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**Child Rearing – A Great Misunderstanding**
*by Jeanine Buol Hug*

The healthy child is born with the full potential to develop into an independent human being – a person who can also skillfully handle the achievements of our culture. But we think we need to rear our children in order for them to develop. We bring up our children the way we have been brought up: we show them how to do things, we help them, praise and punish them – we interfere with the children’s explorations of themselves and their environment. We interfere because we don’t trust human nature, because we don’t know about our “natural equipment” (biologische Ausrüstung), as Jacoby called it; we interfere because we are out of touch with ourselves and don’t recognize what is necessary and useful.

However, these little human beings are in full touch with themselves (their weight) and in constant interplay with their environment (the ground and gravity). When a child falls, he gets up again, he falls again and gets up once more..., until his legs and feet become balanced and stable, until this stage of his development is completed. Only then will he take the next step in his development – and not a moment earlier – because that’s when he is ready for the next step. To stand without outside help and support – that’s what it means to be independent (the German word for independent is selbständig, to stand on one’s own). Children are guided by a ‘sense for what (continued on page 2)

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**Dancing in the Dharma**

**The Life and Teachings of Ruth Denison**


Before Ruth Denison became the first Buddhist teacher to lead an all-women’s retreat, she survived years of horror in Nazi and post-war Germany. Once a friend of Alan Watts, Aldous Huxley, and Timothy Leary, and a student of Charlotte Selver, Denison was also the first teacher to use movement and dance to instruct her students in mindfulness. Eighty-three-year-old Denison still leads retreats at Dhamma Dena Meditation Center and feeds the coyotes near her home in the Mojave desert.

Now in Dancing in the Dharma, Sandy Boucher celebrates the life and accomplishments of “one of the pioneer teachers of Buddhism in the West.” Drawing on (continued on page 6)
works’ and they can fully trust this sense – until we interfere with our good intentions and try to educate them. Once education has kicked in, they soon loose touch with this sense.

When a child can develop autonomously, then he can feel whether or not his little feet, his legs, his muscles, his skeleton are ready and capable of standing and walking. If not, he will try and try – he will trust this inner knowing – until ‘it works’. Left alone, the child will not be discouraged. Pushing a child into doing things he cannot yet do, because he is not in this stage of development, will lead him to feeling discouraged: discouragement is a reaction to our attitude, to our expectations. This pushing a child is the beginning of ‘doing’ and straining – of dependency: the child loses touch with himself, with primal and natural ease.

“In the beginning was education”: We don’t know what harm we do to our children, when we raise them according to current trends of education. [...] I see it as an important part of our work that we point to these things. We all could live more peacefully, we could make better use of our gifts and function more smoothly, if we would trust our own ‘nature’ and ‘natural equipment’.

So what kind of an environment do children need in order to develop according to their ‘natural equipment’? The more independent we grown-ups are, the more aware we are of our own actions (which includes realizing when we interfere unnecessarily with a child’s developmental processes), the more we are in touch with ourselves, the better for our children.

When we are in touch with ourselves we can also remain calmer, and when we are calmer we are more receptive to information from within and without. We need to develop a receptivity that allows us ‘trip’ over our own mistakes, as Jacoby used to say. We need to become conscious of our own condition and conduct.

Being in touch with oneself is crucial and has an immediate effect on the child’s behavior. Not what we say to our child but how we are when we say it is the guiding light for our children. Only then can things change. This is the great challenge we are facing and also our responsibility.

Translation by Stefan Laeng-Gilliatt

have separation anxiety. He recommended expressive painting for her child. This will also help her creative expression, Soccer Mom thought, which should get a boost anyway through the constitutional homeopathic remedy, with which their naturopath is currently treating her daughter. (No, she’s fine but it will help her development.)

