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## **RESPONSE TO VYGOTSKY'S THEORY OF COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT**

When Vygotsky uses the term *intrinsic forces*, I liken it to Piaget's stages of development. Therefore, when *intrinsic forces* deliver a child into a stage of readiness, a stage when he is curious about moderately novel events or elements in his environment, his *cognitive development* "requires the introduction of psychological tools the culture provides and expects the child to use." (Crain, p. 221)

When either the intrinsic or the cultural force is emphasized above the other, the education of the child can be ineffective. If we try to introduce an abstract concept to a child before he is ready to engage in abstract thinking, we will frustrate ourselves and the child. If, on the other hand, we find that the child is beginning to solve problems on her own, we might observe that the child has begun using one of society's tools, *speech*, as a way of working out the problems at hand. At first we hear them verbalize the process, and, finally, we can observe that this self-guiding speech has "gone underground," (Crain, p. 224) Vygotsky refers to the child's self-directed speech as *egocentric speech*. The child has learned to use it to solve problems, first, audibly, to himself, then, silently, around the age of eight. This inner speech is a marker on the trail towards higher problem-solving.

I can substitute the language of music (not in the sense of nouns and verbs, but in the sense of a medium of communication, with its own syntax) for the sign system of speech. Giving a child the means to make music, both vocally and instrumentally, and to be able to read and write the symbolic representation of that language, music notation, is the equivalent of equipping the child with yet another tool with which to make his way in society.

By using every means at our disposal as teachers, making available as many experiences in music as we can find or create, we are encouraging the intrinsic forces which direct the child. We

will find that, equipped with new skills and symbols and the confidence to use them, we can help them move more quickly, and happily, to a new stage of learning. Vygotsky tells us that cultural sign systems have a major impact on cognitive development. (Crain, p. 219)

I can liken the internalizing of egocentric speech to the concept of *audiation*, a theory devised by Edwin Gordon, whereby we go through stages of hearing and understanding music. This inner hearing of music at increasingly higher levels is a cognitive process which is only possible with a thorough understanding of music and all of its tools. This is an area in which the intrinsic force in the child, the curiosity and excitement about learning something new, and the teacher's ability to provide the child with the tools for working with music, can produce the kind of *transformation* that I think Vygotsky is talking about. The transformation in the child means that he can more fully participate in life, in culture, and in society.