

Gateways

Newsletter of the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America ♦ Issue 75, Fall 2018

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From the Editor

— Nancy Blanning

Speech and Language is the stated theme of this issue of *Gateways*. And it is. We knew that we would want to feature the keynote lectures presented by Dr. Lakshmi Prasanna and Michael Kokinos from the February 2018 WECAN East Coast conference on *The Development of Speech and the Human Encounter*. The audience expected to learn a lot about speech. And we did. We know that speech and language create a pathway to convey information and share ideas. But the profound emphasis that sounded forth from their presentations was upon how speech provides the opportunity to create connections and to encounter the other human being in “the space that lies between” us. These presenters helped us consider not only how we speak physiologically but also reminded us that our speech needs to be infused with intention and authenticity to truth to activate the power and “spirit of language.”

Dr. Lakshmi and Michael work extensively with young people living with severe, nonverbal forms of autism. Their experience shows how dedicated, sincere, warm interest in these socially isolated young people can open up pathways to encounter one’s human essence soul-to-soul, even if speech is lacking.

These two lecture summaries in our **Focus** section, as the introduction to these articles describes, are unusual. The presentations were not “usual” lectures but very much experiences for the listeners. The message they brought about human encounter through language is important for us to consider. As teachers, we all speak. If we are able to infuse our speaking with imagination and warm, interested intention, then the substance of our speaking can take a quantum leap. The last two issues of *Gateways* have featured comments on reading the signs of the times. Nurturing a healthy social life is of concern in our society at large and even within our own schools. Our conscious intention to fill our speech with true warmth and interest can be an agent for change and healing among human beings in our disquieting times.

Dr. Lakshmi and Michael also shared a third presentation that will be summarized in the Spring issue of *Gateways*. It will be good to have some time to live with these ideas and then round off with their final presentation as a capstone. These presenters have also authored a book, *Autism: Meet Me Who I Am*, reviewed in this issue, as an added resource to exploring these ideas.

In order to have true encounter, we have to have devote true attention to the other human being. Holly Koteen-Soulé has written an article entitled “Attention to Attention” about how we see our attentive faculties being badly weakened

in our technological age with so many distractions. This study is a thorough research article, too long to print in its entirety in one issue. The major part of this essay appears here, describing the situation we are observing with children. The concluding part, which describes more of how we can respond to this concern, will be published in the Spring 2019 issue.

But all is not bleak! We are delighted to share an extract from a research project done by Rie Seo as her concluding project for her early childhood teacher training at Sunbridge Institute. Rie was both fascinated and challenged by how she could bring more imagination and pictorial quality to speaking with her students. What began as kind of a practical question expanded into a deeply thoughtful exploration of language and of speaking imaginatively to the child's will. She describes how her questions and research have begun a journey for her that is far from finished. She guides us through her experience and shares insights into how we can all develop our own pictorial speaking which invites the child to "do" without command or coercion. To my thinking, this is a very important article.

For the Classroom brings us back to language and speaking in our classrooms every day. Stories are prominent ways to share and explore language and speaking. These are very dear to our hearts and practice as Waldorf early childhood educators. Trice Atchison has offered a wonderful description of "Slow Puppetry." She noticed that our societal "Hurry up! Keep it moving!" mentality had crept into puppetry presentations. She chronicles reawakening to the power of quiet, serene, unhurried presentation in puppetry that did not bore but which supported a

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healthy breathing interlude for the children—and the puppeteers. This article confirms that what we know to be true for children in slowing down the world is perhaps more essential than ever.

Words with really interesting sounds catch children's attention. Rose Maynard of the Calgary Waldorf School shares her version of "The Turnip," employing Russian names for all the characters. The sounds of the names are tantalizing to the ear. The challenge to speak these complicated, multisyllable

names is also almost irresistible to the six-year-olds who are sure they know everything and can say anything. The way she has dramatized this story as a circle time or "acting out" for story time is delightful. Enjoy!

Michael Kokinos featured the Ellersiek hand-gesture game, "Snailyman," in a most impressive story. We wanted to make sure that you all have access to this game for your classrooms. This simple, almost nonsensical rhyme holds archetypal images of inner and outer, going out and then coming back in. What this game—accompanied by the teacher's sincere, committed interest to this child—opened up for a young, nonverbal girl with autism was miraculous. This is shared to remind us that what may just seem simple and sweet can hold archetypal power that we may have fallen asleep to.

And in the "just for fun" category, a short Valentine's Day Circle is shared. This yearly celebration can be challenging to acknowledge in a non-sentimental way. This circle was inspired by a visit on Valentine's Day some years ago to the Green Meadow Waldorf School kindergarten class of Lyn Barton, who is now helping our work from the spiritual world. She announced that this day is "the

birds' wedding day," as we put snippets of colored yarn outside for the birds to collect to weave into their nests. The imagination is short and sweet and gives a picture from the natural world to associate with Valentine's time.

Reading the Signs of the Times in this issue gives us encouragement. The American Academy of Pediatrics has issued a study with current research that affirms the importance of play for children's healthy development. The AAP makes a strong statement that free play is essential for children, not just a nice diversion. Details of the study and how to find the complete report are provided in the article.

Book Reviews begin with attention to the new WECAN translation of Daniel Udo de Haes' *The World of Fairy Tales*. This review is printed courtesy of the UK early childhood journal, *Kindlings*. We thank reviewer Jill Taplin for sharing this rich consideration. My own reading of this book offers some different ways to describing the value and wisdom of traditional fairy tales. There is much skepticism directed toward fairy tales in our times of sexism, genderism, etc. This book may provide us with new language to describe how valuable we find these stories to be for nourishing our children's soul life.

As mentioned above, you will find *Autism: Meet Me Who I Am* also reviewed in this section.

Two other books of interest are briefly reviewed as potentially helpful resources for our work. Sally Goddard Blythe has revised a previous publication, *What Mothers and Babies Really Need*, under the title *Raising Healthy Happy Children*. This book is a deep and thorough study of early childhood development. Its content is rich and dense—not light reading—but well worth the effort.

Faith Collins's book, *Joyful Toddlers and Preschoolers*, rounds out this issue's reviews. Faith describes her success as teacher in Waldorf and

Lifeways programs in figuring out how to live in "yesness" with these little ones. She gives clear picturing of the different consciousness that lives in very young children—which is imaginative, not logical or intellectual. She gives do-able steps to approach problematic situations and lessen conflicts. The presentation is clear and well-documented with mainstream research that will appeal to young parents whose orientation has been so far influenced by mainstream advice.

International News gives us a preview of the International Waldorf Early Childhood conference that will take place at the Goetheanum (Dornach, Switzerland) on April 15-19, 2019. Social relationships and collaboration among the adults who educate our children (us) is the featured theme. As we celebrate the hundredth anniversary of Waldorf education with this conference, emphasis will be directed to building the healthy social life among ourselves. May this impulse flood out into the world at large. Details of the conference can be found at iaswece.org.

Our Spring *Gateways* will continue to focus on **Speech and Language in Early Childhood**. We will also discuss how speech and language in the early years opens the doorway to literacy—obviously for reading in the grades—but also for relationship to the spirit of language for the whole of life. Contributions to expand our conversation are warmly invited.

We are so lucky to have daily inspiration and delight in the children who continue to bring us "the latest news from the spiritual world." Best wishes to all as we enter Waldorf education's second century.

~ Nancy Blanning

FOCUS: Speech & Language

Speech Development: Giving Birth to Speech

Speech and the Human Encounter, Keynote Lecture I – February, 2018

— Dr. Lakshmi Prasanna

Dr. Lakshmi Prasanna, anthroposophical medical doctor and neonatal specialist, and Michael Kokinos, physiotherapist specializing in neurology and the relationship of movement and sensation, brought to the conference insights and imaginations about speech and language development. Their presentations are deeply informed by their therapeutic work with nonverbal young people with autism, by their dedicated study and work with anthroposophy, and by their sensitivity to “living into” different experiences of consciousness. Dr. Lakshmi, as she is known, emphasized that it is essential to consider karma’s role in our encounters and relationships, especially with children. Michael’s presentations shared pictures of consciousness and relationship he has come to respect and admire of the aboriginal peoples he has lived and worked with in Northern Australia.

It is difficult to capture on paper what it was like to experience these keynote presentations. Along with thinking the thoughts shared, the audience had to work to live into the pictures and imaginations offered. This reporting will be a pale representation to what it was like for those who were there.

Rather than summarize the content, we are reproducing the speakers’ actual words as much as possible. This is to respect the mood and development of images that led us into a subtle and profound consideration of the essence of language and speech. The young child needs particular things from us to develop this uniquely human and connection-making gift of speech, which we bring with us from the spiritual world.

I knew that I would work with children for the rest of my life when I was three. At that time, I had my brother and took over care of him totally. I think we both agreed on this before we came here [to earth.] And I told my father to not come between me and my brother; I am going to teach him.

This presentation is about speech development. This is close to me personally, biographically. I have carried many images in myself. Teachers struggled with me; doctors struggled with me. But I am so glad I was one of those children who kept images from childhood inside of me.

I will bring some images and pictures, which Rudolf Steiner brought to us in a free deed of love, which we can carry into our sleep. Try to take these not just with the head but with the whole organism. Some things will make sense and some things won’t. Just say to yourself that this is a story from an Indian doctor; she is not a Waldorf teacher. We learn much from each other through speaking. As I stand here, I am not just speaking. I am also listening, I am listening to the sounds of your soul as you are listening. I listen with my soul to the questions and responses within you and bring it out through me. This is the space into which I invite you.

Today I want to put speech development in a young child into the context of what happens before and after it develops. Speech comes in between two other important phases of the first three years of life. Speech comes after the child has become upright and the hands are freed. The milestone after speech develops is coming into thinking. These first three years are important for the whole of a person's life. No matter what a person's age, we are still working with what happened in the first three years. It is exciting that human beings are never complete. We are always in development, striving to become a full human being. We even learn to walk every day again and again. When we wake up each morning, we have to remember who we are, where we are. When we awake each day, we can joyfully begin again. Only human beings are always developing and can return to previous phases. If you grow up to be a good cat, that is what you are. You cannot go back to previous stages or phases of development.

Through these developments of the first three years, the child can come to experience herself. When I speak, I can begin to think and can come to experience myself.

The first three years concentrate upon development on the basic physical, sensory level. This continues, ongoing, all the time. Every moment in our lives, we experience ourselves—where our feet are, where we are in space. We claim our space. The moment this happens, we have a longing to share, a longing to meet someone on earth whom we have known before in the spiritual world. There was a time when we met without these physical bodies. We promised each other that we would meet again, though not in the same level as we did in a pre-bodily state. How is it to meet one another in a sensory experience on this earth?

This moment of longing for connection can only happen when we wake up to remember pre-physical consciousness. I wake up inside my physical body. I wake up to my motor system, my sensory system. I wake up and look around and look for my friends. Every time in our lives when we wake up in our physicality, we are looking for an encounter, an encounter which brings a memory from a previous encounter. It is a little game we play when we wake up to each other behind the masks we are wearing now in this physicality. Human speech organs are completely formed and

matured at birth. But speech develops only after uprightness. What is behind speech formation? How does the longing to speak come?

Babies "speak" with their fingers and eyebrows, with drooling, with intake of breath, etc. The babies are longing to get to see the doctor for this prearranged upon encounter. Even the drop of saliva shining on the face expresses the joy in coming for this meeting. Inside the doctor is also dribbling. The babies and "talking" and the "listening-other" become one. Anyone who has had a deep encounter with any baby will agree with this description and leave aside any need to be psychologically and scientifically correct. If you open yourself, then the baby comes inside you. There is much movement here. Who has moved and who is inside of whom?

