, the educator may include middle and ending letters with their corresponding sounds.

/ s s s- o o o- l l l / for the word “sol” (sun) in Spanish

/ k k k- aaa- s s s- aaa / for the word “casa” (house).

/ o o o- s s s- o o o / for the word “oso” (a male bear)

/ o o o- s s s- aaa / for the word “osa” (a female bear)

Parallel to these daily oral exercises the educator should help the children illustrate such words in order to emphasize an artistic and thus social perspective of literacy development. For example, the educator may first present the phonological features of the targeted words and then gives the children a piece of paper. Then the pupils may, with the help of an adult, illustrate the targeted words first and afterwards trace the letters several times. They may do the same exercise (i.e., illustrations of socially close objects such as the sun and a house) as homework on a daily basis with the help of their parents. Because of the artistic efforts of both the children and their parents, the educator should discuss every day with the children at the beginning of the school day how well the parents helped in the illustrations and how well the children traced over the letters, which should be written by an adult on blank pieces of paper and on a big letter format.

In other words, whatever the children do in terms of such initial, middle and ending sounds based on “socially close objects” should not be viewed from an academic perspective.

⁵ While most Spanish-speaking children in South Central Los Angeles have not visited the LA zoo or any other zoo with bears, such animals because of their mythological value in society (i.e. the “Teddy Bear”) nevertheless seem to acquire the same psychical value as those names of words close to the hearts of the children: “mother, sister, brother, etc.” (“mamá, papá, hermano . . .”). Thus “oso” (bear) may become a key word to a child, although the child may have never experienced a bear in real life.

The point of the matter is not the “phonological exercise” in and by itself, but rather the fact that the parents take time in order to help and guide the children through the corresponding illustrations. In this sense, the children are not “writing” letters, syllables and words, but rather “illustrating” them in big “letter format just as if they were to illustrate any other object in their physical surroundings. Just as Elisabeth took interest on the “s” in terms of a sensitivity toward lexical knowledge (a natural tendency for children during their lexical and syntactical explosion of language), then four-year old child in a Gestalt-Dialektik classroom should take interest in the same letter because it looks like a snake and mind you, snake bite and make a special sound:

/ **S S S** o l / for the word “sol” (sun) in Spanish.

4.1.2 Phonological Awareness via the Names of the Children

Another way to target the initial phonological features of certain words would be to integrate the names of the children in the daily “phonological awareness activities.” In order to achieve such an objective, the educator should take any social opportunity in order to write the names of the pupils on the board. Let us say for example that “Juanito” is not paying attention or for any reason is not following the social norms of the classroom. In such a case, the educator may react by writing Juanito’s name right next to a “sad face.”

Writing the name of a particular child on the board for positive and sometimes negative⁶ reinforcement is a powerful and meaningful experience. Children’s names are full of emotions and personal sensitivities and it is obvious that the children will relate to the written equivalence of their names. What is important is that if for any reason whatsoever the teacher is to write the name of any particular child on the board, then that child and the group of children should be aware of the initial sound of such a targeted name. In the case of “Juanito,” the educator writes only the initial letter, emphasizing its sound, and does not write the entire name the way most other teachers would.

Educators ___OK, “**j-j-j**uanito” (Juanito) I am going to write your name because you hit Maria on her back. Please do not hit her again! OK children, what is the sound of “**j-j-j**uanito”?

⁶ However, at times it may be necessary to write the name of a child right next to a sad face as a temporary “disciplinary and social reminder” that the child should act according to the social norms of the classroom. Such negative reinforcements should be used as a last resource and only for a couple of moments. As soon as the targeted child does any thing positive, the educator must either erase the name from such a “sad face” or transfer the name right next to a star as a highly positive reward. Whatever the educator tries to do in terms of negative reinforcements, it must be done with love and understanding. The children must feel that such actions are done only as a “social and positive” reminder and not in a way to punish them. My current preschool children at 75th Street Elementary School (Los Angeles Unified School District) take such actions with ease and personal responsibility. At times they may even enjoy the way I put several of their names right next to a sad face as a reminder that they ought to behave in a certain fashion and then just to bring a comical element, the teacher may act out as a clown, for which the teacher’s assistant may write the teacher’s name on the board right next to a SAD FACE for “not acting appropriately.” The pupils take great enjoyment knowing that the teacher uses such “negative reinforcements” as a social reminder that we are not perfect human beings and that at times we just need a temporary social reminder in case we disregard the social norms of the classroom.

(The educator writes in big letter format the letter “J” on the board. The children take a guess at different sounds of the letters they are familiar with and then the educator writes the letter “J” and monitors that every child clearly reproduces the sound)

J

Educator ___OK, I see that “**m-m-m**-aria” (Maria) is sitting very nicely and attentive on the carpet. I am going to write her name right next to this big star on the board. Who knows how to right her name?

Children ___With the letter /S-S-S . . . /

Educator ___That sound is for this letter (showing the letter S in the context of the alphabet), but not for the sound /m/. Where in the alphabet do we find do we find this letter? (the children look and discover the targeted letter:

M

4.1.3 Literacy Development via a Poetic-Music Continuum

With the daily routines described above, plus the other phonological strategies, my four-year Spanish-Speaking children at 75th Street Elementary School in South Central Los Angeles begin to isolate the initial sounds of all their names as well as other letter sounds in middle and ending positions. However, other strategies with a more poetic approach seem to be very significant. For example, some rhyming patterns for the Spanish language seem to be very effective such as the following:

e o	e o
o s o	f e o
e o	e o
y o	te v e o

With such patterns and especially if the educator has 15 pupils or less, all children should be given an opportunity to decode, first phoneme after phoneme, and then specific words such as “oso, feo, yo, veo.” As the children acquire more and more insights into these daily phonological exercises such words as “oso” and “feo” may even become “sight words,” especially if the educator reads the entire rhyme in a syllabic rhythmic pattern.

One should also remember, that such rhymes must be viewed from a holistic and oral language perspective. The objective of such games is not to “bore the kids” with a mechanical “drill and kill-approach” to such exercises. The educator must always keep in mind that the entire rhyme must be viewed as a rhyming game, as a poetic unit used in clapping as the children recite the entire rhyme. Mastery of the phonological and sight-word features of such rhymes should become a function of the entire oral-language features entailed in such exercises. That is to say, the very first objective is not the mastery of the phonological and sight-word features, but rather of the rhymes as a dramatic and oral language phenomenon. The children should be given plenty of time and opportunities to play with such rhymes. For example with “eo, eo__oso feo__eo, eo__yo te veo” the educator could show the children how to clap to the different syllables. At first “eo” may receive one clap and “oso” and “feo” two claps, one for each syllable. However, later “eo” may be broken into two claps “e—o.” Later one, these claps may have its “written representation” when the entire rhyme is posted on the board and the educators introduces the phonological and syllabic features of such a rhyme.

