



# An Education for Our Time

by

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In this article we investigate whether the first years at the Stuttgart Waldorf School can be seen as prototypical for the development of schools and teachers in general. It tries to establish whether we can benefit today from the events that took place in the six years between 1919 and 1925, while this first school was led by Rudolf Steiner. Can we find something archetypal in these events that could give direction to the development of teachers and schools in the 21st century?

## Sources

In order to be able to answer these questions, we need to consult the relevant sources, especially the lectures Rudolf Steiner gave to the teachers of the first Waldorf school. What interactions do we find concealed there? Today's readers of Steiner's lectures are used to looking for general information such as knowledge of the human being. The majority of lectures on education was given to a general audience, with only a few of them addressing the same group of specialists, i.e., the college of teachers of the first Steiner Waldorf School in Stuttgart. (In Steiner's times this consisted of 12 colleagues; by the beginning of class 6 the number had risen to 49). The following lectures were given to this relatively small group of people:

*Study of Man* (later published as *The Foundations of Human Experience*)

*Practical Advice to Teachers, Discussions with Teachers* (Stuttgart, 21 August–6 September 1919; CW 293, 294, 295)

*Balance in Teaching* (Stuttgart, 15–22 September 1920; CW 302a)

*Waldorf Education for Adolescents (Supplementary Course)*. (Stuttgart, 12–19 June 1921; CW 302)

*Adolescence – Ripe for What?* (Stuttgart, 21–22 June 1922; CW 302a)

*Art in the Light of Mystery Wisdom* (Two lectures, Stuttgart, 7 and 8 March 1923; CW 283)

*Deeper Insights into Education: The Waldorf Approach* (Stuttgart, 15 and 16 October 1923; CW 302a)

There are two other important volumes:

The 70 teachers' conferences with Rudolf Steiner: *Faculty Meetings with Rudolf Steiner* (CW 300 a-c)

Rudolf Steiner in the *Waldorf School—Lectures and Addresses to Children, Parents and Teachers*. This includes addresses at monthly school festivals, seasonal festivals and parent evenings.

The lectures mentioned were given to one and the same audience. We will now try to investigate how the lectures responded to the evolving situation at the school.

### **Stage 1: *The Study of Man***

After the opening address on the eve of the Teachers' Seminar where Steiner outlined the school's administrative set-up in a few sentences ('not bureaucratically, but collegially ... in a republican way. ... Each one of us must be completely responsible. We can create a replacement for the supervision of the School Board as we form this preparatory course and, through the work, receive what unifies the school'<sup>1</sup>), the first lecture was presented on the following morning.

With simple words, the significance and depth of which can be grasped only gradually, a link is established between a new education and human evolution. A connection is created to the spiritual world and to entities whose deepest concern is the development of human beings. Reference is made to the 15th century as the starting point of the development, the consequences of which we experience today. The concentration of intelligence on purely worldly aspects, which was necessary for human freedom to unfold, gave rise not only to science and technology, but also to materialism and egoism. '... all of modern culture, right into the spiritual areas, is based upon human self-interest.' It is pointed out that the religions tend to focus on the after-life as the time when everyone's future lies while forgetting about the time before birth. It is the teacher's task to explore the life before birth: 'Our form of educating can have the correct attitude only when we are aware that our work with young people is a continuation of what higher beings have done before birth.'<sup>2</sup>

How can this be achieved in practice? Think of a child study. The first step is the forming of a picture of the pupil as he or she appears in space and time. In order to understand this picture we have to go a step further. How did the pupil come to develop in this way? It is easy to find out as long as one avoids the