When the pre-birth journey begins, there is no physical body. But with every earthly birth, the physical body has to learn how to deal with gravity. Rudolf Steiner tasks educators to continue the child's pre-birth education here on earth. The child carries its pre-birth wisdom inside itself already. Our task is to observe in such a way that we can see the spiritual truth of story we are hearing now.

Out of this wisdom, the first thing the baby does is breathe. There is an exchange between the internal world and the external world. The child has something inside itself and comes to meet what is outside. There comes the first breath, then warmth, and then the first mother's milk. Inner and outer continue to be experienced through touch, all the sensory organs, as well as through nourishment and taking in earthly substances. With breathing we have inner and outer. Babies also sleep a lot. There is sleeping and waking, forgetting and remembering—both for children and for ourselves.

When we come into physical life we forget the agreements we made in the spiritual world to meet again in earthly life. There is a long time between remembering the intention, to forgetting it, and then feeling the longing awaken for that meeting with a long-lost love. This wonderful loving relationship is what the baby comes back to find. The baby comes into the mother's arms, into a loving family, into the world. The baby will thrive, grow, and claim its place. The space of mama's arms is the space into which the baby comes. The baby cannot even lift a hand. There is total trust.

Then a moment comes when the baby can leave the lap of the physical mother and return also to the other mother, Mother Earth. This listening to Mother Earth involves the child's whole organism. Every individuality comes through the physical body of the mother to meet the world. Birth is almost like a stepping stone to step first to the mother and then onto the earth.

The child comes to standing on the earth and tries to listen to the story of the earth. In the child's inner life there is a dreaming, imaginations of how he will enter into life. The child has carried the earth story inside before having a physical body. Now there is an earthly part—this physical, metabolic part—which stands, and hands which are free. The child has come to stand upon the earth and to listen to the earth with his feet.

Then the child takes a little, very gentle step, and now there is walking. The child walks on the earth in a pure, sensory experience that comes out of love. We can spend hours and hours watching children and how they take their first steps. They are not showing how powerful they are as they take these first steps. We are not talking about the power of strength or the power of intellect. I am talking about the power of love. They walk out of love for the earth and being upon it to encounter and connect with others.

But this standing and walking also means that there is now a distance from mother and from the earth. Now there is a space between child and mama and between child and the earth. Before this time, the space could be bridged by physical touch. Now how is this space filled up? Now the child fills it up with sound. This is how speech comes. The need to be received physically with love through all the steps described above must have been met. The child needs to have felt received, enwrapped, touched, and nourished so the he will now experience the distance created through walking and long to fill up the space through speaking. If any of these steps have not happened, then the child will not want to speak.

When the child first comes to earth, first there is deep touch. In touch the child meets the other she is seeking and says, "Ah, ha! That is who you are. There are so many things that I want to tell you

that I see of this wonderful world. But what comes out of me are only sounds. I still do not have words. How do I collect words?" The job of the child is to go around and collect words. They actually fill up their pockets with the words. Adults around the child want to know what the child wants. What the child wants is words. In India when a child is in distress, the whole village comes and the child is very happy. In the Waldorf school the children are very happy when the school doctor comes and a big meeting happens with the college of teachers. The child is happy because the adults are finally asking, "Who is the spiritual being of the child that I do not understand?" Whenever we start talking about who is this child and what does this beautiful being need, the child begins collecting words. Then five to six months later, the child walks in the room and her pockets are full. She throws a word into the room. If the word gets a good response, she keeps it. The child has already learned how to get our reaction. So begins a collection of vocabulary.

The little child feels a word as pictures inside, not as an intellectual concept. Some people draw pictures when listening to a talk. The speaker uses words but the listener draws pictures. We use our metabolic life to build pictures out of the external world. We can hear a word and understand in our heads what it means. But when we hear "water," for example, we respond with all kinds of different pictures within ourselves of—rain, a glass of water, a shower. Everything in our lives has pictures. Repeated experiences are stored in the human body as pictures. It is like we are a camera taking days and days and days of pictures. We can store what we experience as a picture, as an image, as a tone. Each time the same tone comes, we have a picture. Children are living with pictures inside them. If every day at lunch mama gives me water to drink in the red cup, then every time I see the red cup, I drink water inside of myself. And every time I need water, I see inside myself a red cup. I have repeated sensory experiences and I begin relating them. Now the child will need to find the word so she can ask for water. The child hears parents talking about how she always drinks water in the red cup. But she cannot say water, so she says

“red.” An inner experience related to a picture and a word related to that picture come together. There is a meeting of the inner life of images and the outer life of language. The carriers of language to a little child’s life are all of us—mother, father, family. If the relationship of the mother, father, or other caregiver to the language is a big, soul-filled relationship to that language—then every time the adult says “water,” the child sees inside a beautiful picture of water. There is a harmonious joining if the speaker’s inner picture corresponds to the image the child carries inwardly.

In another example, the doctor sees children in the clinic. The doctor has to find words to convey to the parent what she experienced as image of the child. The doctor has an image inside and chooses the words to describe this outwardly in language. If we go to the spirit of the language, we go inside and find what matches the image. If she finds the words to communicate the image, we can understand each other even though we live in different languages.

We have children in the kindergarten come to us and start explaining what they have seen in the playground. They come to the moment when they do not find the words for something, and they take deep breaths between words and are actually going all the way into their organism. If we are good kindergarten teachers, we are lending all of our forces, our form-giving forces to the child. We lend these forces patiently and silently to the child and work together so she can get the word out.

The coming forth of a word is a kind of labor. We do not want this to be an assisted labor. The speaking of the word has to come out of the child’s own life forces. It has to come out of the whole organism—a giving birth to speech. And if we do not have this experience in freedom, it is not possible to experience the next stage of development.

The child is ready to speak. Once the child starts speaking and meeting the world—through the senses, through the limbs, through interacting—then there now stands a physical being who has an experience of self as a physical being on the earth, as a sensing being on earth, as a speaking being on earth. The child awakes from out of the dream of who he was. Free from the dream, he can sense who he is and in

all encounters use language. All future development in any age of life depends upon having had these two experiences—of self as a physical being and of self as a speaking being in social encounters.

In *Philosophy of Freedom*, Rudolf Steiner talks about freeing the spirit out of the organism. The human physical body is different from all other things physical. It is condensed spirit. We come all the way to the physical body in the first three years. Rudolf Steiner talked about freedom as freeing the spirit. The human being has to take charge of every muscle, top to bottom, from head to toe. We experience everything inside and outside of ourselves. Physically we meet ourselves. But we want to free the part that is spirit. And when we free our spirit, we can express to the world what lives inside of us. That is to be free. Freeing life of the spirit gives life to perfect harmony.

This harmony arises out of how many inner pictures we inwardly carry of the world that truthfully resonate with the word in the spirit of the language. We have the freedom to choose the word. We celebrate when a child says a new word and we sense an awakening within them.

What is this “spirit of language”? It is our task to research what the spirit of language is and work with it in our speech. ♦

Lakshmi Prasanna, MBSS, DCH, is a pediatrician. She was one of the pioneer parents and founding members of the Abhaya Waldorf School in Hyderabad. Lakshmi has worked for many years all over the world as a school physician and was the founding president of the Anthroposophic Medical Society in India. She runs a teacher training (www.iralearn.com) as well as small curative education centre in India. Lakshmi has developed courses for schools, parents and teachers to understand and help children with Autism. More info at www.doclakshmi.com.

The Human Encounter and Integration of the Lower Senses

Speech and the Human Encounter, Keynote Lecture II, February 2018

— Michael Kokinos

Lakshmi's keynote lecture offered several important images. The first one is that the human being is always developing, always becoming. The second image shared was of the first breath and the first intake of breast milk as making a connection, a communication, between the inner world and the outer world. The third image was of little tiny feet landing on the earth in uprightness after the long journey from the spiritual world and of the feet listening to the earth's story. The final image Lakshmi brought is of the spirit of language, which lives in the sacred place in Australia. It is full of crocodiles, but it is also the "dreaming place" for what is known as "mermaids' spirit." This mermaid dreaming place is ceremonial ground for the aboriginal people.

Telling some stories about work with aboriginal children will tell something about the spirit of language. The baby represents a polarity. He is completely vulnerable and open to the world. Yet he is also active and moving with muscle power. We will want to carry these images. In the northernmost part of Australia, indigenous people live as a very old culture. They constitute only 1.5 percent of the population. Before British and Dutch colonists came two or three hundred years ago, there were three hundred different language groups, probably more. Most of the old people who taught in the school on the ceremonial grounds knew five or ten different languages, their own mother tongue and the tongues of their neighbors. With this incredible linguistic capacity, no pen or paper was used. All was taught by rhythm, imagery, and movement (tapping sticks). There lives here a historical harmony, sort of a spiritual unity, in the diversity of the languages. Much of this is gone now and we find only remnants. We are lucky enough to work in an environment where this spirit of history and this linguistic history is still living.

In our work with aboriginal teachers, we explored puppetry, storytelling, felting, and beeswax modeling. Out of some cloths the teachers and mothers made knotted dolls and brought them to life. One could see

the joy as they told stories and engaged the children beautifully. These aboriginal ladies just knew what to do and created masterpieces in their own chaotic style. The children were completely mesmerized, sitting still and quiet.

They also did hand-gesture games. The children loved these, some joining in, some just chewing on a pen.

One of the teachers sculpted a fish and told about it. The teacher looked intently at the fish while she spoke the word "fish." What is the inner life and consciousness of this mother when she says "fish"? What is she thinking? Is her speech and inner life congruent or is her mind wandering off to details of what she needs to do next? It is scary to realize how much chatter is going on in our thinking. What is wonderful about working with these aboriginal people is that they have no inner chatter. These teachers and mothers are fully present in their actions and thinking. There is congruence between what is spoken, what is created artistically, and speech. The child takes this in and becomes almost paralyzed in engagement with the image and speech. We have to become awake to these moments with the children. We are witnessing neurology. This is how connections in the brain are made. It is not linear and materialistic. It is done through the soul. Through ceremony, through movement and song the children are carried along. They receive a wonderful education through speech, song, movement, and rhythm.

Aboriginal art and ceremonial decoration make use of diagonal marks and cross-hatching and designs of dots, varying from tribe to tribe. These designs represent what we know of as the universal etheric. Here is a picture of a snake. It represents the universal etheric, the formative forces behind everything. For an indigenous person, this snake is not drawn in isolation as a concept, not even as a separate sensory concept. There is an egg, a snake, and a small animal that will be the snake's lunch. But the whole is nestled in cross-hatching, within creative forces. Outside of the figures are the etheric, creative, universal forces,

and the body contains the same forces inside. This is clearly seen and beautifully expressed.

We have here a picture of objects that live within their wholeness. It is probably safe to say, however, that our culture has lost this wholeness. We would just draw the separate snake. But an aboriginal person will never draw a separate snake. It just doesn't happen. It is always contextual. Rudolf Steiner said that we should always see events contextually whether it is in space or in time. This picture shows time contextually in the egg, the snake, and its lunch. Time and space are expanded beyond just a simple concept.