However, literacy development must not stop at such simple, but practical phonological, syllabic and rhythmic activities, but must also include the dynamics of a “poetic literacy continuum.” Thus, a transitional period from the most simple phonological and syllabic rhymes to the more poetic levels that include music education should take place at least for the pre-K and kindergarten curriculum.

In order to comprehend why a poetic-music continuum should be developed in order to form the foundation of literacy development, one should take into account the following hypothesis:

The Literacy-Linguistic Connection

With some exceptions⁷, a child cannot read, what he or she cannot speak. Likewise a child will most likely be able to read and write what he or she can speak. Thus, for the vast majority of children, linguistic development is a transcendental factor of literacy development.

Therefore, with most children of limited oral language ability, excellent results in reading and writing cannot be expected until any oral language deficiency disappears. Basically, in general terms and with some exceptions a child who cannot speak cannot learn how to read and write at age appropriate levels regardless of the initial reading and writing methods being used. On the other hand, normal or above normal children in terms of oral language development will exuberate with most reading methods, especially those designed under Gestalt-Dialektik.

Therefore, if linguistic development is so transcendental, then one should develop a curriculum based not only on the most appropriate methods possible in terms of phonological

⁷ I believe that in some cases a child may be limited in its oral languages development, but nevertheless be able to excel in most areas of the curriculum. However, more research may be needed in order to find out why such children excel despite their oral language deficiencies.

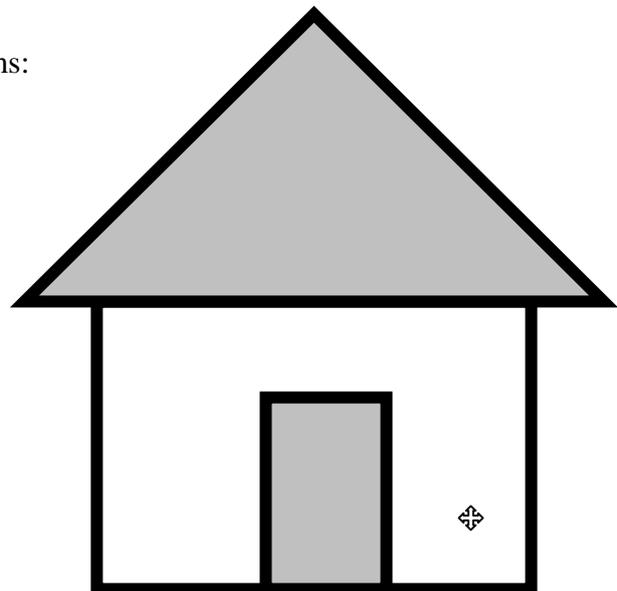
and syllabic awareness, but also based on linguistic development. If for example, the oral language development is deficient, then it's obvious that the child needs an appropriate linguistic therapy. In my opinion, there is nothing more significant than oral language development via music and poetry.

4.2 The Theory Behind the “Gestalt-Dialektik’s Water-Drop-a” The Calligraphic Principle

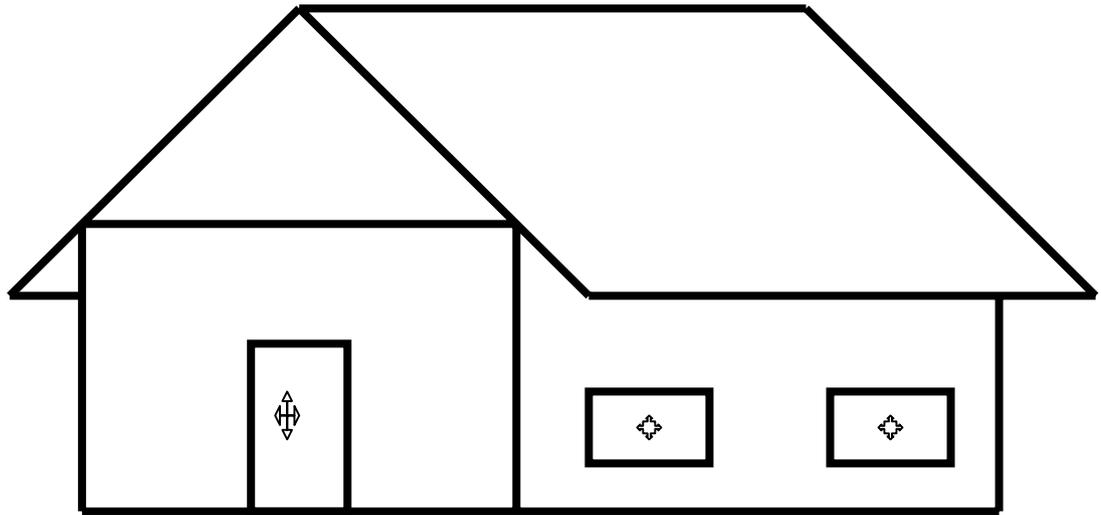
As a major factor of my holistic approaches to initial reading and writing, I have developed a highly significant calligraphic method via which most of the pupils will be able to write the exact “letter formation” instead of the generic “letter approximations” as implied in some curricular methods such as the DLM Performance Assessment Checklist (Schiller Pam et al 2003: Teacher’s Edition, p. 292) in order to represent written language.

Under “Gestalt-Dialektik,” one should try to seek and discover higher paradigmatic levels of any skill or cognitive ability to be taught. Thus, the “piecemeal-additive approach” to letter formation by Open Court (1995) is hereby rejected as completely inadequate. On the other hand, the circular patterns and/or geometric figures, in accordance to the principles of Gestalt-Dialektik, should become the stepping stone out of which the children acquired the ability to form letters. In other words, one should look at the entire phenomenon from the most holistic point of view. One should realize that all letter formations have parts that are found in nature, such as in geometric and organic figures. Thus, instead of dealing with letter formation in isolation, we should encourage the children to draw specific patterns of geometric and organic figures (i.e., a house with its doors, windows, roof, etc. all dealing with horizontal and vertical lines in a very holistic perspective)