temptation of applying superficial psychology (which never leads to any insight or knowledge). We come to an understanding of the inner essence of a pupil if we ask how ether body and physical body, for instance, relate to one another, or how the soul (astral) works on the ‘learning body’ (ether body). How did spirit soul (or soul spirit) and life body find each other? What expresses itself in which way? We experience immediately, if we practice this way of asking questions, how we move in a realm of ‘pure air’ where we can sense the becoming and the essence of the human being. We begin to understand. Those of you who attempt this, when meditating on a pupil for example, know from experience that it works only if you manage not to put yourself into the foreground. You have to be open, without preconception; the ‘not I, but the pupil in me’ approach will allow you to develop a sense for the pre-earthly intentions through observing the pupils. If I manage to take hold of these intentions as ideas, I will be able to fuse them into an ideal. Pedagogical inspiration becomes possible, acting in harmony with what wants to come to life. It arises out of the interest in the pre-earthly aspects that reveal themselves in the different parts of the human organisation. (Steiner gave evidence of this capacity in the course of more than a hundred child studies.) It is easily forgotten that the understanding and anticipating of the pupils’ temperaments is also a way of overcoming ‘cultural egotism.’ The temperament says something about how the life before birth weaves into the life after birth. When studying the pupils’ temperaments the teacher has to hold his own temperament back and this allows him to build a bridge to the child, to the pupil. Then the child, the pupil, will come towards him.<sup>3</sup>

Let us turn to the end of *The Foundations of Human Experience (Study of Man)* and *Discussions with Teachers*. The last lecture deals with the surprising significance of the image, of speaking in images, of keeping the intellectual flexible. The importance of imagination is emphasized, especially on the threshold to adolescence (ages 12 to 15).<sup>4</sup> The process culminated on September 6 with the presentation of the seven virtues of the teacher—the first three at the end of the last lecture of *The Foundations of Human Experience (Study of Man)* —‘Imbue yourself with the power of imagination, have courage for the truth, sharpen your feeling for responsibility of soul,’ the remaining four at the end of *Discussions with Teachers*: ‘The teacher must be a man of initiative, a man of interest in the being of the whole world and of humanity, a man, who never makes a compromise in his heart and mind with what is untrue (especially in the way we present our subjects) and he must never get stale or grow sour.’

How does one deal with these virtues? The last four represent faculties of the temperaments; they are virtues that can be exercised in one’s daily work. Initiative: Shall I make the phone call tonight or wait until tomorrow? Interest: These parents are foreign to me, can I still summon up an interest in them? This colleague gets on my nerves, but that is interesting! This student walks in

such a strange way, as if the ground beneath him was hurting him. What does that indicate? Am I really interested in the lesson material that I have to present just now? Whether I have a strong or only a lukewarm interest in the subject matter affects the liveliness of my teaching. In the compromise: 'He must never compromise with untruth, for if he did so we should see how through many channels untruth would find its way into our teaching, especially in the way we present our subjects.'<sup>5</sup>

This is a direct reference to the teaching method and there are many channels open today through which untruth can creep into our teaching. Is it not much more practical to have an established method for teaching a foreign language? Should I not just use exercises from these excellent publications on basic maths, spelling, elementary physics? There are so many useful things. We could also call this the virtue of faithfulness. I am faithful to a method which I shape in the truest possible way while constantly renewing it to keep my teaching alive. Every adult has some melancholy which, depending on his overall temperament, struggles with staleness and sourness to a greater or lesser degree. From a certain age it is always lurking around the corner. Am I sufficiently aware of it? Observing each other's lessons is good prophylaxis. (Why do you work with the children in this way? Asking is appropriate, judging is not.) The first three virtues are of a different nature. They cannot be practiced in our day-to-day work. We all know it from experience: imagination, speaking in images, being inspired—this I cannot develop while standing in front of the class. If I have it, it is as a result of different processes. We are referring to ways of educating oneself. Acquiring knowledge of the human being in the three stages described by Steiner elsewhere is one path that leads to imagination, life and the 'profound power of ingenuity that you need when facing the child you are to educate.'<sup>6</sup>

Again and again, we are faced with the immensity of the opening words of *The Foundations of Human Experience (Study of Man)*. They resound as from other worlds: 'My dear friends, we can accomplish our work only if we do not see it as simply a matter of intellect or feeling, but, in the highest sense, as a moral spiritual task. Therefore, you will understand why, as we begin this work today, we first reflect on the connection we wish to create from the very beginning between our activity and the spiritual worlds.'

