

Diagnostic, Pedagogical and Therapeutic Tasks in the Kindergarten

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A report of a workshop at the Kolisko Conference with Bruno Callegaro, M.D., from Kassel, Germany, and Bonnie River, remedial educator and kindergarten teacher from Boulder, Colorado.

This workshop was attended by some 60 people, including many kindergarten teachers, three physicians, several therapists, and people involved with teacher preparation. For a part of each session, Dr. Callegaro and Bonnie River gave presentations, but a great deal of the time was spent in discussions during which our workshop leaders tried to help us to think differently about case studies of children in our care. At times we were disappointed and even stretched to frustration that more “answers” were not given. Yet this was, of course, the point of the leaders' approach - opening doors and inspiring us to investigate and research further - to come to a fuller understanding of what they put before us. We all were given a direction, and many tools and jewels to carry away with us.

The highlights revolved around two children Bonnie described out of pure observation from a classroom setting. No medical, parent's or other teacher's descriptions were part of this picture. We were urged to avoid coming too quickly to the usual question -

“What should I do?” - but to try to create an empty space into which the child could tell us what he/she needed us to do. Some methods on how to accomplish this task constituted our work together.

We were encouraged to work with polarities - to consider children in extremes within the elements, for example: our two case-study children presented a very contrasting set of moist and dry elements. In addition, we were advised to be sure to appreciate the struggle children experience in finding their way into a physical body, with all the wondrous extremes and difficulties that inheritance gives, and to allow them that struggle in the physical and soul realms, while at the same time to see them as beings of both point and periphery. Our study of a child should bring in as many people as possible who deal with the child. Our own view as the teacher provides only one aspect. Parents, doctors, therapists and other teachers should all be involved in contributing observations.

We were urged to delay judgment for quite some time, until those around the child hear and see what the child tells them is the right way of approaching a remedy. A picture that helps to clarify this method is to perceive the many level of will activity in society around the child, and - as knights of the round table see everything from all sides - to have many conversations for the sake of the one. In this way we avoid pinning a label on the child's difficulty, which only diminishes our possibility of helping him or her. We enhance ourselves if we see the children as struggling and working to penetrate their sheaths, rather than to diagnose them in terms of categories. Perhaps it is most important to ask ourselves what inner activities we, as their teachers, can engage in which will assist them to heal.

We looked at the elements of earth, air, water, and fire within the children's constitution, the ethers, the convex and concave motions and how they live in the child, the dry or moist aspects of their ways of doing things in the classroom, the lower senses and how they manifest in each of them, including their interaction with friends and teachers. We need to observe and include in the picture the children's movement, language and relationships to the adult world.

Dr. Callegaro spoke of the importance of story telling as the basis for moral development. As an example, the archetypes of strength, cunning and truth as portrayed in all the “three brother” stories are echoes of what we all knew in the astral world before birth. This has an affirming power in the life of the child and we need to stimulate it through story. He stated emphatically that today's children suffer from the lack of

opportunity to fully develop the lower senses, because the world they live in is filled with endless trivia, distorted images from movies, fads in toys and T.V. Dr. Callegaro pointed to the effectiveness of telling one whole story and of the importance of repetition, and that repetition of a few stories is important in helping to counteract the cultural illness of our society.

Dr. Callegaro acknowledged that although we had covered a great many aspects in the workshop, many areas of exploration were missing. We were filled with fruitful and thought-provoking challenges by the time the four sessions were over. I'm sure we all look forward to hearing more on these topics. We deeply thank both Bruno Callegaro and Bonnie River for what they brought us.