

A Note from the Editor *Nicola Tarshis*

In preparation for the Kolisko conference, it was recommended that we read *Balance in Teaching* by Rudolf Steiner. This series of lectures I found to be a great source of wisdom for the early childhood educator. Dr. Steiner states that we must imbue our work with true knowledge of the growing child. It is not an “educational guide book” that we need, but the faculty of loving, objective observation wherein the truth of childhood can be found.

“If we as teachers can enter into this unfolding of the child, there will arise, out of this understanding, the insight into how we need to act.”

How can this happen practically? How can we become artists in our teaching? Strengthening our powers of observation can be done through daily observation of a plant, (See *How to Know Higher Worlds*.) Also, keeping a daily notebook and perhaps carrying in our daily thoughts and meditations, one child in particular each week. Above all, we must remember to surround the child with love, always looking for the wonderful gifts that the child has brought with him to earth, with the help of creator beings. It is our task, as early childhood educators, to continue the heavenly work of the angels on earth. How can we help the child to walk his chosen path to the best of his abilities and to remove hindrances?

Our observations are important but, more significantly, we must meet the will of the child with our own will. As the child enters into life, so must we. It is not ready made knowledge that we must fill ourselves with (indeed this article is only an attempt to inspire ourselves into life.)

To give an imaginative picture of how artistic forces can be at work, we can picture the sculptor and the musician. In observing a sculptor at work we can see him molding the clay between his fingers, the clay offers resistance to the artist's fingers and with his will, the sculptor responds. Soul-spirit forces can now enter into the artist's work and a beautiful sculpture can now be formed. The true artist can reach to the hierarchies in his inspirations. The sculpture is formed through willful action of his limbs, not from his head. In music, the rhythmic system is called upon. When the musician plays music, the melody is what lives between the notes. The heavenly, soul-spirit element can enter into the space between the notes.

As early childhood teachers we can, for example, run with the children. Run across the field with them feel your will work with the will of the child. In running we can feel the power of our arms and legs as we move. This is the joy of movement in which the child lives so strongly. If we can enter into life through feeling and willing, we will know the truth in our work with the children. We can live in the moment and, if the right thing happens at the right time, we will know that a gift has been sent from the gods, through the activity of feeling and willing. Like the musician, we can leave some spaces for the heavenly work of the angels to enter. We can have courage to make mistakes for it is through our mistakes that we can learn about life. We can imbue ourselves with heartfelt humility.

“A specific kind of inward humility, the sense that we ourselves are still becoming, is something that will give the teacher strength, for out of this feeling more arises than out of any abstract principles.”

When we do things imperfectly our work is given life. But our mistakes must not be taken lightly! Rudolf Steiner goes on to say that what matters more than anything else, is the way in which the teacher regards his “holy calling.”

“This is not without significance, for the most important things in teaching and in education are those that are imponderable.”

In closing Lecture Two, Rudolf Steiner gives a meditation that speaks of the importance of reverence, protection and enthusiasm. Three attitudes which we can endeavor to carry with us as educators of young children:

- * Reverence for what precedes the child's existence before birth.

- * Enthusiasm looking forward to what follows after death.

- * Protecting gesture for what the child experiences during life.

Rudolf Steiner indicated gestures for enthusiasm, a guiding, pointing hand and for protection, both hands raised with fingertips inclined towards each other.

Bibliography:

Balance in Teaching, Stuttgart, 15-22 September 1920, Mercury Press, Spring Valley, NY.

How to Know Higher Worlds, Anthroposophic Press, NY, 1994.