We ask ourselves whether the 'moral spiritual' is not the realm referred to as truth and responsibility in the first three virtues? For all that is spiritual surely is responsibility, all that is moral surely is rooted in truth. We see a gleam of the future of humankind: goodness, beauty, truth as in Goethe's Fairy Tale or as in the Christ words 'I am the way, the truth and the life.' 'Imbue yourself with the power of imagination' can be seen as the way in education, because Steiner once described education as a 'form of normal life.'<sup>7</sup> After presenting the last four virtues in the closing words to the fifteenth discussion with teachers, Steiner

added a more personal note: 'For me this Waldorf school will be a veritable child of concern.' He exhorted the teachers to work together and to live in awareness of 'the spiritual powers that guide the cosmos....they will inspire our lives.' Shortly before the first Waldorf school opened he asked the teachers to promise him to keep this awareness alive.<sup>8</sup> The classrooms were not ready yet when the school opened with a festive celebration on September 7. Lessons could only begin on 16 September, by which time Steiner had left for Berlin. During the first school year, Steiner had fourteen meetings with the teachers, and three more took place at the end of July 1920 in preparation for the second school year. The first school year started with 12 teachers, 8 classes and 256 students which means that the average class had 32 pupils and there was 1 teacher for every 21 students (today the ratio is on average 1:10). The second year started with 19 teachers, 11 classes and 420 pupils which means the average class had 38 pupils and the teacher-pupil ratio was 1:22. These numbers alone justify the expression 'child of concern.'

## **Stage 2**

Five days before the beginning of the second school year, Steiner gave four lectures to the teachers which were intended as a 'supplement' to the introductory lectures on education given in the previous year (*Study of Man*). The preparations for the second school year were so comprehensive, however, that he doubted whether he could manage more than 'scanty introductory words.' He wanted to speak about 'the teacher, the educator' and 'the nature of the esoteric.' The first lecture dealt with the 'condition of misery' in the education of the young which had arisen due to the fact that humankind 'in essential things really made itself dependent ... on the kind of thinking and feeling peculiar to the West.' Fichte, Herder, Goethe were no longer understood. What Herder and Fichte wanted, an art of education, had been turned into the opposite. Steiner offered examples for this view and concluded the lecture with the words: 'But with regard to what has to be given for the art of education, we have something to give the world from Central Europe which no one else can give.'

It hardly needs pointing out that he is not referring to geographical or national aspects, but to spiritual streams. To whom was Steiner saying this? He was addressing the college of teachers of the first Waldorf school, which had just completed the first school year with eight classes and had grown to 19 colleagues. Was it necessary to refer these individuals to the way Western man thought and felt? Did they no longer understand German Idealism? Did they of all people need to be told in depth that their success as educators depended on how much they themselves learned from their teaching? This 'inward humility' which grows out of the insight 'that the art of education must proceed from life and that it cannot proceed from abstract scientific thought.' Herder, Fichte, Jean Paul, Schiller represented 'a life-infused education,' 'a way of educating drawn

directly from life.’ Steiner called this the ‘Central European education impulse.’ References to it will ‘annoy’ the scientific thinkers.<sup>9</sup> This was the situation after one year of Waldorf education. Reading this in 2009 we know: it is still (and again) the main motif in the art of education. Probably due to the experiences of the first school year, Steiner urgently pleaded for a ‘new education appropriate to the time,’ an art of education drawn from life itself.

Today the phrase ‘art of education’ is still ruffling feathers. What were the consequences? In the lectures mentioned Steiner did not return to the seven virtues of the teacher, but spoke of three fundamental forces in teaching. If we bear in mind that the quality of an organism is determined by the sum total of forces that its members are able to summon up, we realize what Steiner achieved with lectures 2 and 3 of *Balance in Teaching*. He spoke to the teachers about reverence, enthusiasm and the protective gesture. Reverence for what the child brings with him from his life before birth, for what determines his existence. Enthusiasm for what the pupil can become in future with our help. Protectiveness to ensure that the pedagogic reality in the here and now remains appropriate to the child’s age. These forces or attitudes, by the way, go with at least two, if not all three, gestures that years later came to represent the higher schooling path of the Michael School.