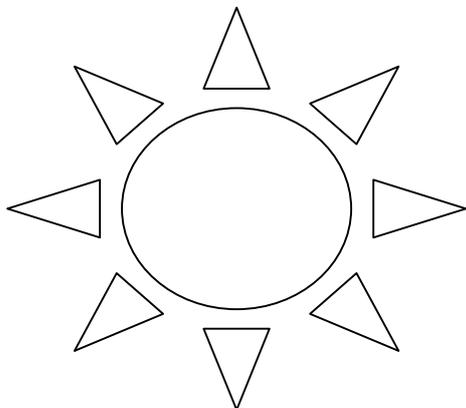
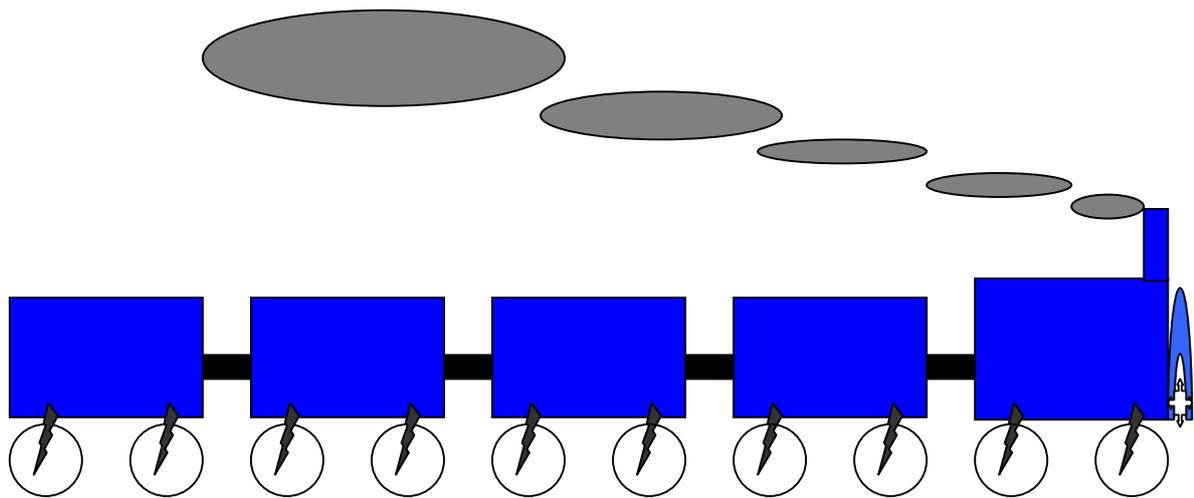
A) Starting with simple geometric forms:

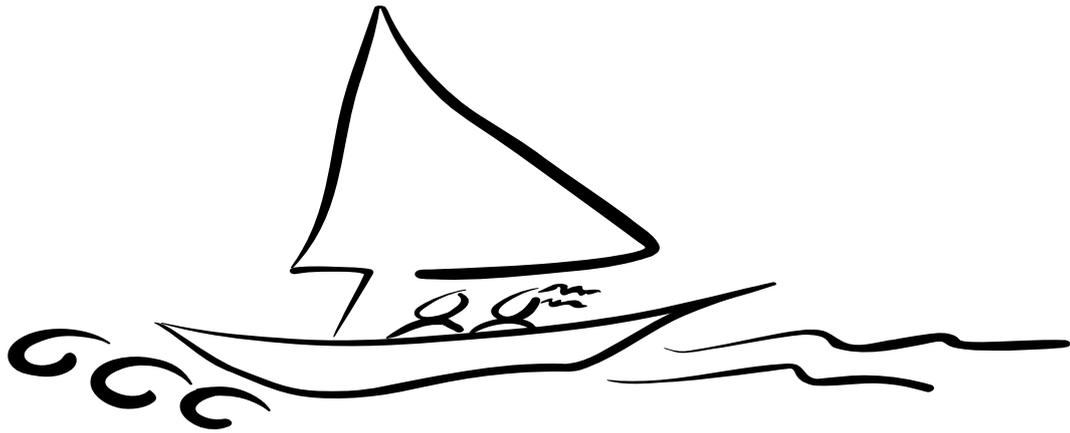


B) Ending with more complex ones:

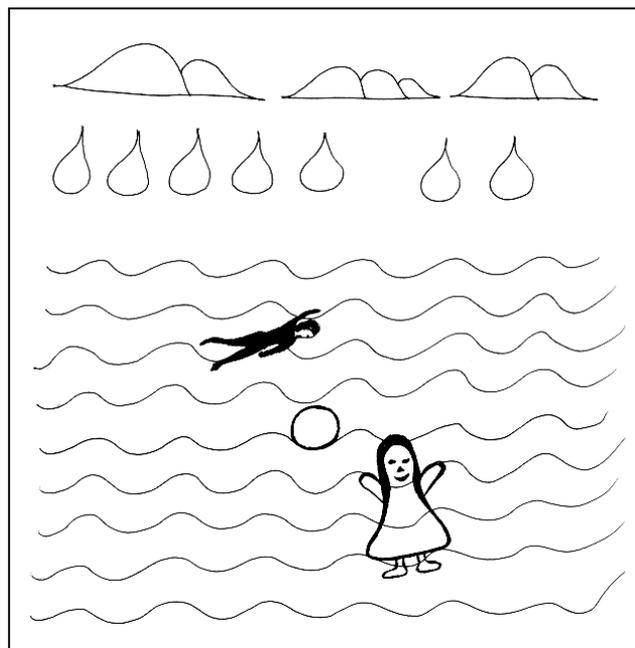


Thus, children should be allowed to experiment with organic figures as well, i.e., drawing apples, pears, trees, and any other organic figures of interest such as the following:



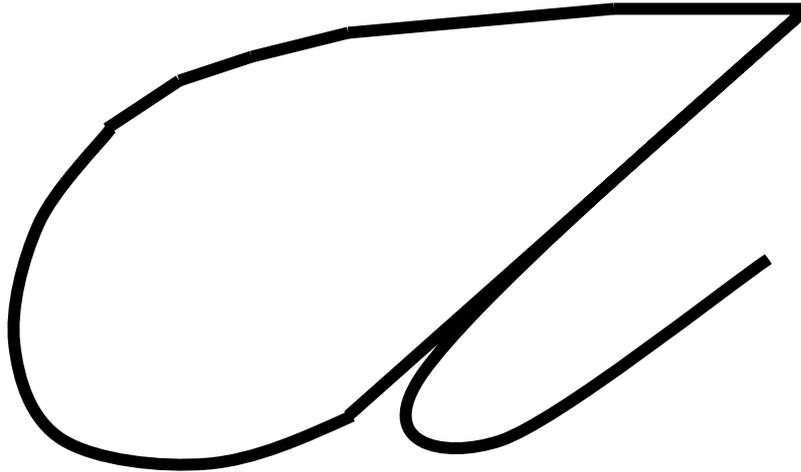


Thus we are dealing first and foremost with a “Pictorial Continuum” as a prerequisite to the calligraphic movements of letter formation. In other words, the ability of the children to draw such organic and geometric figures becomes the basis of their calligraphic insights when it comes to “drawing this or that letter.” At first the “Pictorial Continuum” deals with mostly geometric figures, but little by little the children become more skilful in corresponding organic counterparts:



Little by little the connection to letter formation should be emphasized in accordance to the calligraphic and drawing abilities of each child. A transitional phase from natural drawing (the drawing of geometric and organic figures in a holistic format) to letter formation activities should be the focal point as soon as possible.

