

From the Editor

Stephen Spitalny

Silence is golden! Yet silence is not something highly valued by the mainstream culture. It is a rare experience in most lives these days. Just listen to the sounds of modern life all around us. We resist the experience of quiet; perhaps we even are afraid of silence. It is a common practice for a family to have their radio or TV on as long as people are home and awake, as background noise. Few people drive without the radio or CD player sounding. And one needs only to look at all the people with their headphones and earpiece cellphones to see that many, many people want to be filled with electronic sounds wherever they go.

As childcare givers and guides for parents we have great opportunities to model being comfortable with silence, actually enjoying silence—we are the example for the children and parents alike. If we want children to grow up with the capacity for their own meditative practice, we have to show them that we both value and practice silence. They imitate us, and our actions are an imprint for their later activity, like a seed. We all know that in kindergarten, in our Steiner-inspired early childhood work, we do not fill the silence with our own speaking. We allow the children to be in the quietude of their inner life as they experience the outer world, or to initiate the talking to which we respond. We don't need to intrude into their world with our speaking except when necessary. We don't chat for the sake of chatter, to fill a void. How do we help the parents to discover the importance of giving the children the gift of silence?—not only for their own sake, and for what the silence gives them, but also for their children and for the future. Can we be agents of renewing the practice and valuing of silence?

I suggest reading the July/August 2008 issue of *Ode Magazine*, which was dedicated to various aspects of silence. Here is one quotation from that issue: “What on earth is wrong with modern people that makes us bent on doing whatever we can to chase away the silence? Are we afraid of it? . . . Silence may be scary, but a lack of silence is much scarier. Those who don't seek occasional silence to make contact with their deeper core,

higher self, pure soul, Buddha nature or whatever you want to call it, become detached from God. As a yogi friend said, ‘To hear the voice of God, you must be silent.’ I asked why. He looked at me as if the answer were obvious. ‘Because God whispers.’ ” (Tijn Touber, “Because God Whispers”)

It is becoming a trend at *Gateways* that we have more articles than we can print. What a difference from when I first began as editor and found that gathering articles was a bit like pulling teeth. This issue finds articles from familiar writers, and some new to our pages, all giving the sense of the breadth and depth of the work with young children arising out of the inspiration of Rudolf Steiner's ideas. We also have been receiving rather large articles, and in this issue we include part two of two separate articles by Nancy Blanning and Dr. Adam Blanning. Cindy Brooks sent us two therapeutic stories she created as a wonderful example of the healing possibilities in story. Nancy Blanning offers us another therapeutic circle time, and her thinking behind it. Ruth Ker has written about another aspect of first grade readiness that deserves consideration. We've included another thoughtful article by Renate Long-Breipohl and a first-time-in-our-pages article from Jo Valens. I have always wanted this publication to be a venue for conversation about ideas and approached, a place to pose questions and get responses. In a previous issue we included an article I wrote about the Sistine Madonna painting, and it elicited a wonderful article from Nancy Poer as a response. All in all, I am very happy with this issue, and I look forward to hearing your thoughts and questions that arise from reading it. Perhaps responding to articles can become a trend?

There is a plentiful harvest of new books by WECAN to support and further inspire our work. This issue is too full for a full book review section, but several wonderful titles need mentioning, the first two published by and available through WECAN. *Creating a Home for Body, Soul and Spirit: A New Approach to Childcare* by Bernadette Raichle characterizes twenty-five years of work at Awhina Day Nursery and Kindergarten in New Zealand. The Awhina practices were developed out of an attempt at understanding the archetype of home, the essential role of the adult and the developing of the fourfold human bodies, all out of the foundations of

anthroposophy.

A Warm and Gentle Welcome: Nurturing Children from Birth to Age Three is a compilation of the work of the RIE/Pikler WECAN task group. Full of articles on the changing needs of the family and the developing child, supporting parents, and the art of caregiving, this is the fifth in the Gateways series. The reader will find this an essential addition to his or her library on the work with young children, whether in a “program” or at home.

Another book deserves mention as well. Kindergarten teacher Dzvinka Hayda has published her version of a Waldorf kindergarten birthday story entitled *Little Angel's Journey*, by Trillium Forest Press. Her simple yet beautiful pictures accompany her unique version of an old staple.

And finally I want to mention *Bio-Typing: Beyond Body Language* by Johnny Seitz, published in 2004 by iUniverse. This innovative book is a look at the biographical moment of coming into uprightness, and how the particular method utilized at that important moment imprints the physical body and the soul of the human being. Mr. Seitz gives us a key to the code of human movement and its relationship to personality and soul by examining the various ways of attaining the vertical. A few excerpts:

The body you inhabit today works the way it does as a direct result of how you first learned to use it in response to your environment. The way you first went about these early movements reflected the way you saw yourself and your relationship to the world. This is why the act of climbing to one's feet is so critically important. The muscles you first developed created a domino-like effect that caused some muscles to develop and others to go largely unused. This pattern of discovery and development led to the evolution of which muscles were to become most available to your body, causing certain muscles to be stronger

than others. As a result, the primary postural support muscles that we initially depended upon to stand have shaped how we move for the remainder of our lives (12-13).

It all started when we opened our eyes for the first time. We found ourselves in a new body, and it was entirely up to us to figure out how to use it. First we discovered fingers and feet. Next we began to realize that these were connected to us. Then we began the quest for control over our body. The world around us [was] filled with exciting sounds and sensations that called out to us. Fairly soon, we discovered that the higher we lifted our head, the more we could see, smell and hear. In time, our crib became too small to contain our curiosity. Raising our head as high off the floor as possible became more and more of a full time preoccupation. It slowly led us to the next step: How could we get our feet under our body and bring ourselves upright over them? (15)

The effects of three different ways of attaining uprightness and the longstanding muscle use patterns that result are the theme of this wonderful book. Johnny Seitz is not a student of Rudolf Steiner, but he has taken an in-depth look at a point in an individual's biography that Steiner pointed to as archetypal for the individual, and observed patterns of personality connected to the threefold methods of attaining uprightness. Please let me know what you think about this. As always, *Gateways* is open for your experiences, observations, and research, as well as your comments and questions.

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