In aboriginal culture there is also the "song man" or "song woman." One "song man" friend would create a rhythm with clap sticks over which he would speak words. He could sing for hours, for days, actually. When he finished a song and was asked for a short title, he would answer with a narrative of what the whole song had included. He could not express it briefly. His song and the words did not represent objects but the spaces in between, where connection and interrelationship live. This is a type of universal consciousness we have lost by gaining objective consciousness. This relates to young children. We need to remember that they come from the spiritual world, where everything is interconnected. They enter this world where things are separate for the first time. This is such a wonderful concept to keep in the back of our minds, pictured by the snake not being represented out of context.

Another painting shows a picture of a man, a spiritual being, who is gathering our language from a tree. In reading Rudolf Steiner's *Creative Speech*, I realized that this aboriginal picture depicts the spirit of language. This spiritual being is collecting language for the human being from the tree, a living object, not an inanimate rock. The living tree brings the gift of the spirit of language. One can see the cross-hatches and the dots that form a contextual, etheric landscape tying everything together.

In Lakshmi's school in India are children with autism who do not speak. They make sounds but cannot speak words. How can these children be helped to speak? In *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds*, Rudolf Steiner states that the fourth condition for esoteric training is to acquire the conviction that the real being of man does not lie in his exterior but in his interior. Working with speech takes us to this inner condition.

In a simplistic picture, we can look at the child in terms of what he does in movement, speech, and behavior. This we see as "output." These external things are observable and are commented upon and diagnosed by parents, teachers, doctors, and therapists.

But there must also be consideration of what experiences come through the environment, which we can call "input." How are sleep, nutrition, and sensory and social experiences coming toward the child? What was going on in the house, in the car, with friends? What is going on with the adults in his life, in their inner lives? Are thoughts, speech, and meaning congruent? What is the inner content of the parents' cerebral life and soul life? All of these have impact. The child is processing in his inner life all these experiences and trying to integrate them. What comes out of the child is usually unconscious, not something intentionally guided by him. Children just move, speak, and behave.

If we want to address the "output," we have to observe the "input" and make changes there. To paraphrase Albert Einstein, we cannot solve a problem in the immediate moment; we have to go "upstream" to find the source of the problem. As parents and teachers, we see "output." Can we take ourselves back to a place where we can wonder where lies the source of strain producing what we see in the moment?

We have heard of the steps the child goes through to come to self-perception. At about twelve months, the child stands, then starts to walk. This separates her from other people and awakens a longing to reconnect. This is a deep, spiritual, primal urge and longing to touch into the place whence she came. Speech emerges from this longing. We need to realize how much happens in the nonverbal space between oneself and the other person. After many years, some young people with autism have begun to speak, some verbally, some through typing or using a computer. They have asked teachers to facilitate computer use for them to communicate about their inner life. After many years of Waldorf curriculum, they have begun to "speak" nonverbally. When asked about odd behaviors, these boys communicate that they cannot sense their own bodies. "I don't feel my physicality. I don't feel my physical body. I do not have a sense of my own 'I am.'" They lack a sense of physical body landscape. Most of us have a safe, secure experience of our physical body even when all kinds of other transactions are going on socially. But

the boys describe that they do not sense themselves through proprioception.

Another boy says, “I am floating in space. I do not orient to my own three-dimensional physicality. I scream and stamp and make noise because it makes me feel better in my body. I cannot stand the sounds and lights and noise—these are too painful.” This is a description of sensory disintegration. These children have not crossed over from physical sensing to perceiving themselves as a wholeness. These examples are extreme, but we meet more and more children in our classrooms who are not oriented into their physical bodies. Then we see behavior problems. What do we do? If a child cannot sense his feet, how can he feel the story of the earth? How can he speak when he does not perceive himself?

Recalling from yesterday, we are reminded of four steps in development—

- Inner perception
- Motor development—head control, crawling, standing, walking
- Separation from others through mobility
- Longing to reconnect

This work with autistic-spectrum children is research with children who did not make that first step. Development is always sequential and built up, layer upon layer. We can begin to understand this as Rudolf Steiner gives us a picture of the lower senses. These lower senses are a wonderful structure for considering children. He tells us very clearly that the sense of self-movement or proprioception is directly related to the sense of word, also called the sense of language, the ability to sense language. But we should be warned to remember our snake in its context because this is not a linear relationship. It is always complex and interrelated. We cannot just move with children who do not speak, and expect them to speak. It is interesting to observe that speaking came to the students with autism later like a waterfall after the Norse Myths block. The Norse Myths are very physical and are about encounter. The speech and the imagery are powerful. It is all about the structure and beauty and temples and experiencing hexameter. Stamping and clapping, the noises made in rhythm in this curriculum helped to integrate the lower senses.

I work within the kindergarten to integrate the lower senses. Working in a group in the kindergarten classroom is the best practice. There is no better place.

Looking at speech itself, where has evolution placed speech in terms of human physiology? Speech is a motor and muscle activity that is placed on top of our breathing. Rudolf Steiner said that speech has a formative influence upon the physical body. How others speak and how the child hears language also affects physical development and influences the way the child goes into the world and collects words. The child collects words through listening. Then the question is, “What do I hear? Are people speaking in a way that is connected to the spirit of language? Are people speaking in a way that is congruent? Does what Mama says make sense with what I sense in her inner life? Or is this incongruent for me?” What happens in the invisible “space in-between” takes us to the place where speech either comes or is inhibited in children. This is the space where speech is birthed. Space. Think about what care we take in consciousness about the earth. Are we that careful about speech?

The aboriginal people sit in the ceremonial circle by a waterfall, surrounded by the colors of nature, tapping rhythm with sticks and speaking and singing. What are they doing? They are imitating our physiology. They are imitating the speech sitting on top of rhythm, the rhythm of the breath. The breath mediates the inner world and the outer world. Speech is grafted on top of this function which connects the individual soul life and the outer world. Rudolf Steiner never stops talking about this. In the *Foundation Stone Meditation* he is talking about the human soul in mediation with oneself and the world—the world of the earth, the elementals, the world of the spiritual beings, the world of social relations. To mediate and integrate all these is our task on earth, what we do.

Speech is in the center of this task.

There is a wisdom in bringing hand-gesture games to our kindergarten classes. These games are full of playful, rhythmic, musical education. We know this but must stand strongly for our practices. Mainstream views may think that we are “all play, but what do the children learn?” We need to inform ourselves so we can speak strongly and proudly about what we do. This education is the best practice;

it is a physiological, health-promoting education. We should carry this conviction away with us from this conference.

A miraculous story of a little Indian girl and a hand-gesture game proclaims this truth. We worked extensively with this nonverbal girl, who had many challenges. When she and Lakshmi first met, it was as though they had been waiting for this encounter forever. We worked with her with movement and nutrition, but the child seemed most interested in us as people, in the relationship and encounter with us.

Then came the magical moment. Lakshmi wanted to bring the magic of hand-gesture games. We live in a world of ideas in which we can become trapped. Rudolf Steiner points out that human gestures, especially with our hands, convey deep feeling towards song and to the word, not to ideas. With hand-gesture games, we can save ourselves and our children from this trap of living in ideas. Be cautioned in hearing this story again that there is always an interconnection of events, not linear causes and results. But this is what happened between us and this child.

I had recently learned Wilma Ellersiek's hand-gesture game, Snailyman, and did it as a touching game on the little girl's hand. When the game finished, the child ran to everyone in the clinic and grasped each one's hand and said, "Man!" She repeated this word over and over and could not be stopped. She would walk up to people, often strangers, and point to the back of her hand and say "Man." This was her first word. What happened in our encounter?

In both teaching and therapeutic work, we work with life forces and the rhythmic system. Whenever we work with these, we help the child consciously access her own life forces. And we start with the radiating warmth of the life forces, which enable the child to enter a meaningful karmic relationship. Children do search and look for that meaningful karmic relationship. It is not enough as a therapist, healer, or educator to intellectually know exactly what this child needs and give it. There must be relationship. It is this longing for connection that invites the birth of true human speech. And this birthing of speech is the freeing of the spirit. If the spirit is freed, it can choose which space into which it wants to enter, the space into which one wants to

bring personal, inner content. In this space lives one's truth of inner life. "Where do I share it? How do I share it? With whom? How much do I share? Do I want to share the whole of it, a little bit of it?" And here is where human speech belongs. This little girl with the Snailyman game demonstrates to us how she recognized this space where speech lives.

Speech belongs to the warmed space between the two participants, into which comes the experience of who "I am."

What happened with Snailyman? In the beginning the child watched the person doing it. Then she began to look at her hand. Snailyman is a beautiful expression of the archetype of the inner world opening up. The words don't mean anything; they are mostly nonsense sounds. This means nothing but also everything. It is fun and it is deep. When I did Snailyman, I began to build up the picture of the *Foundation Stone Meditation*. What lies behind it is the human soul; what lies behind it is the picture of the snake; what lies behind it is the song man singing with his clap sticks; and what lies behind that is the spirit of language, mediating from the spiritual world through speech into this little girl and me. We can find this mediation through speech, perhaps a song, a rhythmic verse, hand-gesture games, or through puppetry. We have many tools for opening up pathways to the encounter the child has come to earth to find. ♦

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Speak Pictorially

— By Rie Seo

One day a visiting mentor encouraged me to speak with more imagination. While getting snow pants on, she suggested saying “A rabbit has to go down the tunnel and come out,” instead of “Put your legs in the snow pants.” And it worked like magic. I was fascinated by the simplicity and capacity of using imagination to invite children’s will without giving commands. I wanted to strengthen my imagination muscle and build my repertoire in pictorial/fairy tale language. I wanted to learn how to create pictures with words that invited the children to work freely out of their own will. At first I tried to collect words and phrases that were useful to direct children in our daily interactions with them, but I didn’t even know where to begin. Even after reading songs, stories, verses, and poems, I struggled to come up with imaginations on my own and wondered why it was so hard.

Then I went to the 2018 WECAN conference and heard Dr. Lakshmi Prasanna talk about our language, where it comes from, and about the space between the earthly and spiritual worlds. At the same conference I also attended Laurie Clark’s presentation on the Madonna series. The first picture in the Madonna series is of the Sistine Madonna by Raphael. This painting shows the Madonna holding baby Christ, depicting the earthly world and our heavenly origin. It struck me that I was forgetting where children, and we, have come from. We all come from the spiritual world, as spiritual beings, to experience the earthly world. As Rudolf Steiner and others have indicated, children are deeply connected to the spiritual world. That is why adult language often fails to reach them: because we are not speaking the same language. Small children live much more deeply in the soul world than adults do. In *The Creative Word*, Daniel Udo de Haes writes, “Even when young children are ‘awake,’ they can, in a day-dreaming way, still pass lightly to-and-fro at every moment and with each experience. For them, heaven and earth are still essentially one. The gate is always open” (13). For me, realizing that adults and children speak quite different languages became the key that opened the door to pictorial speaking.



Rafael Sanzio, *The Sistine Madonna*

That realization brought the question, “What is spoken in the spiritual world?” We need to find a language that comes from there and expresses itself in the soul at its deepest, subconscious roots. We need to understand the languages of the earthly and spiritual worlds and be translators for our children as they incarnate into this earth. To do this, we need to look at how children come to and experience the earth in their earliest years. What is the language that can bridge the spiritual and earthly worlds?

Children come into this world living in two soul realms, “that of the earthly world, and that of the spirit which contains the archetypal origins of earthly objects” (*The Creative Word* at 13). They live amphibiously between these spiritual and earthly realms. Seeing these two worlds

meeting is what fascinates children. They dreamily recognize everything they see and hear as the earthly embodiment of something from the spiritual world that still lives within them. Children are alert for things that can remind their souls of content that originates in the spiritual world. When they find it, children miraculously reunite the heavenly world and its perfection with their surroundings on earth. Even simple, everyday objects can be a symbol of the mystery-bearing aspect of our own soul.