Under such a theory, any child who is able to draw a diagonal water drop with its slanting hook (the form of the calligraphic *a*) is also capable of “drawing all the letters” (that is, writing any letter of the alphabet in a very precise fashion) no matter how complex they may be.



In essence, what we are dealing with is the integration of the children’s drawing and writing abilities within a specific calligraphic continuum: from geometric gestalt-forms (“gestaltqualitäten”) to the organic ones, then from there to circular patterns, ending up with the ability (via practice) to draw a water drop, and from there proceeding with the calligraphic water-drop like letter “a.” In other words:

A) From geo-figures such as these:



B) To the drawing of organic forms in their natural format such as the drawing of pears, apples, oranges, trees, mountains, lakes, etc.

C) To the actual “drawing” of the targeted calligraphic letter “a” and from there to the most complex letters such as the formation of “g, m, n, etc.”

As transposed from the water drop format, the calligraphic letter “a” may be practiced on a wide open space, such as “drawing it” on an entire piece of paper, whereby the whole movement of the hand may be involved. According to Gestalt-Dialektik (and as such, according to the theory of the water-drop format), any child who is able to draw such a “water-drop-letter a” is also able to write any other letter of the alphabet. This would be the equivalent or learning to play the violin or piano, two very complicated music instruments, in order to learn how to play the recorder.

In this sense, the theory behind the “Gestalt-Dynamics-a” is hereby proposed and postulated as the basis for the calligraphic abilities and exercises that the children will undertake and internalize. That doesn’t mean that the teacher would not provide teaching units regarding the exact letter formation of any letter of the alphabet. It is obvious that one would still have to teach for example the particular formations for the letter “d” (i.e., “let us draw a vertical line with a circle attached to it on its lower left hand side . . .”):



However, it will no longer be necessary or desired to present a very simplistic “preschool and Kindergarten form of the letter “a” such as the following:



Such a letter has no “style” whatsoever and it is too static, that is to say, it does not correspond to the psychological “dynamics” of the letter “*a*”. This new form, which could also be known as the “aristocratic letter-*a*” within Gestalt-Dialektik’s school of thought, should be practiced with movements involving the entire hand over a wide open area such as the entire surface of a blank piece of paper. By all means the child should “redraw” the circular lines many, many times, starting with a clockwise position and ending with the curving hook towards the right. Such “redrawing” should be done as fast as possible and in a very natural and rhythmical format.

The point is not to “write” the letter only once the way is done today in most Kindergarten classrooms, that is ending up with the aforementioned typical and boring form of the letter “a,” but rather to “stylize” it with its corresponding “*a*” with nice rhythmical and natural hand movements over and over again, covering the greatest area possible of a blank piece of paper. The end result is a highly poetic and aesthetic letter that is closer to art in the form of a wonderful drawing than to the boring one-dimensional letter formation of the typical letter “a” that is used in most classrooms of the world today.

Not only that, any child who achieves such artistry with this so-called “aristocratic *a*” will also master without any major problems the writing of any other letter of the alphabet. The teacher will nevertheless have to emphasize the key variables of the other letters, but even then experience shows that any child who has once mastered the highly stylized letter *a* will also master any other letter without much ado and likewise with much artistry and dynamism.

Above all, we are dealing not just with a powerful and highly dynamic way of teaching children letter formation per se, but with a beautiful and wonderful “poetic continuum” from a calligraphic perspective. This and more is what “Gestalt-Dialektik” is able to offer not just in letter formation, but also in other key elements of the elementary school curriculum.

4.3 Gestalt-Dialektik: Early Reading and Writing for the K-1 Curriculum

In the case of the K-1 curriculum in initial reading and writing in Spanish and in German a method has been developed based on a cartoon-story as its starting point and not based with the usual letter (or couple of letters) per week from some modern methods (such as Open Court, 1995 or Success For All, 2000).

A whole language approach is always relative to its own terms. The developers of some of today's initial reading and writing methods may claim for example that their approaches are eclectic or relatively holistic just because of some interdisciplinary and holistic traits of their methodology (such as a thematic unit, which encompasses phonemic awareness, i.e., phonemes in initial position in names of some targeted objects). However, in the Gestalt-Dialektik's initial reading and writing method (as well as in all other methods), a true holistic and therefore analytic approach is followed. There is nothing synthetic or eclectic whatsoever in such an approach!

4.4 Gestalt-Dialektik: The Oral Tradition and Early Reading and Writing

Under "Gestalt-Dialektik" it is the spoken word that carries all the affective force necessary to elevate the human spirit into higher grounds. That is to say, all efforts to implement literacy skills that disregard the power of the oral language tradition will not reach the most optimal literacy levels. Therefore, music, poetry, drama and the general arts shall become the spirit and the dynamic force of all our pedagogical curricula.

Once a strong oral tradition has been put into place, then any true and transcendental holistic method will do wonders in any language. Under Gestalt-Dialektik, a holistic approach to teaching is the most logical consequence. Whereas the whole language movement (Goodman, K.S. 1986) may have collapsed under the new research based on phonemic awareness, it is nevertheless claimed that a holistic approach to "all learning" via "Gestalt-Dialektik" is more natural and powerful. As far as initial reading and writing is concerned, the "whole" is still greater and different than the sum of its parts in accordance to gestalt psychology (Köhler, 1971). New reading programs that do not respect this "law" will sooner or later show its limitations. **A letter per week, even under the auspices of well-designed phonemic awareness methodologies (such as in Open Court, 1995 and Success for All, 2002) is not the real answer.**

One cannot make a claim based on this or that method which deals only with one aspect of learning. For example, phonemic awareness, which has become the center of attention worldwide, is indeed essential in order to master initial literacy skills. The issue is not whether or not phonemic awareness is essential for we all know its importance. As far as Gestalt-Dialektik is concerned, the real issue is how we get a child to become aware of the corresponding sounds within a word. Do we do it analytically or do we do it synthetically? Do we expect the child to learn a letter a week in the Kindergarten curriculum or could we make of the "phonemic awareness" ability a true holistic and metacognitive process?

"A letter a week-type" of initial reading program as proposed for example by the reading program, Success For All (2000) at the Kindergarten level, even with its holistic features (the letters are not presented in isolation, but rather within the context of a story line), is not dynamic enough, especially for the gifted pupils. If the teacher is bound to use a very

rigid program, that is, if he/she has to follow a step-by-step methodology, and especially if the program is synthetic in nature, then such a program cannot be part of Gestalt-Dialektik.