And thus the child’s creativity was unfolding wonderfully, which was confirmed by the recent Hellinger Family Constellation workshop. Before we forget: we should also mention the expressive dance classes her daughter was taking. They really unlocked her inner potential. However, some questions remained. Recently, when the parents had had a crisis over the question of whether it would be better for their daughter to take eurhythmics lessons or stay with tai chi, Soccer Mom started wondering about the Montessori compatibility of

(continued on page 4)
SAF Co-President’s letter
Dear Friends of the Sensory Awareness Foundation,

Sometimes, when we work on our connection with the floor, there will be a student who – after a while – will claim that the floor has become softer. She will be quite adamant about it although what really happened is that her tissues have become more giving and her quality of perception may have changed. That is, however, apparently not felt by the student. Instead, the floor appears to have changed. Similarly, the way we perceive the world at large can vary wildly. On some days, we can only see the destruction and violence and we fall into despair. On other days, the world looks much more hopeful and – in spite of all the problems – we feel encouraged and engaged. While we may think that things look up, it is really not because the world has changed but because of our changed perception and attitude. The world – people, icebergs, birds and trees – is still troubled about ‘functioning’ in the world. And for that, we need to practice, because – I speak for myself really – our ears are plugged, our eyes are covered with dust and our joints are rusty.

Sensory Awareness is not a static method but a living practice, a tool which becomes more refined as we practice. As such, it has proven to be of utmost value, and because of that I am not only committed to practicing, I am also aware that the practice itself needs nurturing. We can nurture Sensory Awareness in our society by supporting the efforts of the Sensory Awareness Foundation. At the SAF, we are currently working on different levels to build a solid foundation for the work. We will be able to tell you more about that in the next newsletter but would already like to mention the next Sensory Awareness Conference – In A Heartbeat (see announcement on this page). Our efforts are currently focused on this conference, which will be preceded by a large leaders meeting. It is our hope that both of these event will spark renewed enthusiasm and interest in Sensory Awareness and we hope to see you there.

At this time, the continued existence of the SAF is not secured and we urgently need your support. I ask you to do your part and nurture the practice by either renewing your membership with the SAF or by becoming a new member. Your support is appreciated at all levels. A regular membership is only $50 per year. If all of the recipients of this newsletter make a donation at that level, we will have covered a good part of our expenses for next year and together with major donations we will be able to continue our work. Thank you for your consideration!

I would like to close with a big thank you to Hannes Zahner and our Swiss sister organization ‘arbeitskreis jacoby / gidler’. The current newsletter was only possible thanks to their support – in a heartbeat – at a time when my plans for it crumbled unexpectedly. I hope you will appreciate the contributions of Jeanine Buol Hug and Hannes Zahner as much as I did. I am both grateful for their insights and their humor. I believe it is the first time that we are publishing a satirical piece in a SAF publication. Enjoy!

Sincerely, Stefan Laeng-Gilliatt
it all. The somatic consequence of that crisis were severe yin-doubts, radiating from Soccer Mom’s liver meridian. Her acupuncturist suggested that she switch from the Hellinger Constellation workshops to Neo-Reichian Therapy.

A few sessions into it, after Soccer Mom had ripped apart her cushion-turned-grandfather in a role play, she suddenly started screaming: “NO! NO! I DON’T WANT ALL OF THIS!” Then she fell into a deep confusion. Dad was called on his cell phone – he had just picked up their daughter from her lessons with the math tutor – but that didn’t prevent Soccer Mom from escaping the therapist’s office. She ran aimlessly through the streets, followed by her daughter, dad’s cell phone ring, and an old crone sitting on her shoulders, pulling her hair and croaking: “Why didn’t you listen to me, I told you how to do it but you knew better. Now you have it!” “NO!,” Soccer Mom screamed again – and then she bumped into a little old hunchback.

“Good day,” said the little man, “What’s cooking?,” “Oh”, Soccer Mom wailed, “my daughter is not using her words!” “But,” she hesitated as she looked around and saw nothing but sky and clouds around her, “where are we? I’m not dead, am I?” “Who knows?” the hunchback replied mischievously. Soccer Mom started to weep bitterly. “And how will my daughter unfold her creative potential without my help?”

