

Nourishing the Sense of Life with the Adult

— Patricia Rubano

Patricia Rubano has been an early childhood teacher and now guides Parent-and-Child classes at the Sanderling Waldorf School in the San Diego area. She is also director of the Biography and Social Arts program at Sunbridge Institute. The previous evening the conference had been treated to a eurythmy performance of the Grimms' fairy tale of "The Donkey." Patricia carried this theme forward into her talk, coming to the podium wearing a tail and donkey ears.

Patricia began by saying that she wanted to bring the donkey from the fairy tale along, a story used in biography work and also by Rudolf Steiner, because both he and the fairy tales let us know that this journey into the Consciousness Soul time is not easy—and it's not supposed to be. During the conference we had been reminded in workshops how to nourish ourselves with healthy lifestyles, and we need that, but the focus in this talk was on inner development, the way to nourish our life forces as adults.

Eastern philosophy speaks of three stages of life. The first twenty years are to learn, the next twenty are to struggle, and the third twenty years and beyond are for growing wise. Natural development only takes us so far. Inner development is a free deed that we can take up if we choose. But look how hard the young child works to learn to walk. We tell parents that children must struggle so they can

learn, and we adults have to struggle too. But don't forget the look of pure joy when they or we accomplish the task!

We are always looking to support the children in developing the lower senses—but we can't stop there. We have to take up the development of the higher senses within ourselves. The donkey gives us a picture of transforming the lower into the higher—even to the burning of the donkey skin that we hide within. And the King, though he orchestrates the burning, watches and waits and is interested.

The lower senses tell us about ourselves: touch, the life sense, self-movement, and balance. Then we go into the middle senses and experience the weaving of self and world. These are the senses of smell, taste, sight and warmth. The higher senses—hearing, word, thought and the I-sensing of the other—are the ones that tell us about the other human being.

Before we can develop these higher senses, we have to strengthen our own "I"-being. The hierarchies guide our growth in childhood and still carry us into our late twenties, but then we have to take up this work as our own developmental deed. Rudolf Steiner has given us a pathway to this development through the Six Basic Exercises (described in Chapter Five of *An Outline of Esoteric Science*, among other places). Through these exercises we can strengthen and gain mastery over our thinking,

willing, and feeling, but we must practice in our everyday lives.

As we strengthen our own “I,” we can cultivate these higher senses with our colleagues and in our work. We can find ways to bring social artistry to life. We can, with intention and with artistry, share our life stories and goals, our thoughts and feelings and deeds, in order to understand one another as we work with fairy tales, child development, the temperaments, and so on. How do these things relate to our own lives, our own experience? When we practice in this way with each other, people become more real to us, more three-dimensional. When we freely direct our attention and interest toward the other, we often find love arising. And as Steiner tells us, we are here to develop love and freedom.

Through this interest and sharing, the picture of the other that arises in us awakens a real feeling for karma. What do we have to do with each other? And how do we find out? If we wish to see what we have to offer one another and for what purpose we must do what is not easy in these egotistical times; we must truly listen with deep interest. This requires that we die to ourselves for a time—that we lay down our “own life” for another. This is one way to the Christ, as described by Rudolf Steiner.

We have in this a mysterious transformation of the lower senses. When we are in balance within ourselves, we can truly hear the other. Stilling our own sense of movement allows us to be inwardly moved by the words of another. If in our life sense, we are comfortable in our own skin, we can lay aside our own thoughts and opinions to truly perceive the

thoughts of another. And as we move beyond the need to defend our own standpoint and enter deeply into another, we can be touched by the “I – being” who stands behind the sound, the words, and the meanings we perceive.

We are building temples together through our human ties and connections. The natural world revives us now, but in the future we will need to find this revival with each other. We have all experienced how our life sense is nourished when we truly meet another. (And lord knows we have plenty of “meetings”! What if we used them as opportunities for this kind of meeting-encounter?)

Rudolf Steiner said, “The longing to be seen and heard in our full reality has arisen in every human soul since the beginning of this century and will grow increasingly urgent.” So if everyone longs to be seen and understood, who’s doing the seeing, hearing, and understanding? We have to take turns. We have to do this for each other, to offer our warm interest to one another. That’s what gives birth to this new faculty that wants to be born, the consciousness soul. When we meet eye-to-eye and “I”-to-“I” our sense of wellbeing, the sense of life, is nourished beyond measure.

The things done here on earth through love, friendship and the intimate understanding of one another; these are the building stones of temples being erected in the regions of spirit. For those convinced of this truth, it should be an uplifting feeling to know that the ties binding soul to soul are the basis for eternal being. —Rudolf Steiner ♦