4.5 Analytic vs. Synthetic Methods of Initial Reading

The totality of human experience cannot be explained in the light of its corresponding parts as “and-add-connections.” A good example can be given in the context of initial reading methods. The difference between analytic and synthetic methods of initial reading instruction is very clear: one is based on holistic patterns of language (i.e., “words, sentences and the like”) down into its respective parts (i.e., syllables, letters, phones, allophones...); the other one is based on the reverse processes, on synthetic approaches, those beginning with the most basic units of language, i.e., allophones, phonemes, letters, syllables, upwards into bigger “wholes” of language, i.e., words, syntactical and semantic characteristics of sentences, stories, poetry, etc.

If for example, a teacher were to use a synthetically inclined approach, he/she would be comfortable with a phonemic program in which phonemes are learned systematically before syllables or words such as in “Success For All” or Open Court (2000 & 1995 respectively). Thus, after a few lessons, the children may be able to identify several letters with their corresponding phonemes. In any phonemic- and/or phonemic-awareness-based program, the next logical step may be the mastery of the “syllabic level” (in the Spanish language) or of the “word level” (in the case of the English language). However, even at the syllabic level, the pupils must be confronted with the “gestaltqualität” (“the quality of the form”) of the syllable in and by itself. The pupils sooner or later will discover that a particular syllable, say “ma” in Spanish (or in any other language) is more than the sum of its parts. In this particular case, the “phonological” value of the syllable “ma” is different than the phonological value of its respective two phonemes with their corresponding visual symbols, the phoneme /m/ for the letter “m” and the phoneme /a/ for the letter “a.” A phenomenon called “co articulation” of the corresponding phonemes indicates that the syllables have something extra not found in the phonemes per se.

The existence of allophones in many cases makes this coarticulation a bigger obstacle within the synthetic process. We know that several phonemes have a variety of allophones (variations within the context of a word of the same phoneme). For example, the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language ([1996], Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, third edition) defines an allophone as follows:

allophone: n. *Linguistics*. A predictable phonetic variant of a phoneme. For example, the aspirated *t* of top, the unaspirated *t* of stop, and the *tt* (pronounced d) of batter are allophones of the English phoneme *t*.

The synthetic process becomes complicated if the pupil’s language development is deficient in any form and shape. At any rate, according to Gestalt-Dialektik, *Linguistic underdevelopment is probably the major direct cause of reading disability*. Even at the level of a syllable, which in and by itself is far more natural than the phonemic level, problems arise in the blending process of learning how to read. Asking a child to say “ca” and “sa” at a rapid speed may be one of the few options left in order to teach the child the concept of “syllabic blending” so that he/she may arrive at a semantic level, namely, the meaning of the whole

word, in this case, “casa” (house) in Spanish. However, because so far the focus of attention in a synthetic process has dealt with “abstract units” of learning (i.e., phonemes, allophones, letters and syllables), the pupil may be experiencing problems switching from a linguistically abstract level into a semantic level (i.e., the meaning of a word). Here again, the synthetic approach proceeds upwards into a “higher unit” in the linguistic paradigm. At any rate, “the phenomenon of the whole being different than the sum of its parts” plays a role in the difficulty of learning how to read within a synthetic method of teaching.

4.6 Initial Reading and Writing: A Gestalt-Dialektik’s Approach

In the area of initial reading and writing, a cartoon-like story has been “invented” for the Spanish and German languages as the transcendental “form quality” (“Gestaltqualität”) in order to establish a system of learning as to how to read and write in a few steps that last about three to seven months depending on the psycholinguistic and cognitive level of the child. If the oral language development for a five year old is normal, that is, if he or she is able to speak clearly, grammatically and syntactically correct as a child at age 5 or 6, then such a child is expected to learn to read and write in relation to his/her oral language skills. *Otherwise, no child, regardless of the method being used, will be able to read and write at normal levels, if his or her oral language development is in any way deficient.*

As far as Spanish and German are concerned, the cartoon-like story becomes one of the first steps of the reading method. From there on, the pupils will go through several steps that will lead to the decoding of all the letters and syllables of the alphabet. For example, after the story level, there comes a second step consisting of chants and rhythms. At the next step, such chants and rhythms turn themselves into rhythmical syllables that correspond to the initial syllables of the names of the characters in the cartoon-like story. After decoding the syllables, the emphasis is turned into decoding the phonemes of such syllables. Thereafter, the pupils learn how to read and write whole words (Vieyra, 2004), which then lead into other holistic ways (i.e. the Key-Word Approach from Sylvia Ashton-Warner, 1963 or the Language Experience Approach, Lee, D. M & Van Allen, R., 1963) in order to master literacy skills at the sentence and story levels.

For the English language, the Key-Word approach from Ashton-Warner (1963) may be a practical and holistic choice in initial reading and writing. Also, if done methodologically, the songs, rhythms and chants (that the children would be learning through a proposed music/poetic continuum) may become the didactic medium to decode the written language. **In such cases, we would not be dealing “purely” with a key-word or language experience approach in the classical sense, but rather with a music/poetic method of literacy development in accordance to the principles of Gestalt-Dialektik.**

At any rate, the decoding skills are a logical consequence of the oral language skills and therefore, the first order of the day is to make sure that the pupils experience the joy of music and poetry. It is through such oral tradition that an aesthetic literacy foundation may be accomplished.

On the other hand, the Gestalt-Dialektik’s methods of initial reading and writing have been developed and presently continue to be improved under constant experimentation. Such methods of initial reading are analyzed continuously in order to “seek, discover or invent” new approaches through the arts, especially with the dynamics of rhythms, tunes, dancing, drama, drawing and painting and other plastic arts such as clay, ceramics, carpentry and last but not

least in accordance with the “sensitive periods” of Maria Montessori. Through “discovery and/or invention,” the methods may be transformed into “artistic approaches” in teaching initial reading and writing. With constant experimentation and because all proposed “approaches” follow the precepts of the Gestalt theory, they are in essence “open and analytic systems” of teaching initial literacy skills through rhythms and tunes and through music and poetry in general. Since the systems are “open and analytic in nature,” they are not rigid and thus allow for a wide range of “rhythmic transpositions” and further experimentation with a variety of stylistic variations on the part of the teacher.

As far as Spanish and German is concerned, the teacher should be able to change the whole “character” of the two reading approaches (one for Spanish and one for German) just by introducing more and more “rhythms and tunes,” which are the basis to “decode the phonemes” in analytic “Gestalt-frames.”