It is crucial for us to understand this view of how the world speaks to children. There are two distinct realms in the child's environment on earth: the natural world—stones, water, plants, animals and so on; and the human realm of man-made things. But everything in the world, be it the natural or the human realm, speaks to children and reveals their hidden picture-language. A cupboard can represent the quiet guarding of secrets. A bowl or plate can bring an experience of open giving and receiving.

What speaks easily to children are things related to nature, such as animals, plants, and stars. This is because Mother Earth whispers the first stories to children that “may be read only by the dreamy soul of the child” (*The Creative Word* at 25). The image resonates to the source of all that surrounds us that lies in the spiritual world.

What's more, it is equally essential that we teachers, as Daniel Udo de Haes indicates, “must, for our children's sake, understand also these deep secrets which our surroundings whisper to every still listener.” It is the journey we adults need to take, not with our intellect but with our hearts, to meet these secrets of deep soul-life and listen to the archetypal revelations forming our surroundings. By bringing more imaginative, picture-filled language to our daily interaction with children in a conscious, warm and joyful way, we can help our children find their home on earth, to fully incarnate.

What language can bridge the spiritual and earthly worlds? Though we need to carefully wait for the appropriate age to bring fairy tales to children, we can learn the qualities of heavenly language by

studying fairy tales. Steiner's indication on fairy tales and fantasy gives us a clue to finding images to use in our own speech with children:

The fairy tale is like a good angel, given us at birth to go with us from our home to our earthly path through life, to be our trusted comrade throughout the journey and to give us angelic companionship, so that our life itself can become a truly heart- and soul-enlivened fairy tale!

~ Steiner, “The Poetry and Meaning of Fairy Tales”

Working from this indication, we can learn the essentials of the language that can speak to our children's souls. We seek images that:

- Nourish the hunger of the soul.
- Combine “the richest spiritual wisdom with the simplest manner of expression.”
- Express inner joy with its unsophisticated pictures.
- Bring the roots of human life together with cosmic life.
- Affect the soul in a “spontaneous and elementary [way] and, therefore, remain unconscious.”
- Give small images for large things and, thus, connect with archetypes.

What are archetypes? Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines them as the origins of creation; “the original pattern or model of which all things of the same type are representations or copies.” Archetypes connect to dreamy remembrance of what is carried deep within and comes from the pre-birth world.

This connection to archetypes through words is what Susan Perrow described as “metaphor” in a recent issue of this newsletter. Metaphor juxtaposes familiar concepts to reveal higher, archetypal concepts; and it speaks directly to our imaginative faculties, bypassing our rational brain. It speaks to the heart.

How can we create imaginations that speak to children and their will? We want to use imagination, not instruction. First and foremost, we must hold in mind that we want to guide and inspire the children, not manipulate them. While trying various ways to find this language, I experienced that children can detect when I am using pictorial phrases to make them do what I want. If I had a self-centered desire to make things go quicker and quieter for my own sake, my language and my images immediately lost their wonder and never reached the children. Our language must be genuine and speak directly to the children's will, not to their intellect. As Meister Eckhart's tells us, "When the soul wants to experience something, she throws out an image in front of her and then steps into it." The wonder and imagination of a proper language should conjure up an image that invites and enables children to step into it with joyful will.

As Udo de Haes states, "Now in young children this resonance is strongest in meeting 'ordinary' things and events. For them this is the 'sublime,' the 'great' in the world, for these simple things, in their own earthly appearance, can speak to them in the language of their heavenly origin. Through this bridging capacity they unlock the passage from their world of origin—which is also the child's—to the life which he seeks on earth" (*The Creative Word* at 27).

As indicated above, children are still perceiving and listening to the deep secrets and archetypal images of everything that surrounds them. They find the greatest joy in discovering those heavenly seeds planted, by exploring the most ordinary things. We, as adults, need to rediscover this "soul-language" as an inner, spiritual development, so that we can carefully unite our earthly language to the one that originates in the spiritual world, without making it too complicated, literal, or scientific. For example, in something as simple as a ball a child sees a heavenly round shape and cosmic perfection and finds delight with the reunion of these images and the object. We adults tend to focus on what is done with an object

rather than with what it is. By focusing on what each object is, we would find a better way to rediscover the secret it reveals.

This all applies to the actions and expectations we have throughout the day in our lives with children. Instead of focusing on the action of putting on a pair of shoes on and the quality of the action, we adults tend to focus on what it is for. When putting on shoes, we will hurry the children because our busy minds are focused upon what to do *after* the shoes are on, such as getting into the car and going to school. I believe that is why saying, "Put your shoes on. We need to go outside. Please do it now," fail to work. These directions do not enable the children to form a picture they can connect to. It works far better if we stay focused on shoes, toes, and feet, and the essential qualities of the action required. "Piggies have to slip into the barn to stay warm" speaks to children because it brings their attention to the feet and slipping into a protection. Once piggies are in, then we can invite them to go outside!

It resonates more with the children's stage of development if we carefully consider what to pay our attention to and what quality we want to bring to a particular moment. For example, a boy in our class chatted nonstop, as if he were afraid of silence. First, my attention gravitated toward his behavior and stopping his incessant chatter. He drove me absolutely crazy, especially at lunch time! Then I realized that I needed to shift my attention to what I wanted to bring into the room. I began to imagine a calm, relaxed, and nurturing meal time with candle light and joyful conversation, as if we were having a royal tea party. This was not an instant fix but did help me bring a different energy to the room and a more imaginative way to direct the children.

Shifting my attention helped in another situation with lighting the candle at snack time. The children had developed a habit of talking over the blessing song and waving their hands to catch the smoke when the candle was lit. I tried to bring the image of

a fire fairy and its magic. I sang, “Here is the spark of father sun’s light,” and truly focused my attention on lighting the candle, observing the flame with keen interest. Sometimes the fire fairy’s magic showed us some sparks. More and more children joined me, and we had more days with quiet blessings.

Children can give us vivid examples of how they perceive the world—if we observe and listen. One day I brought a boy to his previous parent-child classroom to put on his rain suit. He looked around and said, “I used to live in this house with my mommy. Ms. Abby also lived with me. We baked bread together and made butter. My mom still lived with me.” For adults, this was just a room where he used to come a few hours once a week. But for a child who lives so much in the present moment, memories from that time stayed with him as an image not attached to any past or future. That moment in the room stayed with him as a picture of a house where his mother, the teacher, and he all lived happily together.

Mother Earth, the great storyteller to whom our children know how to listen, offers a bounty of stories throughout the year to inspire our imaginative speech. Our class was fortunate enough to witness a little robin building a nest right above our garden gate. Before she started her construction, she seemed to be doing a site survey, flying and chirping around the tree. One boy observed, “The robin is here to tell us that spring is here.”

As the mama robin finished the construction, she laid her eggs and began brooding. We watched in awe at how still she sat upon the eggs. Later, during rest time, I mentioned the robin so quietly resting in the nest. The children were able to relate to the image easily and went under their blankets contentedly.

On the day we planted sunflower seeds in our garden, one boy could not settle down for afternoon rest, flipping and flapping his blanket. The image of the seeds having to go under the soil and rest to grow so tall and strong helped him. These images of the brooding robin and the planted seeds were taken

directly from experience and made a strong, resonant impression on the children.

As children enter the earthly realm, everything speaks to them of their connectedness. All is still one. There is no strong separation between themselves and the world. It helps in our speaking if we remember this. Instead of saying “you” and “your,” use “we,” “our,” and “us” more often. “You need to put your head on the pillow” becomes “Our head goes on the pillow.”

Even more inviting is when the object itself has a voice; “The pillow is waiting for our head.” The world speaks to children and they listen and take action in conversations with the world with a devotion Steiner calls “bodily religion.” This devoted engagement of will and body nurtures the child’s feeling of belonging unreservedly to his surroundings. Children identify the world through participation. Margret Meyerkort points out in *The Challenge of the Will* that as the child participates with this bodily reverence toward the world, “he experiences not an increase in knowledge, but an awesome meeting with what divine forces created” (59). It must be active participation, different from “following instruction.” After children are given ample participatory movement of the limbs, the outer world begins to resound in their souls in pictures. The words are there not to give them information but to offer experience through sound, movement, and imagination.

Speaking to the child’s living experience of the world can be especially inviting and effective when a child is reluctant to do what is asked or when needing to have a boundary drawn. It could be as simple as “The shoes are waiting” instead of “Put your shoes on,” or “Mr. Soap stays on his bed” instead of “Don’t pick up the soap from the dish.”

It is essential to remember that love, joy, and humor are key ingredients in making our words and images alive and magical. Only good words and phrases delivered with love reach our children; words spoken with irritation and anger can harm them. I took the hand of an uncooperative boy to go inside.

My saying, “You need to hold my hand” or “We all listen to the teachers” did not still his fussing. Then at the door I said with a smile and enthusiasm, “Oh, the old grumpy stays in the garden,” and gestured to suck something out of my face and throw it away. His mood instantly shifted, and he followed my gesture with a smile.

Especially in our busy modern times, adults are hurried and stressed. It is getting more rare for our children to engage with grown-ups who meet life with joy, enthusiasm, and laughter that is not sarcastic. Trusting that every child is golden and having a twinkle in our eyes are important capacities we need to develop in communicating with them.

My exploration of the language of children can be summarized in this:

- The world speaks, and the world invites.
- Observe and listen with an open heart.
- Offer an invitation instead of giving an instruction.
- Always have love in your heart and a twinkle in your eyes.

To develop all of this takes practice. When looking for an image and the right words, I ponder what quality the imagination should bring and what archetypal image carries that quality. It is helpful to have a clear picture/imagination in my mind, which can lead to an animal, plant, elemental, or such. Great picture books like those by Elsa Beskow and Sibylle von Olfers offer wonderful starting points.

Keep a nature observation journal, read fairy tales every night to nourish your soul and strengthen your imagination muscle. ♦

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Attention to Attention!

A growing need for educators and parents in the digital age

Part 1 of a study on human attentive faculties

— Holly Koteen-Soulé

Watching a small child pursue a beetle as it crawls through a thicket of grass, or follow the course of silvery raindrop down a windowpane, or all-consumingly lick an ice cream cone, is a study in devoted attention. As parents and teachers, we are tickled by the full-bodied ability of the young child to focus on an object or experience.

These delightful images stand in sharp contrast to the all-too-common sight of a plugged-in park walker oblivious to his surroundings, or two people at a restaurant both looking at their phones, rather than into each other's eyes!

What has happened in the intervening years? How might these contrasting phenomena be related? How has technology, the smartphone in particular, changed our lives, our children's lives, and our parenting?

We know that electronic technology can be both useful and challenging. We also know that research strongly suggests that excessive media use is deleterious, especially to the health and development of children and teens. While televisions and computers can be sequestered away or turned off, the smartphone has become ubiquitous in everyday life. Like other electronic technology, but to an even greater extent, the smartphone has tethered our attention, mostly without our being aware of it.

Warning messages from the tech industry

A recent feature in *The Guardian* highlighted several designers and product developers who have begun speaking out about the dangers and unintended consequences of technological innovations, particularly the smartphone. One recent study, according to Justin Rosenstein, found that the mere presence of the smartphone, even when it is turned off, damages cognitive capacity. "Everyone is distracted. All of the time." A former Google employee, Tristan Harris, gave a TED talk in Vancouver in which he said, "All of us are jacked into the system. All of our minds can be hijacked. Our choices are not as free

as we think they are. I don't know a more urgent problem than this. It's changing our democracy, and it's changing our conversations and the relationships we want to have with each other." Harris was the author of a 2013 memo to fellow Google employees titled, "A Call to Minimize Distraction and Respect User's Attention," and has subsequently made his concerns public. Loren Brichter, who designed the pull-to-refresh feature used in many apps, admits that, "Smartphones are useful tools, but they're addictive." As Paul Lewis laments in the *Guardian* article, "I have two kids and regret every moment that I am not paying attention to them because my smart phone has sucked me in."