What else did Steiner give the teachers with these few lectures? Next to the pedagogical contents he conveyed to them two ways of transforming their teaching by filling it with life inspired by the Central European spirit. He showed them how to realize their ‘power of ingenuity,’ i.e., their pedagogical imagination and intuition. The first can be practiced with the help of inner pictures; Steiner called them meditative images in this context. Intuition is practiced by following the digestive process that takes place after one has absorbed spiritual scientific content. The ‘vigorous power of ingenuity you need when facing the children you are educating’ is kindled if one develops mental images of how visual and auditory perception relate to one another in a crossing over process; how the audible is perceived in the will (or memory) region of the visible; how the visible is remembered in the perception region of the audible; how these two principles of time and space in fact form the human body. Such ‘pictures’ (or meditative images) can also be derived from the second lecture by considering the two streams: the sculptural and intellectual forces that come from the head or use it as transition and the musical forces that stream in from the outside world. The first work from the outside as attack and from the inside as defense. The latter where the attack comes as from inside are attenuated by music and speech instruction. Experience shows that such images, if they are again and again placed before the inner eye, strongly inspire the day-to-day work of the teacher.

The second important indication that Steiner gave to the teachers after their first year of teaching referred to the threefold approach to attaining knowledge of

the human being: studying contents, coming to understand what has been studied through meditation (calling up images again and again), ‘and finally we have a remembering of the knowledge of the human being out of the spirit. This means teaching creatively out of the spirit; the art of education comes about and takes form.’<sup>10</sup>

As the crowning we have the practical examples that illustrate how our teaching works on the relationship between the I and the body. What seemed like an abstract request the year before (‘the task of education conceived in the spiritual sense is to bring the soul-spirit into harmony with the life body’)<sup>11</sup> is now explained in detail: how this harmonizing of the upper and lower human being proceeds. How the I settles in the body without being ‘caught’ in it. It all depends on how elements of a sculptural, musical and intellectual nature and elements of memory and speech alternate within the lesson. The impact of the various subjects is also explained: whether they help the I to ‘settle’ or achieve the opposite. It is like the ultimate description of the artistic approach to teaching.

In summary we can say that Steiner obviously deemed it necessary in September 1920, after one year of Waldorf education, to confer with the teachers on the educational impulse that is drawn from life and not from science. The seven virtues of 1919 were extended by the three forces that relate to the pupils’ past, present and future. On the basis of this he used higher considerations regarding the human being to point out two possible paths, one of which is more inspirational (‘the vigorous power of ingenuity’) and the other more intuitive (‘teaching creatively out of the spirit’). At the end Steiner demonstrated the artistic approach to education and how it ‘regulates’ the relationship between the I and the body: the essential task of education. I would suggest that this was exactly what the teachers of the first Waldorf school needed after one year. It is what Steiner identified based on the experience of this first year.

We ask ourselves now: how is it with these qualities in 2011? Are they an inherent and identifying component of the Waldorf school? Are they cultivated in the right way in the teacher training seminars and in teachers’ meetings? Have we understood that this education has to be drawn from life, from the living experience of teaching rather than from imposed parameters of whatever description? These four lectures alone support what is said throughout the school movement, that if Steiner had to do it all over again, he would drastically change course and steer towards the artistic. We need not worry about the authenticity of this statement. It is the essence of these lectures.

### **Stage 3**

Another year later, eight days before the beginning of the third school year, Steiner gave eight lectures to the teachers (later published as *Waldorf Education for Adolescents*). Unlike those published in *Balance in Teaching*, these lectures