Thus, days and weeks passed. After a very long time, the hunchback asked her what she missed the most. “Sitting at the table with my daughter and eating porridge with applesauce”, Soccer Mom replied. “I so much long to spend time with her.” Then she lay down on a soft cloud and fell asleep, sobbing.

A bell-like voice woke her: “Mamma, Mamma. – She’s waking!” the bell-like voice called out. When Soccer Mom opened her eyes, her gaze plunged into the wide open eyes of her happy daughter and they embraced. Now, they usually play tennis or do math together; they like to draw together or play soccer. Sometimes they wrestle and sometimes the girl plays on her own or with her friends. They live happily and the girl is growing up. She may not be as creative as she could have been – the biofeedback support group made note of that – but Soccer Mom doesn’t care, she’s not part of that group anymore.

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only way in which we can thoroughly develop strategies for solutions (See also ‘learning through insight,’ gestalt psychology).

In this respect it would be better to learn from children instead of helping them. Instead of going through a routine and repeating what we have learned in the past, we could experience anew and rediscover how to do things. This childlike ability to improvise – i.e. to respond to the moment and its circumstances – contains the potential for creative and appropriate solutions to problems. This is what may have been the original meaning of the bible words: “I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Our great challenge as adults is to respond to situations in which the children’s need to explore and discover is not supported by their environment. “When a child’s experimenting becomes chaotic, it never has to do with the field that is being explored. It is always a sign that the child’s play has been disturbed and that she therefore lost her trust in her own authority.” (Jacoby, p. 145) (While this is so for the healthy child, cases of illness and disability would have to be discussed separately.)

Instead of providing step-by-step solutions to challenges children are facing, adults are called to provide an adequate setting for free and safe explorations, which promote deep learning and development.

“Every time we help unnecessarily, we hamper a child’s opportunities for growth and development. ‘C’ on, I’ll show you how to do it!’, is the beginning of unproductiveness of a child. We have no idea how much trust our children’s self-organizing potential deserves, if we have never observed them quietly and openly in their explorations. […] This is not the same as leaving them on their own. Although we are asked to remain silent, we are also asked to be present with warmth and interest.” (Jacoby, p. 145 f.)

Martin Buber writes (p. 71): “It is not the educational intention which is beneficial but the educational encounter.”

It is only through real contact with the child that we can feel what his developmental needs are, and what he would like to explore. “He feels that he can trust this person and that this person doesn’t project her own needs onto him but takes part in his life. He feels that he is confirmed in his own needs instead of influenced. That’s how he learns to ask questions.” (Buber, p. 70)

A child can only ask questions and ‘do that too’ (what they see us doing), if we are with her and if we are consistent in this regard. This includes spending time together, living and experiencing life together. It is only then that our nurturing will be based on sympathy rather than on theories and projections. We then realize that raising a child is “about her whole being, her whole being in her present suchness as well as in her potential.” (Buber, p. 65)

Creative translation by Stefan Laeng-Gilliatt.

Literature:
Martin Buber, Reden über Erziehung, 1986, Lambert Schneider, Heidelberg.

Hannes Zahner is a Social Pedagogue and Gestalt Therapist. He has many years of experience with the work of Heinrich Jacoby and Elsa Gindler and, as a student of Charlotte Selver, he is a member of the Sensory Awareness leaders Guild. His work is based on the principles of Jacoby and Gindler as well as Gestalt Theory. Hannes is the managing secretary of the arbeitskreis heinrich jacey / elsa gindler in Switzerland.