Such Gestalt-frames are defined as follows:

- A) **First frame: starting with a cartoon-story followed by its corresponding imagery. The child is to retell the story in his/her own words in order to proceed into the second frame. However, if the child is not able to retell the story at expected linguistic levels according to his/her age, then oral language development via a proposed music/poetic continuum in his/her native language should become the central pedagogical factor in the literacy development and not this or any other initial reading and writing method.**
- B) **Second frame: the introduction of rhythms and tunes that become associated with the names of the figures and characters of the story; then such rhythms and tunes become associated with their corresponding initial syllables, the third frame.**
- C) **Third frame: the correspondence of the rhythms and tunes with their corresponding initial syllable.**
- D) **Fourth frame: the syllabic chart. Immediately the syllables become systematized into a fourth frame, a specific syllabic chart.**
- E) **Fifth frame: a system of decoding (through specific patterns of speech and Gestalt-processes) the phonemes and allophones (in association with the first four frames), which are the smallest units of language. These phonemes and allophones correspond to the initial sounds, letters and syllables of the names of the figures and characters of the cartoon story.**
- F) **Sixth frame: the Key-Word (Sylvia-Ashton Warner, 1963) approach is used in accordance to special techniques developed by Vieyra (2004).**
- G) **Seventh frame: a sentence-word approach is used in accordance to special techniques developed by Vieyra (2004).**
- H) **Eight frame: a story-writing-and-reading approach is used in accordance to special techniques used by Vieyra (2004).**

During the first days all is done in “Gestalt-like systems” that allow for the “associative introduction” of newer and newer “rhythms and tunes,” *depending on the musical background of the teacher*. For example, in the past months of teaching initial reading and writing in Spanish, the author has discovered newer rhythms and tunes which in turn have made the method even more dynamic. Such an approach has impressed the teaching staff of a private Montessori preschool in Germany (see Section 5 below, “The Results of Gestalt-Dynamics”).

4.7 General Description of the Frames

(Starting with a cartoon-story followed by its corresponding imagery for the Spanish language: "El cuento caricaturesco")

For the Spanish language a cartoon-story represents the first frame of the initial reading and writing method. The teacher dramatizes the story, improvising the scenes as necessary as he/she shows the corresponding pictures of the story. For every scene, there is a picture. Depending on the story-telling style, the teacher may choose an inductive and fluid method of presenting the scenes through the corresponding pictures. An inductive way of telling this sequence of events is advised because the teacher then may be able to ask pertinent questions before introducing the next picture. At first, he/she may just start with the classic introduction, "Once there was a "barco" ("Había una vez un barco. . .," ["a boat" is the first picture of the cartoon-story in the initial reading and writing method in Spanish]), but as soon as possible, the teacher ought to make inductive questions so that the children may make their own predictions. Asking questions always makes them think; such questions are particularly helpful because they help organize the mind in a particular mind-set, in this particular case, in the notion that there is a cause-and-effect relationship for every scene of the story being dramatized by the **teacher**.

Once they can retell the story (see Vieyra 2004 for exact details of the cartoon-like story) in their own words and with syntactical fluency, then they are ready to enter the second stage, namely the introduction of chants and tunes related to every figure of the story. We should remember that the objective of the cartoon-like story is for the children to remember the exact sequence of events, which is done via a special mnemotechnical strategy developed by the author (Vieyra 2004). Under such strategy, a chant is attached to each figure of the story. Thus, a sequence of chants is developed that also reflects the syllabic chart as well. For "barco," (see Vieyra 2004 for more specific detail on the chanting requirements such as the simplicity or complexity of the chant itself) the chant may be a simple chant such as:

1. Barco, barco, **ba**

Likewise for the rest of the figures of the story:

2. Carro, carro, **ca**

3. Chango, chango, **cha**

4. Dado, dado, **da**

5. Falda, falda, **fa**

A space between the number five and six is emphasized in accordance the principles of Gestalt-Dialektik (see sections dealing with early arithmetic, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division in Vieyra 2004 for more details).

6. Gato, gato, **ga**

7. Hada, hada, **ha**

8. Jaula, jaula, **ja**
 9. Karro, karro, **ka**
 Etc.

However, if the teacher is musically inclined, he or she may be able to create his/her own melodic chants (and not just a nice rhythm or chant). The children and the teacher then may be able to sing the entire sequence of events via a special mnemotechnical strategy. In a couple of weeks in a first grade classroom, most of the children should be able to associate a chant (with the corresponding syllabic ending) for each of the figures of the cartoon-story. Then such chants may be replaced with an actual syllabic chart that can be presented to the children on one of the classroom walls. Such a chart may even be enumerated according to the principles of arithmetic instruction of Gestalt-Dialektik, especially in regards to the pentagonal principal of number sequencing. This means that all is done in terms of groups of five, resembling the Mayan number system, a principle that claims that the decimal system, as far as the optical effect of “looking at the numbers” is concerned, is not the best system of teaching number sense. Grouping apples, for example, in sets of five is more natural than grouping them in sets of ten. Thus, the decimal system is replaced by a “pentagonal system” (see Vieyra 2004 for more details) in the early stages of arithmetic instruction. For this reason, the syllabic chart is organized in sets of five syllables:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
ba	ca	cha	da	fa	ga	ha	ja	ka	la
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
lla	ma	na	na	pa	que	ra	sa	ta	va
21	23	24							
wa	ya	za							

After a few weeks (for more details, request a copy of Vieyra 2004 via e-mail: Gestaltdialektik@hotmail.com), the children are able to decode the syllables not just in sequence, but also out of sequence. Then with the help of other techniques, the children become empowered to decode all the phonemes related to the syllables. By the beginning of the second month, the majority of the children are able to write simple words and phrases with the help of the syllabic chart. After two or three months, they become completely independent from such a syllabic chart as they start writing and reading their own sentences and phrases.

However, it is not the purpose of this section to explain every single apparent discrepancy of the method. For example, there is not enough space to explain why “**carro**” and “**karro**,” that is, why the syllables “**ca**” and “**ka**” may be represented with the same cartoon figure, namely with a “**carro**,” which may also be written as “**karro**.” The two methods (for initial reading and writing and for the letter formations) thus far described in general terms are the subject of a doctoral dissertation at the university of Passau in Germany (Vieyra 2004). If the reader has any specific questions, please direct them to the e-mail: Gestaltdialektik@hotmail.com.

4.8 Reading Expectations

It is expected that the majority of the five-year old children will learn how to read basic primers by the end of Kindergarten. A primer is defined as any short story with very simple syntax and limited morphological features such as the following story.

The Cat

The cat went up the park. The cat played with a hat. The cat found a rat in the hat. The cat ate the rat . . . , etc.

Just a few months after the children become “empowered” to read such simple primers, it is expected that their literacy skills in “reading and writing” will explode into limitless possibilities. **However as already mentioned above, if the “oral language development” in the native language does not reach appropriate maturity levels, that is, if the children cannot “express themselves” at age appropriate levels or above in terms of their syntax, morphology and semantics, then no “explosive literacy” is expected to take place. In other words, if the oral language of any child is syntactically or semantically deficient, then his/her reading skills will also be “correspondently” deficient no matter what reading method is used.**

Thus, the most fundamental basis for success is the initial level of “oral language development.” It is highly recommended that children are exposed to “rich oral language” experiences as early in life as possible, especially through music and the general arts. In this sense, the sensitive periods of life, according to Maria Montessori, should be highly regarded. Any problems in their oral language skills in the early stages of life could have negative consequences throughout the academic life of any child. Therefore, it is highly recommended that the children get yearly physical check-ups with an expert on hearing and visual diagnostics. It is widely known that any ear infection could impair oral language development at critical levels.

