From the Editor

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We welcome Spring, albeit belatedly, with a rich and varied issue of the *Research Bulletin*.

The current issue opens with a philosophical treatise by the *Bulletin*'s very first editor, Douglas Sloan. Working his way through the intellectual history that shaped up the Modernist, empiricist view of the world, thereby forming a new mode of "knowing" the world, Sloan declares a fundamental need to overcome it and its dominance in contemporary science, society, and culture.

Constructed on principles of empirical demonstrability, this mode of knowing has reduced the sphere of existence to mere matter-in-motion, imposing on the world and on the human culture that it has shaped a mechanistic view that covers everything from nature to the human mind, itself reduced to a soft-tissue mechanical computer of sorts. If humans are one more modality of matter-in-motion, Sloan argues, then the unique domains of humanity—values, meaning, ideas, and ideals—have been explained away from the world, as has any notion of spirituality, which the human embodies. While the dogmatic beholders of such a scientific, mechanistic worldview might have no issue with the erasure of spirituality from the dominant discourse, they will have to answer to the paradox of denying the impetus for meaning and value, which has set human inquiry in motion to begin with, and which is now banished from the realities of the world altogether. As Sloan summarizes with an astute quote from the British philosopher and Harvard professor Alfred North Whitehead: "Scientists animated by the purpose of proving that they are purposeless constitute an interesting subject of study." The much-needed alternative to the mechanistic worldview, Sloan concludes, is to develop and sustain "a living, knowledge-grasp of the qualities of life, meaning, beauty, and spirit," an endeavor to which the "whole of Rudolf Steiner's spiritual science is devoted."

Moving to the pedagogical, we encounter next Holly Koteen-Soulé's article, "Attention to Attention!" in which the author, a seasoned Waldorf teacher and trainer of teachers, underscores the need for self-checking the quality of attention teachers and parents pay the children under their care. It has become customary to complain about the divided and extremely limited attention capacities of the children and students born into the digital age, but how about us, adults of a previous century, who have also been swept up by the multiple distractions of modern life? Noting how children, especially before the age of seven, develop through imitation, Koteen-Soulé raises the question, to what extent the degradation of the quality of adults' attention plays a role in the increasing number of various learning challenges children are facing today. Bolstered by testimonies from Silicon Valley engineers and insights from recent studies on attention, this article also offers some helpful guidelines for mindful attention, which are of great importance to parents and teachers alike.

Lowell Monke, a professor of education who specializes in teaching adolescents about technology, makes a compelling connection between adolescent narcissistic behavior and the effects of social media. In an analytic description of the narcissistic personality, Monke demonstrates how important insights are gained by viewing phases of adolescence as being controlled by a subset of narcissistic qualities. These include self-absorption, a sense of entitlement, difficulty in forming close

relationships, and an aggressive reaction to criticism. Parents and educators, whose role it is to guide adolescents through their skewed, self-centered, yet self-blinding view of their place in the world, are facing a new obstacle in the form of social media. Constructed to reinforce and exploit the narcissistic tendencies to create amplified impressions and elicit favorable reactions, social media disposes adolescents to remain in the blind spot, from which pedagogical guidance and maturation would otherwise carry them away. The cure, Monke suggests, is the narrative of ecology, which reverts the individual to his or her humble place in the order of nature as well as in the social order. Such an "ecological consciousness," he argues, can be further enhanced by reviving the notion of *stewardship* as the responsibility to compassionately tend to the well-being of all that one is related to: environment, family, community, and especially to those who are in need. The promotion of stewardship in adolescents, Monke reminds us, requires adults to reclaim the role of steward if they are to steer erring adolescents back into the fold of a compassionate, altruistic society.

Following her survey of dyslexia among North American Waldorf students, published a year ago in the *Research Bulletin* (Vol. XXII, Number 1), Waldorf teacher and remediation specialist Lalla Carini expands her study of Waldorf approaches to detecting and remediating reading difficulties while keeping in step with contemporary findings in the field of neuroscience. Carini is encouraged, as should all Waldorf pedagogues be, by some important correlations she finds between Karl König's anthroposophically inspired study of literacy disorders (presented in his mid-century Camphill lectures, *On Reading and Writing*) and contemporary studies in the neuroscience of reading and writing difficulties. By reviewing recent mainstream studies against the backdrop of König's important work, Carini is providing a crucial anthroposophical lens through which better detection, understanding, and remediation of dyslexia can be achieved in the Waldorf classroom. This is a major contribution to Waldorf pedagogy in deepening our understanding of reading acquisition and of meeting the needs of struggling readers without separating them from the main classroom.

Adam Blanning, out of his practice as an anthroposophical physician, offers helpful diagnostic insights that aim to bridge the gaping gap between the therapeutic and the pedagogic support needed by autism spectrum children. Blanning moves from an outward, behavioral description inwards to the highly-specialized anthroposophic grid of the "constitutional polarities" (large-headed vs. small-headed; earthly vs. cosmic; rich vs. poor mental capacities of image-formation and memory) that designate irregular modes of incarnation of the ego in the physical body. While the article is rich in further specialized distinctions (the epileptic/hysterical constitutions, the maniacal and the feeble), which would certainly challenge the non-specialized reader, the general orientation of this important work should be clear: It is the extent to which one is at home in one's own body that affects one's comportment in the world and behavior towards others and is manifested by such comportment. Learning how to read these manifestations carefully and compassionately, as disruptions to the integration of the different levels of the human being, as described in anthroposophy, is paramount to the ability to offer support to children on the autism spectrum, support which will allow them to benefit from the remarkable gifts that come with their unique constitution.

In another reaffirming article, teacher, author, and economist Robert Oelhaf reviews rising innovations in mainstream and experimental education that tend to repeat and confirm the century-old practices of Waldorf education. Among these practices, Oelhaf notes the systematic engagement with the arts, a learning process that proceeds from physical movement to aesthetic and emotional feeling, a deliberative rhythm for the school day and year, a consistent relationship with adult-teachers, and even central

aspects of school self-governance, in which teachers, rather than external authorities, are in charge of the institutional decisions that would support their pedagogical efforts. The "case" Oelhaf makes for Waldorf education might not be necessary for those who have been practicing it in the classroom, where its efficacy is clear, but it certainly provides a contemporary vocabulary and a rich resource of scientific reassurances for teachers and schools who need to explain, at times even justify, the merits of Waldorf practices to skeptical, even anxious, parents.

Finally, we highly recommend reading Cindy Brooks' long review of Dorit Winter's book, *Train a Dog but Raise the Child: A Practical Primer*, which offers a sober yet pleasant reminder of what teachers and parents should and should not do, even when they have the best of intentions.

On the back-end of this issue, you will find, as always, reports from the world of Waldorf Publications, in print and online, and on the activities of the Research Institute for Waldorf Education. The latter report includes a reminder that the much-anticipated *Survey of Waldorf Graduates* is approaching its final stages and is slated to be published in the centennial year of Waldorf education. Stay tuned!

Authors who wish to have articles considered for publication in the *Research Bulletin* should submit them directly to the Editor at: theresearchbulletin@gmail.com.