



THE WALDORF CLEARING HOUSE

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Notes from a curriculum
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THE WALDORF CLEARING HOUSE 17100 SUPERIOR STREET NORTHRIDGE CALIF. 91325

THREE LECTURES FOR TEACHERS
6 Sept. 1919

RUDOLF STEINER
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LECTURES ON THE CURRICULUM

Part I

My dear Friends,

Naturally there is much, very much that could still be brought forward in the way of general pedagogy, but a temporary conclusion must be found in these matters. This morning, in the time that remains to us, we shall lead over what has been said in the way of general pedagogy and didactics to a general treatment of what our aims are in teaching at each different stage; for we have sought to reach a point, at which we can consider the arranging of the teaching material in its relation to the developing human being. We shall bear in mind that the lesson is to be fashioned as far as possible, in the manner I have described, that mineralogy may lead over into geography and that history and geography can be linked with a cultural treatment of history and folk scharacterisation. While holding fast to the fact that actually one subject leads over into another, we will for once go through the material that has to be taught, dividing it into categories, and thus consider how it is to be brought to our pupils.

FIRST CLASS: Now the first thing we have to do when we get the children in the first class is to find suitable material for telling stories and having them retold. In this telling and retelling of fairy tales and sagas, but also stories of realistic happenings, we develop real SPEECH; we form a passage from dialect to cultured colloquial language. In seeing to it that the child speaks well, we are laying the foundation for correct WRITING. Running parallel with this telling and retelling of stories we introduce the child to a kind of language of Pictorial Forms. We let the child draw simple curved and angular forms, merely for the sake of the form, not copying anything external. To this simple DRAWING we shall add PAINTING, placing one colour by the side of another in such a way that the child experiences what it means to put red next to green, red next to yellow, etc. From this we shall lead on to WRITING in the way we considered in our didactic. It would be a natural sequence gradually to find the way from drawing of forms to the Latin letters. If we can take Latin letters first, we should certainly do so, leading these over later into German script. We next proceed with the PRINTED LETTERS, but only after the child has learnt the simple forms of the letters and has transformed these into real words that he can read and write. Also with the printed letters take Latin characters before the German ones.*

If we proceed rationally in these matters we shall bring it about in the first year that the child can put on paper in a simple way anything he may wish to, or words that are spoken to him, and he will also be able to read simple things. One need not be in the least concerned about the child reaching anything conclusive in this first year, - it would even be quite wrong for him to do so. The first year it is much more a question of bringing the child so far that he is not unfamiliar with print, and that he himself has the possibility of writing things down in a simple way. That, if I may say so, would be the ideal for teaching language and writing.

*Dr. Steiner refers to the old fashioned script which is no longer used in Germany.

This would be supported by what we are going to discuss: elasticity and flexibility for his speech organs will be gained in the SINGING LESSONS, and a finer sensibility for long and short sounds will arise by itself.

It is not necessary to plan to bring this about through music, provided the child is introduced to the music given out by the instrument in a way that stimulates his "hearing-understanding". To begin with this must be a simple "super-hearing" way, if I may coin such an expression, since one cannot say "lucid, clear (übersinnlich)". What I mean will be understood: "Superhearing (überhörlich)" is what is inwardly experienced as one amid the many, not taking things into us pell-mell.

To what has just been described must be added what can stimulate the child to reflection; you explain to him what lies near at hand and this will later be brought to him again arranged in an orderly way as Geography and Natural History. These subjects are brought close to his understanding by linking them to things familiar to him; plants, animals, configurations of the land, mountains and rivers. This is called in school "local knowledge" (HEIMATKUNDE), knowledge of the homeland. But the point is that we bring about a certain soul-awakening in the child just in this very first year of his school life; an awakening as regards his environment, so that he learns to connect himself with it.

SECOND CLASS: When the second school year is reached you continue with the telling of stories and having them retold and try to develop this further. The child will gradually be brought so far that he can write down what has been recounted to him. Then when he has been guided to write down what he has listened to, he can next be induced to reproduce, in quite small compositions, descriptions of what has been brought to his notice about the animals, plants, and woods in his neighbourhood. It is important not to touch upon grammar in the first school year, but in the second school year one should let the child know what a noun is, and adjective and a verb. This should be combined in a simple obvious way with a talk about the formation of sentences. What was begun in the first year in the way of descriptions should be continued.