At any rate, this “Gestalt-like and therefore holistic and analytic method” is a challenge to any proponent of the phonic-based methods now used worldwide. **It is claimed that Gestalt-Dialektik in regards to its methods used in teaching initial reading and writing is highly significant for native speakers of German and Spanish once the children reach acceptable levels of oral language proficiency in accordance to their age.** Results from either normal or gifted children in terms of their oral language development have been outstanding. A video is also available from a five-week pilot program in Kassel, Germany with four-to-six year old children. The results with such children were astonishing (see next section for more details).

However, with children of limited oral language ability, excellent results cannot be expected until any oral language deficiency disappears. **Basically, a child who cannot speak cannot learn how to read and write at age appropriate levels regardless of the initial reading and writing methods being used.** On the other hand, normal or above normal children in terms of oral language development will exuberate with most reading methods. **In regards to “Gestalt-Dialektik” as an initial reading and writing method, the results can be down right superlative.**

4.9 The Results of Gestalt-Dialektik

The results of Gestalt-Dialektik have always been impressive. A classical example of its significance relates to the SABE/1 (Spanish Assessment of Basic Education, First Edition: Mcmillan/Mcgraw-Hill: 1986) standardized tests results of the author's first grade bilingual class in Duarte California during the 1993-94 school year in which for example the whole class as an average reached the 89th national percentile in total reading:

School: Maxwell Elementary School Duarte Unified School District (about 40 km East from Los Angeles) First Grade Bilingual Class: Mr Vieyra, teacher			
Pupil #	Date of Birth	Total Reading	Total Mathematics
N = 25 (N = Number of students tested)		„National Percentile Ranks“	„National Percentile Ranks“
1	04/14/87	95	86
2	04/08/86	96	95
3	11/08/87	85	80
4	06/15/87	92	83
5	12/03/86	74	86
6	06/04/87	97	70
7	12/25/86	55	93
8	10/26/87	79	77
9	09/17/86	95	92
10	10/13/87	52	73
11	03/06/87	96	89
12	09/23/87	89	75
13	03/15/87	94	93
14	03/25/87	77	70
15	07/16/87	85	92
16	07/22/87	77	73
17	03/25/85	92	92
18	10/12/86	73	73
19	10/09/87	97	86
20	02/10/87	96	92
21	08/07/87	63	48
22	01/19/86	66	86

(for a hard copy of these and other results, please write to Gestaltdialektik@hotmail.com)

These are highly significant levels dealing with low income families in Southern California. In accordance to a testimonial letter written by the then district bilingual coordinator (in the Duarte Unified School District):

(Mr. Vieyra's) classroom performance has been exemplary. He has used an accelerated method of teaching reading and writing in Spanish, which he has developed himself. The results have been enviable and have made a great impression on both parents and staff.

Pat Hicks, April 25, 1994 (see letter underneath)

DUARTE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

1620 HUNTINGTON DRIVE, DUARTE, CALIFORNIA 91010
TELEPHONE (818) 358-1191 • FAX (818) 358-4317



BOARD OF EDUCATION
Kenneth
Antonio L. Du
Kenneth E. Han
Scott Magnus
Janet Wi

August 30, 1994

To Whom It May Concern:

Gustavo Vieyra has taught a Bilingual First Grade at Maxwell Elementary School for the past year.

His classroom performance has been exemplary. He has used an accelerated method of teaching reading and writing in Spanish, which he has developed himself. The results have been enviable and have made a great impression on both parents and staff.

Mr. Vieyra takes a methodical and scholarly approach to instruction. I would recommend Mr. Vieyra without reservation for teaching positions at any level.

Sincerely,

Pat Hicks
Bilingual Coordinator

Dr. Marcia McVey, Superintendent

ADMINISTRATION

Dr. Alan Johnson, Deputy Superintendent

During a video demonstration of the results of a five-week pilot program in Kassel, Germany (to view the DVD, please write to: Gestaltdialektik@hotmail.com), the following statement was written by a school psychologist working at 92nd Elementary School in the Los Angeles Unified School District:

From a clinical perspective, I was impressed by the Gestalt experience I observed in the small group of students being filmed. The ability to transcend___ for lack of a better word, and express the entire base schema in the story-telling mode was **fascinating**. I am looking forward to reading more about the theories behind the application of Mr. Vieyra's ideas.

Tobias Maxwell, July 11, 1998 (see letter underneath)

Tobias Maxwell, M.S., M.F.C.C.

Lic. # M.F.C. 31498

6240 Whitsett Avenue #104 ♦ North Hollywood, CA 91606

(818) 508-5189

July 11, 1998

Dr. Hubert Buchinger
Universitaet Passau
94030 Passau
Germany

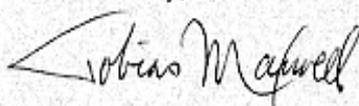
Dear Prof. Buchinger:

My colleague, Mr. Gustavo E. Vieyra, suggested that I write to you regarding the video demonstration of the pedagogical technique he has been developing over the years.

From a clinical perspective, I was impressed by the Gestalt experience I observed in the small group of students being filmed. The ability to transcend— for lack of a better word, and express the entire base schema in story-telling mode was fascinating. I am looking forward to reading more about the theories behind the application of Mr. Vieyra's ideas.

As with any new approach in the art and science of instruction, time and its tested results will speak louder than any testimonial. I wish Mr. Vieyra ongoing success with his research.

Yours truly,



4.9.1 Testimonial by Inge Jakob, a Montessori Educator in Kassel, Germany to Prof. Buchinger, Chairman of Elementary School Didactics at the Philosophical Faculty of the University of Passau, Germany

In relation to initial reading and writing, most of the K-pupils in which Mr. Vieyra has taught in Southern California end up reading at least at a very basic level. Most K-pupils end up being able to read and write short stories with a very simple plot. For a more precise reference, the testimonial report by Inge Jakob __addressed to Prof. Hubert Buchinger, Chairman of the Department of Elementary School Education at the University of Passau, Germany__, is an excellent source. What follows is a copy of such a testimonial translated in English (if the reader needs to read the original signed document in German, please write to Gestaltdialektik@hotmail.com):

Inge Jakob
Schwengebergstr. 14
D-34132 Kassel
Germany
Tel. 01149-561-4000499

Nov. 9, 1998

Prof. Dr. phil. Hubert Buchinger
Universität Passau
Lehrstuhl für Grundschuldidaktik
D-94030 Passau
Germany

Testimonial regarding the Vieyra Reading and Writing Method

A Pilot Program: Montessori-Kinderhaus
Konrad-Adnauer-Str. 143
34132 Kassel, Germany
Tel. 01149-561-408702
End of May until end of June 1998

Very respected Herr Prof. Buchinger,

At the end of May 1998 Mr. Gustavo Vieyra presented his reading and writing Method in our "Kindergartenhaus". The pilot program lasted for about five weeks.