do not explicitly tie in with *The Foundations of Human Experience (Study of Man)*. By the beginning of this school year the school had almost doubled in size: 540 pupils in 15 classes (36 per class). The teacher-student ratio was 1:18. Steiner never complained about the fast growth despite the fact that the financial problems were enormous. Can we assume that the lectures on the *Meditatively Acquired Knowledge of the Human Being* (cf. *Balance in Teaching*) had made an impact on the individual teachers? Steiner began by looking back over the first two years and concluded: ‘In order to prevent a possible misunderstanding of what I am going to say today, I can assure you that I have noticed and appreciated the progress made during these two years. The way you are teaching—the presentation of subjects—is already such that it can be said: You have, in an extraordinarily healthy way, fused with the goals of these tasks.’ It sounds like a report for the teachers. The eight lectures embrace the richest content, always in keeping with *Practical Advice to Teachers* and with frequent excursions to the study of the human being. The sense of urgency that prevailed in *Balance in Teaching* has abated. The connection of memory and feeling, the work with children who have poor or rich imagination, with cosmic and earthly children – the teaching methods are extended. This culminates in Lecture 3 in which the three essential steps of teaching are explained that happen over a period of two (not three!!) days so that ‘the three parts of the threefold human being can interact, they are allowed to harmonize in the right way.’ The lectures that deal with adolescence, with the diverging male and female constitution, return to *The Foundations of Human Experience (Study of Man)*. The lectures are not just intellectually pleasing; Steiner, with his subtle sense of humor, again proved himself an expert on the adolescent soul. The presentation moves on to explain at a deeper level the ‘understanding of the world’ that is needed for teaching adolescents. The teacher needs to become a representative of the world. Those teachers who have nothing narrow-minded about them, represent the ‘wide world.’ The students begin to choose their authorities and develop their first life ideals inspired by the authenticity of their teachers. Here lies also the secret of a fruitful living together of different generations. The lectures end with the suggestion that one should feel as if the spirit disperses itself among the college of teachers like a living cloud, as if living spirits were called on to help to instill spirituality in the souls: a ‘prayer-like’ rising up to the spirit. ‘Life’ or vibrancy is a recurring motif. The conclusion is a parenthesis to the first lecture of *The Foundations of Human Experience (Study of Man)* which deals with the spiritual task of education. It returns in the form of a meditation:

We have the will to work, letting flow into our work, that which from out of the spiritual world, in soul and spirit, in life and body, strives to become human in us.



In *The Foundations of Human Experience* it was:

The task of education conceived in the spiritual sense is to bring the soul-spirit into harmony with the life body.

What is the difference? The ‘meditation’ focuses on the teacher himself: ‘strives to become human in us.’ Education is self-education. In summary: *The Supplementary Course* is in character closer to *Practical Advice to Teachers*, due to the fact that a tenth class was to start next to class 9. Detailed curriculum indications were developed in the teachers’ meetings. The lectures introduced three essentially new practical methods together with suggestions for their application: the cosmic and earthly orientation of the interest (the astral viewpoint), children with rich and poor imagination (which is more to do with the ability to remember, the etheric viewpoint) and the threefold approach to teaching (over two days) that applies to all lesson contents from the age when main lessons convey subject-matter as such. This is followed by an extended psychology of adolescence.<sup>12</sup> We can imagine that the teachers were delighted about these eight lectures. Not only was the review of the first two years extremely encouraging, the lectures also opened up an unclouded, widened horizon.

#### **Stage 4**

Steiner’s meetings with the teachers have so far not been considered in this paper. When I turn to them now it is with the inner conviction that it is high time that this treasure of 70 teachers’ meetings is published in scientific edition in order to throw light on the development of the art of education in practice. The teachers were not able to apply in practice the indications given in the *Supplementary Course*. At the end of the third school year the students of class 10 asked for a meeting with Rudolf Steiner. They complained about their teachers, about the ‘lecturing’ (we call it today ‘chalk and talk,’ frontal tuition with merely rhetorical questions), about the teachers’ lack of interest, about ‘not having learned anything.’ Steiner looked into the situation and, based on his findings, he arranged for a change of teachers for most of the main subjects, right at the beginning of the fourth school year for these students who were now class 11. ‘We did not consider enough what I said at the beginning of the school year with regard to these children.’

The teachers, in their turn, accused the students of showing a lack of will in their independent work. Steiner answered: ‘That is a problem that lies with the children, and that one we do not need to discuss. What is important now is how we cope with the children.’<sup>13</sup>

The situation continued, vehemently, into the following year. The students became morally neglected, got into trouble and some of them had to be asked to leave. Steiner could see no other way but to blame the state of affairs on the teachers: their lack of interest in the pupils, the absence of contact, the lecturing instead of teaching that had become the rule, the general sloppiness. Neither teachers nor students were fully engaged in the lessons. Social tensions made the situation worse when it was suggested that a small administrative circle should be established. Strong mutual distrust became apparent. The teachers' meetings as such were put into question. Steiner: 'I feel like I have contracted lockjaw from the bad attitude toward the meetings.'