The articles by Jeanine Buol Hug and Hannes Zahner were first published in the bulletin no.6/June 2005, of the arbeitskreis jacey / gindler. For more information about the work of Heinrich Jacoby and Elsa Gindler and the activities of the arbeitskreis heinrich jacey / elsa gindler visit: www.jacoby-gindler.ch
countless interviews with Denison, her associates and students, Boucher portrays the experiences and instincts that has made her one of the foremost teachers of vipassana meditation, and led her to apply the techniques of Sensory Awareness to the endeavor of cultivating mindfulness.*

The explorations of the counterculture were led by men who had lived through the devastation of the Second World War, people who had seen the worst in human nature and who hoped to so transform our collective consciousness that we would never again commit the atrocities that had ravaged the Western world. Erich Fromm, a German Jewish psychotherapist, who sometimes joined Henry and Ruth at their house, was typical of these men. In his *Escape from Freedom*, he defined freedom as the realization of one's individual self, “that is, the expression of [one's] intellectual, emotional and sensuous potentialities.” The seekers of the counterculture aspired to achieve this expression. Their investigation was all about finding ways to open to an enlarged, more authentic humanity. For some that might lead to “God” or transcendence, to gaining access to deeper psychic-spiritual truths through drugs or meditation practices. Swami Vivekananda, the Advaita Vedanta seer, said that “Man is like an infinite spring, coiled up in a small box, and that spring is trying to unfold itself.” Henry and his friends strove to find ways to uncoil themselves and open into their seemingly infinite capacities.

Among these male proponents of transformation, one woman came to be recognized for her work in cultivating awareness. This was Charlotte Selver, founder of the Sensory Awareness method, who became Ruth's first teacher. [Charlotte would not have agreed with this. As a devoted student of Elsa Gindler she did not consider herself to be the founder of a method. slg]

It made eminent sense that Selver would touch Ruth, for Ruth lived in a sensitive, nuanced relationship with her body. Since she was a child running through the grass of a meadow, spreading clothes to dry in the sunshine, sitting with the pigs and geese while they ate, reveling in the smells and textures and sights of nature, she had been attuned to the material universe, beginning with her own body and opening out to the world around her. The abuse and wounding of that body after the war had not alienated her from it; she continued to reside in its wisdom, which withstands violation, springs back from injury. She had fully experienced the attacks upon her, not splitting off or dissociating, so that, when they were over, she was able to leave them behind. In Henry's house, surrounded by men talking of the life of the mind, she had not been touched. But when Charlotte Selver arrived and began to explore the intricate complex of sensations that arise in the physical being, Ruth woke up. Charlotte spoke directly to what Ruth already knew; Ruth saw that with Charlotte's instruction she could penetrate more deeply into the experience of her life as she lived it in each moment.

Meeting Ruth Denison in 1980, I did not know that the underpinning of her work had come from Charlotte Selver. The sensitivity to body that Ruth taught us, her constant guidance to be aware of the sensations arising this very moment in us – this was a revelation to me, and a great opening and deepening. It was the very first time that someone had asked me to be aware of my standing posture, for instance – to feel the touch of my feet on the floor, to pay attention to all the subtle adjust-
found his way to the studio of a German Jewish woman, Charlotte Selver, who taught practices she called “Sensory Awareness.” Selver, ten years older than Ruth [Charlotte was in fact 21 years older than Ruth], based her work upon the discoveries of a German physical education teacher named Elsa Gindler. Having studied with Gindler, and later having taught Gindler’s method in Germany, Selver brought the work to the United States, where she opened her New York studio in 1938. [Although Charlotte arrived in New York in 1938 and soon made her first attempts to offer the work, she did not have her own studio for some years. slg]

Fromm thought that this method led to a more relaxed and alert participation in daily life, and was so impressed that he declared it “of greatest significance for the full unfolding of the personality. “ He promoted Charlotte Selver, securing a teaching position for her at the New School for Social Research, and later inviting her to speak at the Conference on Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis in Mexico, where she met the great Zen scholar D. T. Suzuki. The parallels between sensory awareness and Zen soon became apparent. Selver read Alan Watts’s The Spirit of Zen and, “amazed and fascinated,” decided that on her next visit to California she would visit Watts. After meeting her, Watts attended one of her New York seminars, and immediately took to her work, saying that Selver actually did what he talked about. He began to lead joint workshops with her in New York City.

“She can take absolutely anything –“ he said, “the floor, a ball, a rock, a bamboo pole, a glass of water, or a piece of bread – and get you to relate to it in such a way that the harsh dualism of what you do and what happens to you is transcended.