What is attention?

Attention is a primary factor in both parenting and education. We talk about "paying attention," "attention-getting behavior," and "attention deficit disorder," for example. Generally speaking, attention can be understood as a basic constituent and function of human consciousness. From this point of view, what does it mean, for us and our children, that technology has "grabbed our attention"?

The American philosopher William James explored consciousness and attention, along with many other topics, in his seminal work, *The Principles of Psychology*. He describes attention as naturally selective. He explains that at any moment, outward life presents itself to us in myriad sensory possibilities. What interests us and what we attend to is what forms our experience of life (James, *Principles*, Vol. 1, Chap. 40). Voluntary attention, requiring an effort of will, is quite different from the experience of involuntary attention (James, *Principles*, Vol. 2, Chap. 26).

When we are online, our ability to freely direct our attention may be more illusory than real, in part because the interests of others are often leading and shaping us, as much as or more than our own interests.

The Attention Economy

The Attention Economy, a 2001 book by Thomas Davenport and John C. Beck, attributes the original concept of an “attention economy” to Herbert Simon, an economist and computer scientist, who wrote in 1971:

In an information-rich world, the wealth of information means a dearth of something else; a scarcity of whatever that information consumes. What information consumes is rather obvious: it consumes the attention of its recipients. Hence a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention and a need to allocate that attention efficiently.

(Simon, “Designing Organizations”)

In the decades since then, the consumer’s finite attention has been recognized as an increasingly valuable resource, especially for online businesses. We have all experienced how tantalizing ads and headlines can interrupt our online sessions. We could even say that our attention has been commodified, not unlike the way labor became commodified during the Industrial Revolution.

Matthew Crawford, author of *The World Beyond Your Head*, wrote in 2015:

Attention is a resource; a person has only so much of it. And yet we’ve auctioned off more and more of our public space to private commercial interests, with their constant demands on us to look at the products on display or simply absorb some bit of corporate messaging. Lately, our self-appointed disrupters have opened up a new frontier of capitalism, complete with its own frontier ethic: to boldly dig up and monetize every bit of private head space by appropriating our collective attention. In the process, we’ve sacrificed silence—the condition of not being addressed. And just as clean air makes it possible to breathe, silence makes it possible to think. What if we saw attention in the same way that we saw air or water, as a valuable resource that

we hold in common? Perhaps, if we could envision an “attentional commons,” then we could figure out how to protect it.

(Crawford, “The Cost of Paying Attention”)

Davenport and Beck refer to attention as “the new currency of business,” but their focus is primarily on the psychological and organizational consequences of employees’ feeling overwhelmed by an imbalance of information to available attention and the importance of attention management.

They describe four symptoms of “organizational ADD” (Attention Deficit Disorder):

- 1) Increased likelihood of missing key information when making decisions.
- 2) Diminished time for reflection on anything else but email, etc.
- 3) Difficulty of holding others’ attention without increased glitziness.
- 4) Decreased ability to focus when necessary (Davenport, *Attention Economy*, p. 7).

When I shared these symptoms with a group of educators, they agreed that all four also describe the learning problems they observe in grades and high-school students.

What happens to a child’s developing capacity to consciously direct his or her attention, when the attention of adults and older students is divided, distracted, or even deficient, as Davenport and Beck describe?

Attention and presence

We used to speak about the importance of “quality time” with our children. Now, in the midst of our ultra-busy, multitasking lifestyle, we need to be as keenly aware of the quality of our attention. Are we fully present or are we only offering a shell of ourselves?

The potency of a conversation or interaction between two people depends a great deal on the

quality of the attention that they give to each other. Is there a genuine interest in connecting? How well are we listening to each other? We have all experienced going through the motions of being social, while preoccupied with thoughts, feelings or plans that have nothing to do with what is happening at the moment.

This is particularly poignant in a conversation between an adult and a child. A spouse who does not have the full attention of his or her partner may register an objection and get fuller participation. It is rare for a young child to be able to do the same. A tantrum may ensue, but if its cause is not recognized, is unlikely to achieve a satisfactory resolution for either child or parent.

I did witness a four-year-old child say, in a surprisingly wise and authoritative voice, to his father, as his father glanced at his phone to see who had just sent him a message, “Put down your phone, Dad!” The implication was clear: “I am talking to you.” The father complied, of course.

During my many years as an early childhood teacher, I observed many interactions between children and adults. A young child can readily sense if and when “someone is at home.” Typically, the child first relaxes and then becomes more animated. The image that best captures what can happen is of the sun coming out from behind a cloud! Children who sense the conscious, generous, fully present attention of adults around them can feel affirmed in their active devotion to life and supported to enter more firmly into their own beings.

Imitation in the formative early years and beyond

Our own attention is critical in a young child’s development, because in his first seven years, the child learns everything through imitation. We can recognize this fairly easily with regard to how children learn to walk and speak, but imitation in the young child goes much deeper than that. Rudolf Steiner characterizes the young child as wholly sense

organ, such that they take in everything in their surroundings, especially everything connected to the human beings with whom they have daily contact.

But it is what you are that matters; if you are good this will appear in your gestures; if you are bad-tempered this will also appear in your gestures—in short, everything that you do yourself passes over into the children and makes its way within them. This is the essential point. Children are wholly sense organ, and react to all the impressions of the people around them. Therefore the essential thing is not to imagine that children learn what is good or bad, that they learn this or that, but to know that everything that is done in their presence is transformed in the childish organisms into spirit, soul and body. The health of the children for their whole life depends on how you conduct yourself in their presence. The inclinations that children develop depend on how you behave in their presence.

(Steiner, *Kingdom of Childhood*, p. 18)

From this perspective, it seems clear to me that the quality of attention of the people with whom a child regularly interacts undoubtedly has an influence on the child, especially before the age of seven, when the capacity for imitation is strongest. The question that such a thought naturally brings up is how much of the rise of ADD and ADHD in our children today is due to their own constitutional situations and how much is the result of or aggravated by the quality of the attention they receive from the adults in their lives.

In a 2017 lecture in Seattle, Michaela Glöckler, a medical doctor and former Head of the Medical Section at the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland, spoke about the relationship between fundamental experiences in the first three years of a child’s life and three major health and educational challenges in older children and teens. She correlated attention deficiency problems with a lack of concentrated

or focused attention in the first year of life; problems of depression and aggression with the lack of a peaceful atmosphere for listening in the second year of life; problems of addictions and dependencies with a lack of feeling accepted, or of having an inner space to feel at home in the third year of life.

These thoughts, in addition to much recent research, certainly underscore the foundational importance of the early years. I believe that the degradation of the quality of our own attention and its effect on our children is an area that bears greater study, as it may well have a role in many of the current challenges described above that are facing the children in our society today.

My study has been focused primarily on the child under the age of seven. However, the effects of electronic devices on the capacity for attention of older children, while they may be less physiological in nature, are no less impactful to their development. Older children are still developing their capacity for attention and attention management and still need healthy role models in their parents and teachers, in relation to media use as well as in other areas of life. ♦

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For the Classroom

Slow Puppetry

— Trice Atchison

The slow movement is a cultural shift toward slowing down life's pace in response to its prevailing hectic speed, increasing human connection, and taking better care of the planet. Since it started in Italy three decades ago with slow cooking, it has caught on in numerous other sectors. I propose to add a new category: slow puppetry.

A rushed story cannot land in a child's heart. This is something I've learned over the years as a narrator for the puppet shows my early childhood colleagues and I present at school and community events. By calming the pace of the spoken parts and allowing time for the puppets to speak through their gestures, children are left free to take in the story and images. The slower pace doesn't mean delivering a plodding and lifeless narration, it means allowing breath to flow in and around the words, carrying them directly from speaker to listener. Each puppet as well can have its rightful moment in the sun.

When I started narrating, I tended to speak too fast, until in rehearsals a harried puppeteer would plead, *slow down*. I wasn't confident that the gentle motions of the puppets during those wordless moments would be enough to capture the children's imaginations and convey the storyline. I worried that there would be awkward, empty space. But in time I learned that those spaces are essential. I began to write "wait" into the script in numerous places to remind myself not to race ahead.

Well-placed pauses work together with words to weave a story's spell. When the narrator pays attention to the pace and quality of voice and the meaning of the story, the puppets have a chance to literally bring the tale to life. This is especially important for the littlest children, who still rely on dreamy images to be able to follow along. Puppet stories told and acted out by a single teacher likewise benefit from approaching the activity with greater consciousness. Voice, pauses, and gestures can work synergistically to make even the simplest nursery rhyme captivating.

Puppets are the ultimate teachers of how to use gesture to communicate, because gesture is all they have. They gaze into one another's faces, set out innocently on a wooded path for a transformational journey, hide behind a rock as a bear lumbers by, lose their way, kneel by a pond to weep, and express hope when a little bird comes along to show the way home. That is the stuff of fairytale magic.

I was reminded of the importance of these moments recently while narrating *A Visit to Snow Mother*, written by my colleague, Somer Serpe. We've performed the play several times, letting it breathe a little more with each retelling. For instance, there's a moment where the snow children are called for a snack of snow porridge and gather round expectantly. This scene delighted our children, who are used to having rice porridge for snack every Monday. At first, this struck me as a non-moment in the story, something to skate over lightly in order to get to the more meaty parts. But when the expressive rod puppet Snow Mother had plenty of time to lovingly hand out the porridge to each snow child, our audience was transfixed. Here a humble activity from their own lives was given great ceremony, and they drank it in. A similar effect happened when the little girl "helped to carry piles of snow to cover all of Mother Earth's children that were not already tucked in under their snowy blankets." Hanging chimes lightly played while the simple action of covering the root children took place in its own good time. The children watched with knowing engagement at this moment reminiscent of their own nap time. They understood that it was an honor for the little girl—who had so longed to help with some real work but had been told to "run along"—to be allowed to participate in this sacred task.

Modern Western culture is generally uncomfortable with gaps and pauses; that's why even when we offer something different, as a gently paced puppet show for young children, pauses can initially elicit in narrators and puppeteers a feeling

of low-level anxiety: “Oh, no. Fill up the space!” In contrast, an image I recently saw beautifully illustrated the fullness of emptiness. Michael Kokinos, keynote co-presenter with Dr. Lakshmi Prasanna at the 2018 WECAN February conference, showed the audience a picture of a snake drawn by an aboriginal man from the northern Australian outback still living in traditional ways. Instead of being depicted as a thing apart, the snake emerged out of its surroundings while remaining embedded in it. The “empty space” was completely filled with dense cross-hatchings to represent a living, connecting substance. The seemingly (to us) empty background was as meaningful and present as the snake itself, forever intertwined.

When given enough time, sound effects for a puppet show—pentatonic chimes, a bird’s call, the strum of a lyre, the crunching of dry leaves—can work their enchantment, too. Otherwise a moment meant to enhance the story can be cut short, like a chime muffled too soon and robbed of its resonating vibrations. Additionally, approaching the task of narration with a sense of presence means that

technical difficulties can be noticed and not derail a performance. An inattentive narrator will not notice the tangled marionette strings that need a moment for undoing or the forgotten prop that needs a few beats to reappear in its right place. But a present narrator will calmly wait until the storytelling and action are able to glide back into sync.