Questions of discipline recurred because the teachers felt powerless. Steiner called on the foreign language teachers to work together and find a way of teaching the language instead of complaining to each other about the students' lack of understanding. The meeting of February 6, 1923, is recommended to all who wish to experience how dramatic a situation it was. (This is the meeting where Steiner spoke about large-headed and small-headed children; it is also the meeting where the failed grammar lesson is described and its effect on the threefoldness.)<sup>14</sup> In the third school year which had started so pleasantly only seven meetings with teachers took place. During the difficult fourth and fifth years Steiner made it possible to attend 15 meetings per year. In the autumn of 1923 a severe crisis loomed as teachers struggled under the pressure of the immense and partly new demands. Following a phone call Steiner managed to fit in a visit to the school. He spent October 15 and 16 in Stuttgart, giving three lectures and meeting with the teachers. The exhausted teaching staff heard lectures that belong to the most difficult of Steiner's presentations on education. As with the opening lecture in *Balance in Teaching*, the beginning was unexpected: Gymnast, rhetorician, professor have to undergo a metamorphosis. The weakness of the professor is described: 'Today we usually think because we do not know what else to do, and that is why we have so few real thoughts.'

The second and third lecture are given on October 16 with the teachers' meeting taking place in between.<sup>15</sup> What is the main theme of these presentations? As Steiner spoke about curative education for the first time on February 6, he explained the surprising difference between the healing processes in medicine and in education. They work at different levels. Totally new aspects arise with regard to the knowledge of the human being: 'There are the movements of walking, grasping, the movement of the limbs, outer changes of location, the activity in the process of nourishment, the rhythmic activity—which is through and through a healing activity—and the perceiving activity if we regard it from outside. Regarded from within, educational activity is entirely a perceiving activity.'

In short: all activities, apart from rhythmic ones, are adverse to health. Everything that is adverse to health has to be counteracted by the higher healing process, through education which is metamorphosed healing. 'The forces inherent in education are metamorphoses of therapeutic forces: They are therapeutic forces transformed. The goal of all our educational thinking must be to transform this thinking so as to rise fruitfully from the level of physical thinking to spiritual thinking.'

Steiner went on to describe a new way of judging that was not based on 'right' and 'wrong' or 'true' and 'false,' but on 'healthy' and 'ill.' This was followed by fundamental considerations regarding the effect of life-infused teaching on the child and the physiology of the will. This latter topic in particular has been worked through in depth over the years and Steiner's indications regarding the will have been fully confirmed by scientific research.

The third lecture concludes with a grim picture: Michael fighting with the dragon while a black veil covers the picture. 'Then one would realize that behind it there is something that must not be shown. ...' And the battle with the dragon that must not be shown is the battle with the dragon of the dead, of that which comes from the deadened knowledge of our times. 'There the dragon becomes especially horrible. One might almost say that the correct symbol for institutions of higher education today would be a thick black pall. ...'

'To live in the truth means to unite oneself with Michael. We must unite ourselves with Michael whenever we enter the classroom; only through this can we bring with us the necessary strength. Verily, Michael is strong.' The next morning Steiner gave the teachers 'a summary' of what had been said: the second teachers' meditation. Let us summarize again. The fourth and fifth school years were riddled with crises. In the upper school the connection with the students was lost, the teachers could not rise above lecturing and could not find a warm and interested approach to the students. Added to that was the deep lack of trust within the teaching faculty when a small administrative circle was about to be formed. Steiner helped as much as he could. (On average he was with the teachers once a month.) He tried to help with the (interposed) lectures later published as *Deeper Insights into Education* (in: *Balance in Teaching*). The second sentence of the first lecture is: 'After all, the fruitfulness of our activity in an institution like the Waldorf school depends ... on the ability of the teachers to develop the attitude that will enable them to carry through their work with assurance and be active in the right way. On this occasion, therefore, I would like to speak in a particular about the teachers themselves.'

