

Poetizing our unknown childhood: meeting the challenge of social constructivism. The Romantic philosophy of childhood and Steiner's spiritual anthropology

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Poetizing our unknown childhood: meeting the challenge of social constructivism. The Romantic philosophy of childhood and Steiner's spiritual anthropology

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Abstract

Abstract. This paper argues for a spiritual approach to the pedagogical anthropology of childhood. Education needs a new "grand narrative" of child development to support what we have inherited from Rousseau, the Romantics, and the educational thinkers that followed them. But this requires that the challenge of the critique from social constructivism that has been voiced against all general theories of development be taken up and discussed. The peculiar epistemological and ontological dimensions involved must be carefully identified. I first examine some of the critique of developmental psychology and argue that this critique is justified in so far as psychology tends to reduce the child to a natural object and misses the transcendent, "unknown" dimensions of childhood. Three of the alternative paradigms in childhood research are then shortly presented: the sociology, the phenomenological anthropology, and the philosophy of childhood. All of these have made positive contributions to our understanding of childhood, but they do not present a comprehensive vision of child development. This leads to the question whether it is possible to poetize the transcendent dimensions of childhood and bring such a poetization into harmony with empirical research findings. This possibility is explored with inspiration from Romanticism and Rudolf Steiner's pedagogical anthropology. The latter will be the main subject of the end of the paper, as an illustration of the kind of vision we need to inform our educational practices, if future generations of the human species are to flourish in freedom and creativity.

Keywords: educational anthropology, Romanticism, childhood, spirituality

Full Text:

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Their love-child Caroline was born in 1792, the poet meeting her for the first time during this what must have been a highly charged few weeks and months. Wordsworth, encouraged by Mary, gave payments to Annette Vallon over the years for Caroline's upkeep. The relationship seems to have been an amicable one. Childhood is idealised, romanticised - the present is not so enlightening. Stanza 2.

This challenges the reader, who has to pause, reflecting the transitory nature of rainbow and the blooming rose despite the use of enjambment in two lines. The rhyme scheme differs from the opening stanza's, that word go half-rhyming, not quite dovetailing to the full.

Stanza 3. Poetizing our unknown childhood: Meeting the challenge of social constructivism. The romantic philosophy of childhood and Steiner's spiritual anthropology. *RoSE: Research on Steiner Education*, 4, 16–47. [Google Scholar](#). Dewey, J. (1934). *How cognitive tools shape our understanding*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. [CrossRef](#) [Google Scholar](#). Egan, K. (2005). The popularity of Dr. Steiner's later works upon ethics, mysticism, and kindred subjects has caused people to forget his earlier work upon philosophy in spite of the fact that he makes frequent references to this book and it contains the germs of which many of his present views are the logical outcome. For the above reasons, and with the author's sanction, I have decided to publish a translation. I have had the good fortune to have been able to secure as joint translators Mrs. Hoernlé, who, after graduating in the University of the Cape of Good Hope, continued her studies in the Universities o