This same principle seems to apply in every kind of human interaction: If the goal is to fill up empty space with *something*, then the effect leaves us feeling hollow. But if the intention is to make a heartfelt connection, even if a few strings get tangled, then the exchange leaves us full. ♦

Trice Atchison leads the *Parent Child Garden* sessions at the Great Barrington Rudolf Steiner School in Massachusetts, has taught parent-child classes for more than 10 years, and is a certified Simplicity Parenting group leader. She co-edited *A Warm and Gentle Welcome* (WECAN 2012). Trice also can be found singing jazz classics in and around the Berkshires.

The Turnip

An Old Russian Folktale

— Shared by Rose Maynard

*One warm spring day Dedoushka
planted a turnip seed.*

*This turnip grew and grew
and became very large.*

*Then Dedoushka walked to the
field and tried to pull the turnip.*

He pulled and pulled and pulled.

*“Oh! Oh! Oh! I cannot pull the
turnip,” Dedoushka said.*

*“Baboushka, dear,” he called to
his wife, “please come and help*

me. I cannot pull the turnip.”

*“You are old and weak, Dedoushka.
I will help you pull the turnip.”*

*Dedoushka and Baboushka
walked to the field.*

Dedoushka pulled at the turnip.

Baboushka pulled at Dedoushka.

And they pulled and pulled and pulled.

*“Uh, uh, uh, we cannot pull the
turnip,” said Baboushka.*

"I will call Mashenka. She is young and strong. She will help us pull the turnip."

"Mashenka, Mashenka," she called to her granddaughter.

"Here I am! Here I am! What is it, Baboushka?"

"Please come and help us pull the turnip."

"Surely I will. That is easy, Baboushka."

Dedoushka pulled at the turnip.

Baboushka pulled at Dedoushka.

Mashenka pulled at Baboushka.

And they pulled and pulled and pulled.

"Ah, ah, ah," said Mashenka, "we cannot pull the turnip."

"We will call Geouchka. He is a good dog and he will help us."

"Geouchka! Geouchka! Come and help us."

"Bow, wow, wow," barked Geouchka as he ran to the field.

Dedoushka pulled at the turnip.

Baboushka pulled at Dedoushka.

Mashenka pulled at Baboushka.

Geouchka pulled at Mashenka.

And they pulled and pulled and pulled.

"Bow, wow, wow, we cannot pull the turnip," barked Geouchka.

"We will call Keska. She is a very clever cat and she will help us."

"Kes-kess, come and help us," called Geouchka.

"We cannot pull the turnip."

"Meou, meou, meou. I don't eat turnips but I will help you! Meou, meou, meou!"

Dedoushka pulled at the turnip.

Baboushka pulled at Dedoushka.

Mashenka pulled at Baboushka.

Geouchka pulled at Mashenka.

Keska pulled at Geouchka.

And they pulled and pulled and pulled.

"Meou, meou, we cannot pull the turnip," cried Keska.

"I will call the little field mouse. She will help us."

"The little field mouse?" the others said.

"Yes." And Keska cried,

"Little field mouse, little field mouse! Come and help us. We cannot pull the turnip."

"Ee, ee, ee," squeaked the little field mouse.

"I will help you pull the turnip."

Dedoushka pulled at the turnip.

Baboushka pulled at Dedoushka.

Mashenka pulled at Baboushka.

Geouchka pulled at Mashenka.

Keska pulled at Geouchka.

The little field mouse pulled at Keska.

And out came the turnip!

The Turnip: A Circle Play

— Rose Maynard

The sounds of language can absolutely capture the attention of young children. When teachers burst into nursery rhymes with juicy consonant sounds, ears perk up and eyes light up. “Diddle Diddle Dumpling!” “Hickety Pickety!” The words are interesting, mysterious and even fun to hear and to say. What is most fascinating, however, is that children often will notice and respond in the same way to sounds of languages that are not their own. In other words, children love sounds of all languages and in my experience are truly delighted when they are presented with the challenge of wrapping their wee lips around new and exotic words. And, of course, their capacity for imitation supports them in replicating sounds exactly. This year my students learned a Portuguese song from my assistant Carolina. Through pure listening and imitating, the children sang the song as if they had all spent years traveling through Brazil.

For these reasons, in the fall when I tell “The Turnip,” I use the Russian names during storytelling and our circle play. Dedoushka, Baboushka, Mashenka, Geochka and Kes-kess carry a certain quality of character for my English-speaking students. These new names and sounds grab their attention immediately. Our first story comes nicely

together as the children are captivated by something new in a story that is usually familiar to them from preschool. Some familiarity and something new!

As we make our way through September, I will tell the story first and then move into puppetry. Around the three-week mark, I will introduce it as a circle play. Costumes are laid out before the children arrive and when all are settled I begin to sing bits of the song, highlighting characters. I quickly help them with their costume as I sing through the play. “Dedoushka goes to pull the turnip ... Baboushka hasten here to me ... Mashenka hasten here to us,” and so on. The child who is the turnip sits in a large tub with rope handles. Usually I have the turnip wear a purple gnome hat and will drape the tub with a brown cloth. Costumes are of course simple silks, vests and felt hats. When we introduce Dedoushka through the song, he moves forward and tugs on the handle of the tub. This way the line of characters is actually pulling on something. Baboushka hangs on to Dedoushka, Mashenka hangs on to Baboushka, and so on.

The following is my recreation of the circle/play “The Carrot” by Suse Keonig. I was inspired to transform it into “The Turnip—Russian style”:

It's harvest time on Grandfather's farm. Hey Doo Da Day. . . . (children move around in circle.
Turnip is in the tub)

The crops he planted fill the barn. Hey Doo Da Day

Dedoushka goes to pull the turnip. Hey Doo Da day (circle stops)

The turnip's rooted oh so tight. Hey Doo Da Day (Dedoushka moves out of the circle
and pulls on the handle of tub)

Heave Ho! Heave Ho! Heave Ho! The turnip does not move!

Baboushka hasten here to me. Hey Doo da Day. (Dedoushka motions for
Baboushka to help. Baboushka
hangs on to Dedoushka and then
they both pull, etc. The children
combine pulling with gesture)

Now help me pull the turnip please. Hey Doo Da Day
Heave ho! Heave Ho! Heave Ho! The turnip does not move!

Mashenka hasten here to us. Hey Doo Da Day..... (Children in the circle imitate the pulling gesture with the characters)

Now help us pull the turnip please. Hey Doo Da Day
Heave ho! Heave Ho! Heave Ho! The turnip does not move!

Now Geochka hasten here to us. Hey Doo Da Day
Now help us pull the turnip please. Hey Doo Da Day
Heave Ho Heave Ho Heave Ho ... The turnip does not move!.. (children shake heads and throw up hands)

Now Kes-kess hasten here to us. Hey Doo Da Day
Help me pull the turnip please. Hey Doo Da Day

Heave ho! Heave ho! The turnip does not move.



Heave ho! Heave ho! Heave ho! ... The turnip goes Kerplunk!!. (Turnip jumps out of the tub!)

The following is the melody I reconfigured for the “The Turnip – Russian Style” (tune loosely based on “The Carrot” by Suze Keonig):

g c c d d e g d g e c d
 Its harvest time on Grandfather’s farm. Hey Doo Da Day

g c c d d e g d e d d c
 The crops he planted fill the barn. Hey Doo Da Day

g c c d d e g d d g e d
 Dedoushka goes to pull the turnip. Hey Doo Da day

g c c d d e g d d g e d
 The turnip’s rooted oh so tight. Hey Doo Da Day

g c g c g c g e e d c c
 Heave Ho! Heave Ho! Heave Ho! The turnip does not move!



Rose Maynard is a kindergarten teacher at the Calgary Waldorf School.

Snailyman

From Giving Love, Bringing Joy (WECAN 2003)

— Wilma Ellersiek, translated by Lyn and Kundry Wilwerth

The Snailyman creeps from his shell.

He stretches out his feelers well.

Stubb! Stubb!

He pulls them back again

and creeps back home,

the Snailyman.

A note on touch: It is also possible to draw the snail in the child's palm. Be very gentle, as the center of the hand, the ego-area of the hand, is especially sensitive. Caution is needed for very young or sick children when touching the palm. First start on the back of the hand, later in the palm, or take turns. The adult needs to sense what the children enjoy and what is healing. Role exchange between adult and child is also possible.



Illustration by Friedricke Lötgers

TEXT:

TOUCH:

1. *The snaillyman creeps from his shell.....* The child's right hand (loose fist) rests on bed, table, or left palm of adult. With your right pointertip, draw a spiral unwinding to the right on the back of the child's hand (starting in the middle) down to the base of the thumb. Speak melodiously at "snail's pace." Lengthen word syllables.
2. *He stretches out his feelers well.* Insert your thumb- and pointertips in the space between the child's thumb and pointer at the base. With the nail side of your fingertips, slide along the inside of the child's fingers and thus stretch the child's thumb and pointer as "feelers." Having arrived at the child's fingertips, hold the "feelers" in their stretched position for a while.
3. *Stubb! Stubb!* Now remove fingers and tap against the "feelers" with your thumb- and pointertips. It should be surprising but not scary. Gentle touch.
4. *He pulls them back again.....* Gently push the child's fingers back into a loose fist.
5. *and creeps back home,* With right pointertip, starting at the thumb base, now begin to draw an involuting spiral (to the left) on the back of the child's hand until you have reached the middle of the hand. Speak at "snail's pace," melodiously. At the end, "back home," tickle hand delicately.
6. *the Snaillyman.....* Gently cover the child's loose fist with your hands (the Snaillyman sits safely in his shell). The voice remains floating at the end.

The Birds' Wedding Day

— Nancy Blanning

A circle play appropriate for nursery as well as mixed-age kindergarten

From *Movement Journeys and Circle Adventures*, Volume 2 by Nancy Blanning and Laurie Clark (WECAN 2015)

Note: each section / gesture can be repeated 2-3 times

Hush and whisper! Can you keep..... Speak very softly and make hushing gesture, index finger to mouth, then head tipped to side to suggest sleepiness.

A secret while the birds still sleep?

It's Valentine's, the very day..... Back of hands touching at mid-chest/heart level, then swoop up and inscribe a large heart in the air while slowly speaking "Valentine's."

When the rising sun will say, Starting low, round arms and raise above head as the rising sun.

"Wake up, birdies, come to play!..... Fling arms open with a little hop as a joyful gesture.

It is your special wedding day."

The lady birds come out to say..... Spoken in a light voice—with elbows bent and held close to torso, flutter forearms and hands as wings.

"This is a special wedding day."..... Give small curtsy.

The gentlemen birds come out to say,..... Spoken in a deeper voice—chest stuck out, arms straight as wings and held slightly back and down, pulse more slowly and deliberately.

"This is a special wedding day."..... Give a noble bow.

They flutter from the trees to ground..... Arms begin above head and flutter downward while all remain standing.

And hope a treasure can be found— Head looking downward as though searching

Some seeds to make a wedding feast Gesture with finger tips to pinch small seeds

For all the birds, greatest and least.

They hop, hop here and hop, hop there..... Hop in one direction, then another.

They twirl in the sunny air. Either twirl in place or hop a full turn in place.

(Repeat 2-3x as desired.)

The seeds they pat into a cake. Pat hands together, one on top of the other.
Repeat the line and switch position of hands.