She puts you in love with the simple fact of physical existence.” He told Henry Denison about this exciting teacher, and Henry began to consider sponsoring Selver to teach in Los Angeles. Selver agreed to come and meet Henry at his house. (....)

Soon Ruth would find that Charlotte’s teachings came to her aid in a spiritual setting, and she would begin her life’s work of exploring the sensations of the body to ground herself strongly in the present moment – the base from which to access the great truths of the universe.

By the time I encountered Ruth Denison, when she had become a mature Buddhist teacher, she had developed numerous ways to apply sensory awareness to the teaching of mindfulness. She would lead us in slow stretching exercises, reaching an arm to the side, pausing to be aware of all the sensations of weight and muscle tension involved in that action. She would have us lie on the floor and feel our bodies sinking as our spines relaxed. She would take us out into the desert and guide us in moving mindfully in a circle, lifting one leg, swiveling the torso, setting the foot down again with full sensitivity to the touch of foot on sandy soil. Whimsically, she had us dance in full awareness of our skeletons, shaking our bones. All this served as an invitation to me and the other students to enter into the complex subtle reality of lived existence, to be present for the actual moments of our experience.

Ruth has so thoroughly welcomed and integrated her early work with Charlotte Selver into her life and Buddhist practice that it comes out in myriad obvious and sometimes very subtle ways while Ruth teaches. Nowadays, there is no way to separate her understanding of Buddhist principles and practices from her ability to penetrate the sensations of the body, but it is a sure thing that Ruth’s extraordinary physical sensitivity and her ability to awaken her students to this were nurtured, first and foremost, by Charlotte Selver.

Sensory Awareness Foundation, Mill Valley, CA.

* Excerpt from the Beacon Press press release.

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Sandy Boucher, a leading spokesperson on women and Buddhism, conducts retreats that combine meditation with writing, exploring the compassionate teachings of the Celestial Bodhisattva of Compassion, Kwan Yin. She is the author of eight books, including Hidden Spring: A Buddhist Woman Confronts Cancer and Turning the Wheel: American Women Creating the New Buddhism. She lives in Oakland, California, with her partner.

For a copy of dancing in the dharma visit your independent book store or go to www.beacon.org.
The paintings in this issue are by Ellen Jacobs, from her new book

Poems Without Words
Prayers in Painting Form

“Poems Without Words is painted from my love of the natural environment - its beauties, shapes, colors, textures and constant changes. My desire is that they become prayers for peace for young children, young, middle and old adults of every nation, race, religion and color in hope that we may open our hearts to each other and our planet with the love, safekeeping and compassion these poems represent. May Peace Be In Every Heart”

Ellen Jacobs

Ellen Jacobs is an artist and occupational therapist, and a member of the Sensory Awareness Leaders Guild. She works with children bringing imagination and creativity to their varied and many activities. Ellen lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico.


SAF Newsletter
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SAF Publications
1) A TASTE OF SENSORY AWARENESS, by Charlotte Selver. An overview of the work, with an edited transcript of a session from the 1987 NY Open Center workshop. 38 pages.
5) ELSA GINDLER, Vol. 1. Memorial to the originator of the work we know as Sensory Awareness. Excerpts from Gindler’s letters, an article by her, and reports from her students; including Ch. Selver. 44 pages, with photos (1978). *
6) ELSA GINDLER, Vol. 2. Memories from Gindler students and an article about Heinrich Jacoby, innovative educator and colleague of Gindler. 44 pages, with photos. *
8) ELFRIEDE HENGSTENBERG. This issue embraces her own studies with Gindler and Jacoby, her work with children, and biographical notes. She was closely involved with Emmi Pikler’s discoveries. 46 pages, with photos.
9) HEINRICH JACOBY. The Work and influence of Gindler’s longtime collaborator, summaries of his books, interviews with his students, including his editor and colleague Sophie Ludwig. 46 pages with photos.
10) EMMI PIKLER. Dr. Emmi Pikler, Hungarian pediatrician, whose revolutionary practice and philosophy about earliest childhood upbringing has been very influential in Europe. Contains extensive selections from Dr. Pikler’s first book, Peaceful Babies - Contented Mothers, and a paper by Judith Falk, M.D., then director of the Emmi Pikler Methodological Institute for Residential Nurseries. 48 pages, with many photos of young children.
11) CHARLOTTE SELVER, Vol. 1. Sensory Awareness And Our Attitude Toward Life. Collected lectures and texts. Containing: Sensory Awareness and Our Attitude Toward Life; Sensory Awareness & Total Functioning; Report on Work in Sensory Awareness & Total Functioning; To See Without Eyes...; On Breathing; On Being in Touch With Oneself.
RECENT BOOKS