During the first two weeks Mr. Vieyra took part of the daily Kindergarten curriculum. During this time he became familiar with the children (a group of 20 children) and with the daily routine. Mr. Vieyra was very well accepted by the children so that he could start with his method from the very first day. With a narrative style he introduced his Cartoon story.

On the second day he asked the children to retell the story, based on the pictures of the story (about 1\4 of the whole story); new pictures came into play. The narrative was followed by all participants with gestures. The story was narrated backwards at the end of the hour.

In the morning, during recess time, the children were encouraged to draw and retell the story; small books were "produced". In the third week the children received square-designed paper, each square corresponding with a picture of the story. The children filled the squares with the pictures. Thereafter the designed paper appeared with syllables and numbers that appeared in the squares which corresponded previously to the pictures of the story. During circle time the children were able to imagine the pictures based on the syllables. They named the syllables with their corresponding rhythms, "Banane-Banane-**ba**, Catze-Catze-**ca**, Dahlie-Dahlie-**da** (etc.)": to each syllabic appellation the children applauded or hopped. **They had great concentration and enthusiasm with the lessons.**

Mr. Gustavo Vieyra worked during four weeks with the whole group and then arose the so-called "Gustavo Preschool". This group included a girl of 4 ½ years, a boy of 4 ¾, a boy of 5 years and four girls of 6 years old. Smaller children joined them happily on their own.

In the fifth week sat the children like "school children" on their places. On the wall separate square-designed pieces of papers were hanging, decorated with the numbers and syllables. The children learned the numbers with the corresponding syllables. Very soon they could name the syllables, when one would point to the numbers. The time factor was integrated. It came to their attention via the small and big hands of the clock: within ten minutes the children filled in, as much as they could, the respective syllables inside the numbered squares of the designed pieces of paper. At the end of the fifth, beginning of the sixth week the children could partially decorate blank pieces of paper with squares, numbers and syllables.

It is remarkable and significant in regards to initial reading and writing, that a few children wrote words and also whole sentences, which could be read. I would like to mention, that the children during the morning hours very often moved rhythmically, and it gave them a lot of pleasure to retell the story in a short period of time with their eyes closed and using gestures.

My personal impression

As a prelude I would like to say, they were five moving and merry weeks, that we spent with Mr. Vieyra. The learning enthusiasm was contagious. The children as well as the educators lived in the theme. So it always happened, that one would hear syllables during the mornings, such as, "Anna-Anna-an; Kartoffel-Kartoffel-ka . . ." (extension-transfer). The pictures that were illustrated during their free play time usually belonged to the theme.

Hands on mechanical experiences, including that of plastics became part of their thematic plays; there was even "racket-ice cream". The whole group worked together up to the fourth week, as long as the Drama was the focus of attention. The above mentioned children that belonged to the so-called "Gustavo-Preschool" were partially able at the end of the project to write words and small sentences.

Preconditions of the children

The children worked since their third year of life with Montessori materials; exercises of the "daily life" and the "sense materials" stay at the foreground vis-à-vis the children and the movable letters, math materials, geometric forms, etc. are also included. A few of the children could form, read and write words with the movable letters. However with the help of the reading of syllables (reading and writing of the Vieyra method) the children were faster in their ability to form and read words. In the sound-method from Maria Montessori and in the Vieyra-Method is the motivation of the teacher as well as the consideration of "holistic learning" (with all the senses) important.

Within the groups the children sing, dance, play theatre and illustrate a lot. Notwithstanding the children have a lot of freedom in nature.

My final opinion

During the sensitive phase (0 to 6 years of age) in which the children are receptive via imitation and play, the educators take over the great responsibility for the post life of the children. We should guard ourselves from "over-sheltering" the children and neither should we hold them back or halt (hinder) their development. Here we find the parents as well as the educators in contradiction. On the one hand they want a protective environment and on the other one they want the best possible improvement to the point they become overburden. Hereby a lot of work is needed in order to raise the consciousness that a child does not learn like another one, that here too the child brings forth his own character and that we as adults should be held accountable via observation to give the child the respect that he/she deserves.

Important for the child is the mastery of the mother language, the training of the senses in order to be open and secured in life. I have experienced in the kindergarten that the children who come from an orderly family (in the sense of a life's rhythm) in which the contact persons are clear and

apparent bring forth security --moving freely in the group-- openness, a good self-esteem, and concentration and clearly more than the children in which these preconditions are not given. The aforementioned children correspondingly even want to have more speedy experiences.

It was wonderful to observe how Mr. Vieyra “picked the children up” at the level of their development, in accordance to Maria Montessori. Thus the so-called fast children could always play the teacher in order to reckon with their forward-looking desires. The children that needed more time in the learning task received opportunities to look, to hear, and to jump in playfully in exact accordance to their needs. In this sense the “**we-togetherness**” even in the group of 20 children (ages 3-6 years old) was warranted.

What the children also need to learn is, “**movement, movement, movement!!!**”. This is lacking in the children today more than ever! I find it pitiful, that in the public schools not enough attention is paid to the individuality of the child, that the curricular guide, which must be fulfilled, appears too much on the foreground. What happy children we would have if the competitive stress did not exist along with the feeling of the “I am not OK!” How far would we as humans go forward if we were not become oppressed through the labeling that we received from our former (test) notes, when we could be free from the competition, when we could love the accomplishment in the sense of cordial reciprocity (mutual exchanges)!?. To this we could add that the children need more contact persons at their disposal (here we always experience a lot of limitations).

When the children are allowed to have such experiences, namely when they could develop themselves according to their potentialities, then they would, in my opinion, mature themselves into the adults, which as per the “we-togetherness” would construct the world.

That, which Mr. Vieyra presented in the five weeks with us at the kindergarten via his method of learning how to read and write complements itself beautifully with the Maria Montessori method and with her philosophy. **The children were feeling great, were enthusiastic, happy and wanted to learn more and more:**

- a) drama
- b) movement
- c) creativity
- d) syllabic learning
- e) word-findings
- f) writing of small sentences and their reproduction
- g) indirect learning of the numbers 1-20
- h) the sensitivity towards time
- i) etc.

All of that took place in five weeks.

I wish Mr. Vieyra more success in his work and am thankful for the time we spent together in which we could accompany the children of our Kindergarten-house.

With best wishes,

(signed in the original German testimonial: For a copy of the original text in German, please write to Gestaltdialektik@hotmail.com)

Inge Jakob

Educator at the Montessori Kindergartenhaus.

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