

From the Editor

Douglas Sloan

Nearly every article in this issue of the *Research Bulletin* deals with central aspects of Waldorf education as embodying what is referred to by some of the authors as a “new educational paradigm.” Christof Wiechert, leader of the Pedagogical Section of the Anthroposophical Society in Dornach, addresses the nature of this new paradigm directly in the first article, “Rudolf Steiner and the New Educational Paradigm.” A year ago in the January, 2003, issue of the *Bulletin*, an article by Stephen Sagarin explored the question of what is, if anything, the unique nature and substance of Waldorf education.

Sagarin’s article elicited correspondence taking up central issues raised by him (see “No Such Thing” by Lukas Zay, *Research Bulletin*, June, 2003). In this current issue, Christof Wiechert carries the discussion yet further. Responding appreciatively and critically also to Stephen Sagarin’s earlier article, Wiechert raises the question, “What is genuinely authentic and original in Rudolf Steiner’s education indications?” Wiechert’s is a penetrating exploration of the foundations of Waldorf education in the underlying anthroposophical picture of the nature of the human being and of the developing child. Wiechert brings out central aspects of Waldorf education that can be said not only to be original but also to constitute the essential foundations for a genuinely new and fruitful educational paradigm for our time. In doing so, he underscores the critical challenge to Waldorf teachers and parents to work to understand and to give concrete expression to the essential anthroposophical sources of Waldorf education. This concise article could well serve as the stimulus and resource for ongoing study by teachers and parents.

Nearly all the other articles in this issue of the *Research*

Bulletin deal with one or more aspects of what Wiechert has delineated as “a new educational paradigm.” In his article, Wiechert speaks of the significance of the teacher. Christopher Clouder, European Editor of the *Research Bulletin*, takes up this critical role of the teacher from the perspective of teacher as learner in his article, “Teaching as Learning in a Steiner Waldorf Setting.” Clouder shows not only the importance of this learning dimension of teaching itself in Rudolf Steiner’s educational vision, but also many of its very practical implications for our contemporary educational situation.

The view of Waldorf education as providing a new way of thinking, a new paradigm, is developed further by Johannes Denger in his article, “Education towards Health Is Education towards Freedom: Salutogenesis as a Measure for the Quality of Our Work.” The term “*salutogenesis*” gives expression to a way of thinking about both education and medicine that provides yet another perspective on the paradigm shift described by Wiechert. Although it appeared as a concept in English in the 1960s, it has received most, and, since the 1990s, increasing attention in Europe.

The term “*salutogenesis*” results from a joining of the Latin word for health, *salus*, and the Greek word for

beginning, origin, “*genesis*.” It may well be that Europeans are more at home with jawbreaker words derived from Greek and Latin than are Americans. Certainly it is probably safe to say that salutogenesis does not yet trip lightly from American tongues.

Still, it would be extremely unfortunate if, for this reason, Americans were to neglect the centrally important shift in understanding and attention the word can help us execute in our medicine and in our education. As Denger points out, in medicine the dominant paradigm has long been that of “*pathogenesis*,” which focuses on the origins of illness, of suffering, and has as its primary emphasis the identification and treatment of disease and disease causing agents. Pathogenesis is, indeed, well-established in our English vocabulary and the word appears in nearly every dictionary (unlike salutogenesis which appears in few, if any). The negative pathogenic emphasis slips easily from medicine to education with the effect that we become consumed by an overweening focus on failure—the presence of failure, the causes of failure, the tests for failure, the treatment of failure.

In this process of being increasingly entranced by the negative, we then tend to neglect the positive task of identifying and developing all that which contributes to health and well-being. In its fixation on the negative, education in its effort to combat failure, and any associated illness, begins itself to be a causative agent of failure and disease. This is not to say failure and illness are neglected in a primary health-oriented context, but they are then understood and dealt with in the light of the positive, not vice-versa. Not least among the benefits for education is that the concept of salutogenesis directs attention to the whole lifespan, to what promotes health in childhood, youth, adulthood and old age—and in body, soul, and spirit. In his article, Johannes Denger opens up the rich resources contained in the concept of—to use the full jawbreaker—the “salutogenic paradigm,” and he shows its intimate connection with a life of meaning and freedom.

Providing a concrete, specific example, but with wide-ranging implications, of a positive, health- engendering impulse in education is Jaimen McMillan’s article, “The Stranger in the Mirror: Reflections on Adolescence in the Light of Movement Education.” Jaimen McMillan is the pioneering developer of the discipline known as Spatial Dynamics. Spatial Dynamics studies human movement in space in order to learn to create the dynamic that a given situation calls for. It helps free the human being from the modern experience of feeling bound and determined by outside forces and circumstances. Spatial dynamics offers a growing body of games, exercises and spatially oriented movement activities to support education, health, growth and therapeutic change. It has deep, but not exclusive, roots in Rudolf Steiner’s understanding of the human being and of human development. In his article, Jaimen

McMillan describes what Spatial Dynamics can contribute to the adolescent, and, thus, provides a concrete example of a health-oriented education at one stage of life. He could have done something similar for every stage, and this editor hopes that at some point he may be persuaded and have the time to do so.

The last two articles in this issue connect directly with two topics dealt with in the last issue. In doing so, they also coincide remarkably with the theme of salutogenesis. One of these topics had to do with the emphasis in much main-stream education today on ever-earlier academics, high stakes testing and formal literacy training as early as possible, and their destructive consequences for the developing child. Similar forces are at work not only in this country but also in most of the modern industrial nations. Especially is this the case in Germany, where proposed “educational reform” legislation stresses much of the same tightening and rigidification of education now spreading in this country. In his article, “Pulling the Grass Doesn’t Make It Grow any Faster,” Dr. Gerald Huether, brain researcher at Göttingen University, addresses the German situation in a way fully applicable to our own. He points out many of the destructive consequences of current proposals for early academics not only on the brain but also on the whole being of the growing child. He writes also from the positive perspective of what the child needs for complete and healthy development.

In her article, “The New Generation of Children,” Renate Long-Breipohl evaluates the growing literature that claims evidence for the appearance now of a new and, in significant ways, an advanced generation of children. We introduced this topic in the last issue of the *Research Bulletin* with an article by Georg Kuhlewind on so-called “star children” (see “In what Respect Are Star Children Different” in *Research Bulletin*, January 2003). By placing the whole topic in a larger context, reviewing and evaluating a wide variety of literature on the subject, Long-Breipohl offers an invaluable resource for those seriously concerned to investigate and weigh carefully the question of a new generation of children.

We invite correspondence on any of the topics, issues and questions dealt with in the *Research Bulletin*.