That the Sun's bright rays will bake. Hands lifted above head in open gesture, lower
and bring closer and closer together to show
concentrated sun rays "embracing" the cake.

The feast is ready. But where will they live?. Hands open, palms up to gesture a question.

They need a home to baby birdies give. Nod head in affirmation / agreement.

Off they soar, flying in a ring. Begin flying / soaring around in the circle.
Repeat this line at least 3X, perhaps more to
give enough time for movement around the
ring. Then stop before speaking the next line.

"A nest we'll weave—the very thing!— Gesture shape of nest with cupped hands

Of sticks and brass and bits of string." Suggest weaving by extending right hand/
forearm over the left, then left over
right. On "bits of string," tap thumb and
forefinger on each hand together with each
of the three words.

Move in toward center of circle gradually as you repeat these two lines,
condensing the size of the circle until everyone is close together.

The nest is ready, snug and warm Everyone sits on the floor, together becoming
the nest. Gently, slightly lean into each other
to show coziness.

To shelter birds from any storm.

Mrs. Bird and Mister, too, Everyone quiets and settles into restfulness,

Settle in, that's what they do. Shift weight from side-to-side on bottom like
a bird settling onto the eggs in a nest.

Each says, "A Happy Wedding Day to you." If a rest time is to follow, everyone can lie
down when this line is finished.

Reading the Signs of the Times

The American Academy of Pediatrics Recognizes the Importance of Play

— Nancy Blanning

It is with special pleasure that this “Signs of the Times” can celebrate a change in attitude toward the importance of play. This August, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) published a new clinical report that affirms the importance—even necessity—of unstructured, open-ended play for healthy childhood development. This breakthrough research was provocatively announced in the Los Angeles Times:

Imagine a drug that could enhance a child's creativity, critical thinking and resilience. Imagine that this drug were simple to make, safe to take, and could be had for free.

The nation's leading pediatricians say this miracle compound exists. In a new clinical report, they are urging doctors to prescribe it liberally to the children in their care.

What is this wonder drug? Play.

The study details the shift in educational policies dating from the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, which emphasized academics for young children. Recess, play time, and unstructured moments in the school day were increasingly reduced to make time for direct instruction. The Alliance for Childhood pointed out the dangers of this shift in a 2009 report, “Crisis in the Kindergarten,” by Edward Miller and Waldorf educator Joan Almon. This new report confirms the conclusions of the “Crisis” paper, and adds new research to emphasize that play is critical to healthy development for “whole child readiness [for school] including social-emotional, attentional, and cognitive skills.”

The AAP report provides us professional research vocabulary to explain what we know to be true about child development fostered by play. For example: “Play is not frivolous: it enhances brain structure and function and promotes executive function (i.e., the process of learning, rather than the content), which allow us to pursue goals and ignore distractions.”

The full study, “The Power of Play: A Pediatric Role in Enhancing Development in Young Children,” is worth our time and attention to read. It can be accessed and downloaded from pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2018/08/16/peds.2018-2058.

Book Review

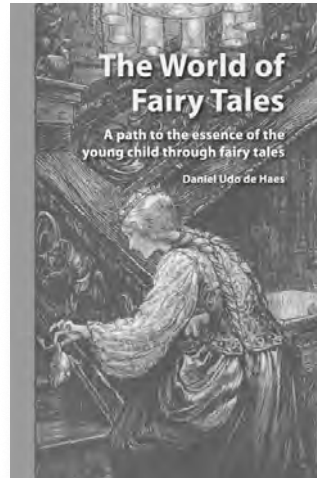
The World of Fairy Tales: A path to the essence of the young child through fairy tales

by Daniel Udo de Haes,
translated by Barbara Mees
WECAN 2017
Reviewed by Jill Taplan

I was delighted to see this publication become available because I have an earlier book by this author, *The Creative Word* (WECAN 2015), which focuses on the developmental path of two- to four-year-olds through the spoken word. In this previous book, de Haes explains very clearly how the child under three does not need the fairy tale world because the everyday world is still full of magic and surprise. The child's task is to meet that world through stories of everyday objects and activities. Who needs a magic porridge pot when the pot in your own kitchen performs such magic on the ingredients which are added to it, producing delicious porridge from dry oats and liquid! Now we have a book from de Haes which covers the next phase of early childhood through the medium of fairy tales.

Daniel Udo de Haes (1899–1986) wrote his books after retiring from a career as a primary school teacher and curative teacher; they were first published in Dutch some decades ago. WECAN has taken the step of translating and publishing them in English because he brings a timeless wisdom in which, as in the writings of Helmut von Kügelgen or Jorgan Smit, we can still find inspiration. In *The World of Fairy Tales*, de Haes explains why fairy tales are important to the development of the young child (from age four to around eight), through a discussion of their deeper meaning.

There are two lectures by Rudolf Steiner that refer to the deeper meanings and interpretations of fairy tales. In "The Poetry and Meaning of Fairy Tales," Steiner acknowledges that we might find the activity of interpreting of fairy tales akin to tearing apart a beautiful flower. We lose the beauty of the whole



by examining the parts. But, Steiner suggests, if we approach the tales with sensitivity as we look for deeper meaning, rather than focusing on a superficial analysis, we will only enhance our appreciation of them. De Haes exemplifies this sensitive approach and gives insights into some favorite and some less well-known tales, within the context of child development.

De Haes makes clear that the older child in kindergarten lives in two worlds, her knowledge of spirituality fading as her connection with the everyday world is strengthening. Fairy tales bridge those worlds because they provide images of extraordinary, eternal, spiritual truths in plain picture-building terms:

The young child is in a transitional phase from the non-figurative, spiritual world to the figurative earthly world. It is his "task" to recognize the living spirit in earthly objects. Fairy tales help him with this task. They describe the spirit and the development of the spirit figuratively in characters and actions, and guide the child into our figurative world (p. 129).

Every true fairy tale contains, through images, an aspect of the journey of every human soul as it searches to develop itself into a fitting garment for the higher spiritual "I," that part of each of us that carries the spiritual blueprint for what we have the potential to become. De Haes sees this journey in terms of the biblical image of the fall of humankind, our exclusion from paradise, and our redemption through our own free actions in the world:

The development of mankind can be seen as one large happening. Each human life reflects this development in its own way, by following its own destiny, its own path in the extensive fabric of this phenomenon.

The fairy tales reflect this development in their own language of images. Each fairy tale has its own specific character, language and motifs (p.109).

As Steiner noted, we should approach the interpretation of fairy tales with caution and not “tear the flower to pieces.” Every tale has layers of meaning and each adult will make his own connection. The intention is certainly not to give rigid rules for what each fairy tale or fairy tale motif might mean. De Haes encourages us to try to understand the background to the tales which we tell the children, but not to see this understanding as a necessity. Knowing that each tale has a deeper meaning, even if you are still waiting for the tale to reveal it to you, is sufficient. He encourages us to live in the fairy tale atmosphere and not to allow background knowledge to come between us and the children. My own image for this is that, when we tell a well-loved tale, we lay it down at the children’s feet, without drama or sentiment, but with our respectful admiration, so that each child may pick it up in the way that means most to her at that moment. This enables us to tell fairy tales to mixed-age groups and to understand the value of repetition of tales over days or weeks, giving each child fresh opportunities to unconsciously transform and digest the imagery.

This book gives, in addition to revelations about a selection of fairy tales, a useful explanation for teachers and parents of the value to children in this age range (kindergarten to second grade) of experiencing the fairy tales. Nowadays these tales are often rejected as irrelevant or too full of stereotypes and antiquated language to be told to young children, so it is vital that their importance as “soul milk” for the growing child is understood. In their gentle way, they build resilience in the young child for the challenges to come in later life. Every soul will meet evil and struggle to defeat it. The greedy wolf, the evil witch, the cunning tailor, the clumsy bear exist in all of us. When the young child is becoming aware of these unpleasant parts of the soul, she needs to know that this is a universal human predicament, not just an individual experience. These darker aspects of self

can be defeated through one’s own inner strength and with the help of the unexpected encounters and relationships that life brings us. Meeting the battle of good and evil in image form gives each child the opportunity to unconsciously understand that there is always hope for a better future:

Fairy tales endow the child with an unparalleled, concealed treasure of spiritual germ cells so that the soul can bear the spiritual blossoms when the time is right (p. 50).

De Haes includes some ideas for engaging children who may not come to the fairy tale world easily because of their exposure to other forms of stories which have lacked meaning and truthfulness. This is becoming even more relevant as we encounter children who have little experience of stories coming to them without animated pictures. These children need to exercise their “picture-forming muscles,” and the heart of early childhood, from age three to five, is when they have the most potential for development, the time of the most active and creative imagination. Fairy tales become even more important in how we can work to balance current trends in society and culture. Their universality rises above cultural distinctions and their messages of spiritual truth in imagery are even more necessary to support the children of the twenty-first century as they climb off our shoulders and go to meet the unknown future which we are bequeathing to them. ♦

Resources:

- Steiner, Rudolf. “The Interpretation of Fairy Tales,” Lecture, Berlin, December 1908. See, e.g., Rudolf Steiner, *The World of Fairy Tales*, (Great Barrington, MA: SteinerBooks, 2013).
- Steiner, Rudolf. “The poetry and meaning of fairy tales.” Lecture, Berlin, February 1913. See, e.g., Rudolf Steiner, Ruth Pusch, ed., *The Poetry and Meaning of Fairy Tales* (Spring Valley, NY: Mercury Press, 1989).

Autism: Meet Me Who I Am, An Educational, Sensory and Nutritional Approach to Childhood Autism

by Lakshmi Prasanna and Michael Kokinos
Lindisfarne Books, 2018
Reviewed by Nancy Blanning

When talking about children in our classrooms who challenge and perplex us, it is becoming almost commonplace to hear phrases like, “He’s somewhere on the spectrum.” The image of the autism spectrum peppers the media, internet, medical publications, and educational reporting, and lives daily in the wrenched hearts of parents who are companioning these special children in earthly life.

Dr. Lakshmi Prasanna and Michael Kokinos, presenters at the 2018 WECAN February Conference, brought pictures of their work with young children and adolescents with autism in their keynote presentations (summarized elsewhere in this issue of *Gateways*). They describe communication—through both language and behavior—as the path to opening up the world of the child with autism. Relationship infused with acceptance, warmth, and love between human beings is key to establishing a communication bridge to meeting the other. The spiritual individuality of the other, hidden within a cumbersome, nonintegrated physical body, can be recognized and honored. The inspiration offered by their keynotes was profound for those who attended the conference. Their suggestions of how to relate to the autistically inclined child were both deep and subtle.

Fortunately, Dr. Lakshmi and Michael have produced *Autism: Meet Me Who I Am*, which further



describes their journey to a better understanding of these children. They chronicle how their acceptance of remarkable children has opened a doorway to fill “the space in-between”—that can be either a barrier or a bridge—with warmth and connection. This book offers practical and accessible insights into the world of autism, a phenomenon we are all struggling to understand. The numbers of “spectrum” children coming to our classes is rising, so this can be a very useful guide to how to support the child and class and respond to behaviors.

But this book is also recommended reading for all Waldorf early childhood educators, because the steps described as the “Five Key Ideas” (Prasanna and Kokinos, *Autism: Meet Me Who I Am*, p. 95) are applicable to every child in our care.