12) EVERY MOMENT IS A MOMENT. A Journal with Words of Charlotte Selver from her 102 years of living and over 75 years of offering the work of Sensory Awareness. (125 pages, with many color and black-and-white pictures.)

13) WAKING UP: THE WORK OF CHARLOTTE SELVER, by William C. Littlewood with Mary Alice Roche. Talks about Sensory Awareness, Reports, Experiments, and Exchanges with Her Students. 140 pages.

* available in German translation.

Audio Tapes from Workshops with Charlotte Selver

T6 TR EXPLORING THE STRUCTURE OF THE HEAD. Leaders Study Group 1990, class 7-3-90 p.m.
T7 TR BECOMING READY - BEING TUNED IN. Leaders Study Group 1990, class 7-19-90
T8 TR FINDING MOVEMENT THAT IS TRUE. Green Gulch Study Group 1993, class 4-1-93.
T9 TR LEARNING TO RECEIVE. Monhegan Island, 7-30-92.
T10 TR LEARNING THROUGH SENSING. Green Gulch, 11-14-77.
T11 TR FREEING THE EYES - BEING OPEN FOR SEEING. Green Gulch Study Group 1993, class 3-31-93
T12 TR WAKING UP - BECOMING RESPONS-ABLE. Green Gulch Study Group 1988, class 5-2-88
T13 TR PERMITTING INNER ACTIVITIES. Monhegan Island, 7-31-80.
T14 TR BREATHING AND FULL REACTIVITY. Monhegan Island, 7-28-92
T15 TR EXPLORATIONS ON SITTING. Green Gulch, 2-27-00
T16 TR CHARLOTTE SELVER TALKS ABOUT HER EARLY LIFE AND STUDY. Green Gulch, 12-5-99.

T17 TR ALAN WATTS ON THE WORK OF CHARLOTTE SELVER. and CHARLOTTE SELVER ABOUT HERSELF. Green Gulch 12-4-99
T18 TR HIP JOINTS AND LEGS. Santa Barbara, 4-1-00
T19 TR COMING BACK TO EXPERIENCING. Santa Barbara, 4-2-00
T20 TR BREATHING AND THE DIAPHRAGM. Study Period, Green Gulch, 5-12-00
T21 TR GIVING UP DOING. Barra de Navidad, Mexico, 1-19-01
T22 TR BEING FULLY PRESENT. Monhegan, 8-16-01
T23 TR ARE YOU TUNED IN? Monhegan, 8-6-01
T24 TR BREATH AND HEARTBEAT. Monhegan, 8-13-01
T25 TR NATURAL OR PERFORMED? -- A TIGHTROPE WALK Monhegan, 8-3-01

Audio Tape in German

G1 TR VOM NACKEN ZUM GANZEN MENSCHEN, St. Ulrich, 10.7.01
TR TRANSCRIPTS. TR indicates that a transcript for this tape is available for an additional $5.

Check our web site for a complete list of publications.

Each tape is of an actual class in the Sensory Awareness Work, and is intended for people wishing to experiment along with the work as it unfolds during the class.

For faster mail service to Europe for the above publications, and/or for a list of German publications related to Sensory Awareness, (including several translations of SAF publications), write to:
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