Did he ask too much of the teachers? The lectures are not about pedagogical questions but about questions of life style, the overcoming of gymnast, rhetorician and professor who either only act, talk or think. All three have to fuse into one whose actions are imbued with life. The clear division between

therapeutic and pedagogical healing touches us. Why? Had it become a habit already to refer what could not be mastered pedagogically to medicine and psychology? The presentations on the physiology of the will relate to the teacher himself as well as to the effect it has on the children when the dual process is developed in the lesson:

‘Whenever we guide a child into some form of action while he is thinking, we call forth a state of balance between the formation of carbonic and cyanic acids. In human life everything actually depends upon symmetry being produced between these two things.’<sup>16</sup>

The great gestures all express the same: Dear teachers, take hold of these insights, use them to heal yourselves. Become alive and truthful in your doing. Gaining a personal relationship to the teaching content is part of the teacher’s self-education. If the subject matter undergoes a certain process in the soul, one inspires creativity of teaching in oneself. It is called the ‘immediate source of inspiration’ which allows the ‘right method to present itself.’ This description immediately preceded the veiled battle of Michael with the dragon. It referred to Steiner’s words about the sourness of the teacher in the classroom. It seems that these words were called for in October 1923. Steiner’s deeply felt pain was noticeable when he spoke of the criminal proceedings against Gandhi; although the British judge admired him greatly personally, he sentenced him to years of imprisonment. Why did Steiner bring this up here? Because it is a picture for the situation where the truth cannot create the right conditions for itself. The truth is that there is a new art of education. Can it create the necessary conditions for itself?<sup>17</sup>

### **Stage 5**

After October 1923 Steiner ceased to give lectures for the teachers only. Between the lectures of October 15 and 16 he also attended a teachers’ meeting which was devoted to the written notice given prematurely by a member of the administrative council (a kind of executive board) which had been so difficult to install. An inner opposition had been noticeable when teachers were appointed on 30 March 1923 and was apparent now again. On the outside, people acted according to the agreements, while inwardly rejecting them as well as the school’s director, Steiner himself: ‘The general opinion has been that I should select the teachers. We should continue with that, but now the problem is that although that opinion has not changed in fact, it has changed in feeling, in how we look at the situation. I may have to pose the question now of whether the faculty members want to select the teachers themselves.’<sup>18</sup> Steiner called it the ‘Stuttgart system.’ Many of Steiner’s suggestions came up against this kind of opposition, such as his ideas concerning more efficient foreign language teaching or the (initially) failing preparations for the final examination (*Abitur*).

Important indications for the now complete curriculum followed in the fifth and sixth school years. Form and content of the language lessons were revised, but the problems with the students reappeared. The teachers were unable to engage the students in a way that could bring about a fertile pedagogical relationship. The sixth school year brought more failings, which Steiner had to blame on the teachers. In the second but last conference he severely criticized the tiredness of the teachers in class. The ‘inner opposition’ became apparent in the fact that the lecturing, the academic teaching style, had increased rather than been reduced. The contact with the students was lost. ‘I have often mentioned it, but you have not really done much to relieve the situation. ...’<sup>19</sup>

Helplessness speaks out of these words. Again and again he mentioned the lack of interest (in the students) and of enthusiasm for the task in hand. One teacher asked whether the ‘Doctor’ could not help to establish contact with the pupils. Steiner had to repeat that it was a question of interest, of affinity with the students, of enthusiasm, and not of lectures. We can feel how he came to the conclusion: ‘I need to give things a new direction’ (July 15, 1924). The last recorded sentence of the last meeting with the teachers on September 3, 1924 is: ‘I want to give some lectures later in September or early October about the moral aspects of education and teaching.’ It was his last visit to the school.

### **Stage 6**

One often hears this sentence quoted out of context as if it were something that was still objectively missing from Steiner’s art of education guidelines. This is not the case. The sentence was spoken in a particular crisis situation at the school and referred to the pedagogical abilities of (mainly) the upper school teachers. ‘Moral’ means a personal relationship of the teachers towards the students that benefits the latter. Looking at the last meetings we must conclude that the school had not met the expectations of Steiner’s new educational paradigm. This comes to expression in a moving way in the farewell letter Steiner wrote to the teachers two weeks before his death.<sup>20</sup> The ‘child of concern’ to which Steiner had referred at the end of the teacher training course, in the last discussion with the teachers (‘For me this Waldorf School will be a veritable child of concern’), was mentioned again in this farewell letter, together with his urgently expressed hope that they should not let go of what they had built up together. If the college of teachers was united by the ‘active power of thought’ (which was not possible during Steiner’s lifetime), it could be done; what had been achieved so far would ‘strongly work among the teachers of this school.’ ‘The Waldorf school is truly a child needing special care, but above all, it is also a visible sign of the fruitfulness of anthroposophy within the spiritual life of mankind.’