- Strive to meet the child in their essence
- Environmental management rather than behavior management
- Start with nutrition: support the liver and digestion (and also with healthy rhythms)
- Help the child with body image and [sensory] perception
- Build a ... community [of support] including parents

We might say that our world is becoming autistic—or already is, as these children are coming to show us. Experience comes to us in sharp bits and pieces, fast and loud, with little rhythm or organizing principle. Through so many ways we are being distracted, blocked from making authentic connection with other human beings. Our social life is being crippled. If these Key Ideas are helpful for the child with autism, they are likely also healing for everyone.

Creating relationship and authentic, meaningful connection with the other is a profound challenge of our time. The openness of these authors, one a doctor and one a therapist, to be guided by these special children bears benefit for us all. ♦

Joyful Toddlers and Preschoolers: Create a Life That You and Your Child Both Love

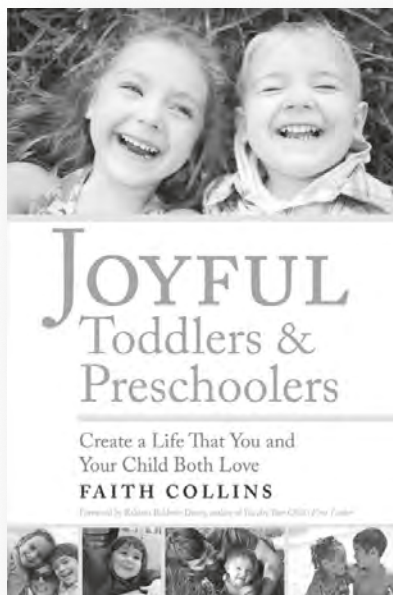
By Faith Collins

Hohm Press, 2017

Reviewed by Nancy Blanning

Faith Collins, experienced toddler teacher in Waldorf and LifeWays settings, LifeWays parent educator, and researcher, has produced a book that can be a good resource and recommendation to mainstream-oriented parents of very young children and toddlers. So many parenting books recommend reasoning logically and speaking about feelings with the young child. Faith points out that this is usually fruitless. Little children are not developmentally or cognitively capable of responding in a logical, reasonable way. She states as a Key Point: “When to Explain and Convince? *Avoid it!* It is not effective: you don’t change emotion through logic, especially for someone with an immature brain” (p. 98). What fundamentally matters is the relationship (which Faith calls “connection”) between the child and parent. When this is fleeting and cannot be relied upon, opposition and unattractive behaviors will be inevitable with the child.

This book makes a strong and healthy argument that children will respond well to our expectations and requests if it is appropriate to the child’s developmental



stage. Most appreciated is the author’s emphasis upon understanding child development so that we set our expectations fairly and reasonably for the little child. Every time this is stated, it is a blessing toward young children.

Parallel to this insight, Faith gives abundant suggestions for employing humor and laughter, rhymes and songs, stories and pictorial (rather than literal) vocabulary to inspire the child’s cooperation and enjoyment in daily tasks.

Collins’s guiding points are clear and well developed in a step-by-step presentation that the logical adult mind appreciates and that a harried parent can hold on to. The book’s insights are supported by mainstream research that validates her points and supports her statements. This volume may be a beacon of sanity to distressed, befuddled parents. Waldorf principles are implicit in the book’s recommendations. The reviewer hopes that this volume may also be a bridge from the logic-driven parenting world to the world of Waldorf early childhood education. ♦

Raising Happy Healthy Children: Why Mothering Matters

by Sally Goddard Blythe

Hawthorn Press, 2017

Reviewed by Nancy Blanning

The works of Sally Goddard Blythe are a great support to our understanding of the importance of healthy sensory development. Her classic, *The Well-Balanced Child* (Hawthorn Press 2005), is a boon to Waldorf early childhood teachers. She provides a Waldorf-compatible picture of how essential healthy development of balance and self-movement are to security in bodily orientation and success in later academic life. *The Well-Balanced Child* is a good resource for our own understanding and is also well worth recommending to parents.

Goddard Blythe's new volume, *Raising Happy Healthy Children*, takes a giant step in detailing the vast range of influences and supports that encourage healthy growth and development in our times.

Raising Happy Healthy Children was previously published under the title *What Babies and Children Really Need* (Hawthorn Press 2008). This revised and expanded edition is filled with current research that makes undeniably clear that each step of child development relies on the strength of what came before. The best arrangement for ensuring close attention and protection to these early years comes from the mother (and probably with support of other consistent "mothering" caregivers). Goddard Blythe emphasizes that the act and art of mothering is undervalued and under-supported in our materialistic and money-driven times and needs more recognition and support.

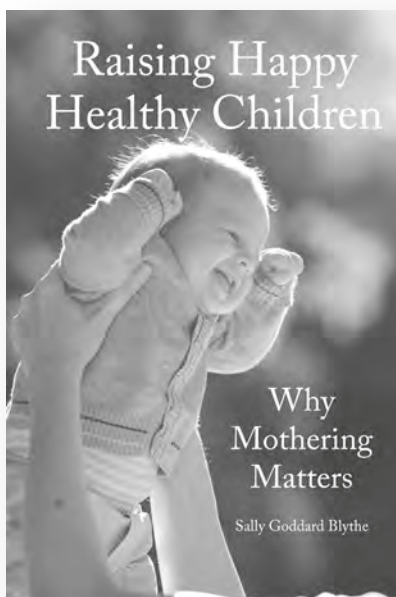
She offers well-stated advice to parents that echoes Waldorf-oriented parenting guidelines. For example, she states that "Discipline surrounds a child with safe boundaries, helping them to learn to regulate their behavior, develop good habits, learn from mistakes, and to take other people into account. The aim of effective discipline is to teach ... Children learn best when expectations and adult behavior are consistent ... Children benefit from routine ...

Children need the real company of others ... Play is an essential part of learning" (p. 225).

For the educator, this book extends beyond the introductory description of development. Regarding movement and language, for example, the author details the intricate steps and stages the child passes through developmentally to achieve health and maturity in these realms. It is important for early childhood educators to be aware of what the child needs to grow well so we can intentionally encourage and offer enrichment to these experiences in our classrooms.

Studying this book will also supply us with mainstream vocabulary so we can speak to other professionals and to parents in a common language. Every time we can do this, our stature as education professionals rises among mainstream therapists and educators.

This book is not light reading, but it is well worth the effort. Its neurological perspective is a supportive companion to what anthroposophy and Waldorf education help us understand from a spiritual perspective. It benefits the growing child when we see child development from both perspectives. ♦



International News

Preparations for Waldorf 100th Anniversary Conference

— Louise deForest

The International Association of Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education (IASWECE) and the Pedagogical Section at the Goetheanum are preparing a World Early Childhood Conference to celebrate 100 years of Waldorf education. This Early Childhood conference will be the first major event in this anniversary year.

The conference planners have considered questions about the needs of our times and how we may help children to meet their future. A conclusion arose that one of the most urgent issues before us is the need to care for the human surroundings, for the quality of the adult relationships around the child, through which a warm and safe free space is provided for the child's healthy development. Out of this consideration arose the conference title: "Inner Freedom – Social Responsibility: Finding Ways into a Human Future."

Each of the morning lectures will address different aspects of human encounters and ways we can promote new social spaces for childhood. Two speakers will share each talk as a model of cooperation and interaction in their preparation and presentation of their topics. Speakers will be Stefanie Allon (Israel) and Claus Peter Röh (Dornach, Switzerland); Clara Aerts (Belgium) and Christof Wiechert (The Netherlands); Gerald and Sabine Haefner (Dornach, Switzerland); Silvia Jensen (Brazil) and Florian Osswald (Dornach, Switzerland); Dr. Lakshmi Prasanna (India) and Michael Kokinos (Australia).

Discussion groups on conference themes as well as workshops will be part of the program.

The conference dates are April 15-19, 2019. Online registration is scheduled to begin on September 15.

More details can be found at the IASWECE website, www.iaswece.org.

Calendar of Events

Personal and Professional Development

October 20, November 3, December 15, Rudolf Steiner College, Fair Oaks, California. Monthly workshops in **Biodynamic Essential Oils: Alchemical Growing and Processing Herbs for Health** with Dennis Klocek. For more information visit steinercollege.edu/biodynamic-essential-oils, or contact the College at (916) 963-4000 or rsc@steinercollege.edu.

October 25, 2018, Prairie Hill Waldorf School, Pewaukee, Wisconsin. **Your Brain on IT: Managing the Human Impact of Information Technology**. An exploration of the challenges posed by current and developing digital information technologies, and of self-management strategies that can help parents, teachers and children. Led by psychotherapist Philip Chard, sponsored by the Great Lakes Waldorf Institute. For more information visit greatlakeswaldorf.org/events, or contact Sandra at the Institute at (414) 299-3820 or admin@greatlakeswaldorf.org.

October 27, 2018, The Camphill School, Glenmoore, Pennsylvania. **Addressing Challenging Behavior and Challenging Situations through the Medium of Story**. A one-day seminar for teachers, parents and health practitioners with Susan Perrow. For more information contact Gleice da Silva at gleicepsilva@gmail.com.

January 24-26, 2019, Sunbridge Institute, Chestnut Ridge, New York. **Deepening Your Work as An Effective Mentor and Evaluator: Guidance For Those Working with Early Childhood and Elementary Educators**. Part I of two-part seminar with Louise deForest, WECAN Board Chair. Part II will take place March 28-30, 2019. For more information, visit www.sunbridge.edu/courses-workshops/workshops-events or contact the Institute at (845) 425-0055 or info@sunbridge.edu.

November 10 and December 1, 2018, and January 12, 2019, The Early Childhood Teacher Education Center at Sophia's Hearth, Keene, New Hampshire. **Weekend Workshops**. Topics will be "Continuing to Deepen our Relationship with Parent/Child Work"

with Nancy Macalaster, "Toy Making for Young Children" with Nancy Macalaster, and "Supporting the Developing Senses of Proprioception and Balance in the Growing Child" with Jane Swain. For more information, visit www.sophiashearthteachers.org/weekendworkshops, or contact the Center at (603) 357-3755 or info@sophiashearth.org.

January 25-26, 2019, Sunbridge Institute, Chestnut Ridge, New York. **Waldorf Weekend**. Experiential workshop on the foundations and fundamentals of Waldorf Education from early childhood through high school. For more information, visit www.sunbridge.edu or contact Penelope Myles-Voss at info@sunbridge.edu or 845-425-0055 x20.

Conferences

November 10-11, 2018, Rudolf Steiner College, Fair Oaks, California. **The 9th Annual Early Childhood Symposium. Transforming Inspiration & Intuition into Practice**. For more information visit steinercollege.edu, or contact the College at (916) 963-4000 or rsc@steinercollege.edu.

November 14-18, 2018, the Biodynamic Association, Portland, Oregon. **Transforming the Heart of Agriculture: Soil. Justice. Regeneration**. Learn, discuss, and build community this fall at the 2018 Biodynamic Conference. 80+ inspiring and thought-provoking speakers. For more information or to register, visit www.biodynamics.com/conference, or contact the Association at (262) 649-9212 or info@biodynamics.com.

November 30-December 1, 2018 Sunbridge Institute, Chestnut Ridge, New York. **Waldorf Education and the Lifelong Cultivation of Ecological Identity**. Keynote address and workshop facilitation by Coleen O'Connell, MS, Co-Founder and Director of the Ecological Teaching and Learning MS Program, Lesley University, Cambridge, MA, and Lesley University faculty member Opening talk by Rev. Patrick Kennedy, Director of The Seminary of the Christian Community. For more information, visit www.sunbridge.edu/courses-workshops/workshops-events or contact the Institute at (845) 425-0055 or info@sunbridge.edu.

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ISSUE 33 Spring/Summer 2018

THEME: Sleep

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