If all teachers faithfully carry within their hearts the awareness of this fruitfulness, the Good Spirits, watching over this school, will be able to work actively; then divine spirit-power will prevail in all the deeds of the teachers.

The ‘Stuttgart-miracle’ Steiner had to say an outward farewell to the school because he had no ‘wings free to fly.’ But the school was in a dire situation: it was in danger of losing its identity. The words ‘I need to give things a new direction’ make sense only in this context.

Despite all these difficulties there were enough people in and around the school who carried within them the living impulse of the art of education. After Steiner’s death in March 1925, they were able to work on in his spirit so that the art of education could grow triumphantly all over the world. Not even the atrocities of the Nazi times could stifle this impulse. In Europe, in wide parts of the world, thousands have been inspired by this impulse to develop education out of the art of life. Wherever one is in the world, one has an immediate experience of the healing effect of education if it unites itself with life and allows itself to be nourished by it. If life is understood as the expression of spiritual processes, the art of education can bring about the healing and renewal of our cultural life. We can therefore say that what Steiner very critically referred to as the ‘Stuttgart system,’ namely the reluctance to comply with his suggestions, was turned into its opposite after his death and became the ‘Stuttgart miracle’: the educational impulse arose and came to life again.

This paper is also an attempt to show that the problems experienced during the first six years of the Waldorf school are essentially the same we face today, even though the circumstances are different. It also tries to show how Steiner, with his power of judgment, his advice and his unconditional loyalty to the impulse initiated by Emil Molt, tried to help. This can also give direction to us today. All that happened during those six years is archetypal and as valid today as it was then. Maybe it can be seen as a mirror for the school movement today.

## Endnotes

- 1 From Rudolf Steiner's opening address of August 20, 1919, the evening before the teacher training seminar began (first published as *Study of Man*, later as *The Foundations of Human Experience*, CW 293). Also in *Faculty Meetings with Rudolf Steiner* (CW 300a) and *Towards the Deepening of Waldorf Education*, Pedagogical Section.
- 2 Rudolf Steiner, *The Foundations of Human Experience* (CW 293), Lecture 1, August 21, 1919.
- 3 Rudolf Steiner, *Discussions with Teachers* (CW 295), Discussion 1, August 21, 1919.
- 4 Rudolf Steiner, *The Foundations of Human Experience* (CW 293), Lecture 14, September 5, 1919.
- 5 Rudolf Steiner, *Discussions with Teachers* (CW 295), Third lecture on the curriculum and closing words.
- 6 Rudolf Steiner, *Balance in Teaching* (CW 302a), Lecture 3, September 21, 1920.
- 7 *Ibid.*, Lecture 1, September 15, 1920.
- 8 Rudolf Steiner, *Discussions with Teachers* (CW 295), Closing words to discussion 15, September 6, 1919.
- 9 See note 7.
- 10 See note 6.
- 11 See note 2.
- 12 Rudolf Steiner, *Education for Adolescents* (CW 301), Lecture 1, 12 June 1921.
- 13 *Faculty Meetings with Rudolf Steiner* (CW 300b), 20 June 1922.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 6 February 1923.
- 15 Rudolf Steiner, *Deeper Insights into Education*. In: *Balance in Teaching* (CW 302a) and the corresponding meeting of October 16, 1923, in *Faculty Meetings with Rudolf Steiner* (CW 300c).
- 16 Rudolf Steiner, *Balance in Teaching* (CW 302a), Lecture 3.
- 17 See note 16.
- 18 *Faculty Meetings with Rudolf Steiner* (CW 300c), March 30, 1923.
- 19 *Ibid.*, July 15, 1924.
- 20 In *Towards the Deepening of Waldorf Education*, Pedagogical Section.