THIRD SCHOOL YEAR: The third year will be essentially a continuation of the second, as regards SPEAKING, READING, WRITING and much besides. The capacity for writing down what has been seen and heard and read will be enlarged. One will, however, also attempt to bring out in the children a conscious feeling for short, long, lengthened sounds, etc. This feeling for articulation in speech, and speech construction altogether, is something that can be profitably dealt with between the ages of 8 and 9, when one has the child in the third class. The child is given then an idea of the parts of speech, the parts of a sentence and the structure of sentences; also the linking up of a sentence by punctuation.

FOURTH YEAR: The fourth year of school will again be a continuation of the third in respect of telling of stories and then retelling, and it will be good to see that in the treatment of short poems we let the children feel instinctively during their first two years at school, rhythm, rhyme and beat. Then in their third and fourth school years one helps them to feel the form and inner beauty of the poem. Afterwards one tries to lead

over what the child has learnt in the way of written narrative and written description to LETTER WRITING of all kinds.

It is just at this time that one endeavours to call up in the children a clear idea of the TENSES and all that comes to expression by changing the form of the verb. In this way the child is given just the ideas that it is good for him to grasp at this age (we are speaking about children of nine and ten years). A child must feel clearly that he cannot say "the man ran" when he means "the man has run"; that he does not confuse the Past Historic with the Imperfect or the Perfect; that he acquires a feeling for when he should say "The man stood" and when "the man has stood", and so with all things that come to expression by changing the form of the verb. We also try to stimulate an instinctive feeling for the connection, let us say, of a preposition with the noun before which it stands. We see to it that the child gets a feeling for how we say "in" in one case and "at" in another (German an and bei). Forming language plastically is what he should practice in his mother tongue when he is about ten years old. A feeling for the plastic forming of speech.

FIFTH SCHOOL YEAR: Now in the fifth school year it is a matter of recapitulating and continuing what we have fostered in the fourth year, and from this point on especially we take care to distinguish between the active and passive mood of the verb. Just at this time too we try to get the child, not merely to reproduce freely what he has seen and heard, but if possible to render it in direct speech, as though put in quotation marks. We try to give the child plenty of practice in distinguishing when he is giving his own opinions and when those of somebody else. The same with what he writes, one must try hard to awaken in the child a strong feeling for the difference that exists between what he himself thinks or has seen, etc., and what he communicates spoken by somebody else. In connection with this one tries again to improve punctuation. Letter writing is also developed further.

SIXTH SCHOOL YEAR: When we come to the sixth school year we naturally repeat and continue what we have been doing in the fifth year and we try to get the children to feel, as a matter of style, what the subjunctive mood is. We speak of these things, giving plenty of examples, so that the child learns to distinguish between what can be expressed as a direct affirmation and what needs to be expressed in the subjunctive mood. We give the child exercises in speaking where we pay strict attention to this and allow nothing to pass that is faulty as regards the employment of the subjunctive. For instance, when the child should say "Ich Sorge dafür, dass mein Schwesterchen laufen lerne" (I take care that my little sister may learn to walk) never let him say instead "Ich Sorge dafür, dass mein Schwesterchen laufen lernt" (I take care that my sister learns to walk), so that a strong sense of the plasticity of language flows into the feeling of speech.

At this time we let letter writing develop into simple straight forward business essays, in which actual themes are dealt with that are already familiar to the child from other sources. What one gives in the third class about meadow and wood can involve business considerations in such a way that it serves as material later for writing simple business letters.

SEVENTH SCHOOL YEAR: In the seventh school year one will have to follow up what was done in the sixth. One must try to develop in the child, in sentence building, a truly plastic capacity for giving expression to wish, wonder and surprise. The child should form sentences which really do bear an inner relationship to the form of the feeling itself. Nor does one go about it by taking an existing poem or something of the sort and misuses it, to show how someone or another has formed a wish-sentence. No, one tackles the matter directly by letting the child give expression to some wish and then form the sentence - or one lets the child express Wonder and form a sentence - or one helps the child to do so. Then by comparing the sentence expressing a wish with the one expressing Wonder, one brings to light the inner formative power in the language and develops it further.

What has been brought out in natural history will make it possible for the child to write simple essays descriptively, let us say, the Wolf, Lion, Bee, etc.

Parallel with what brings into the education something of a general human character, practical business affairs should be cultivated very particularly at this time. The teacher must take the trouble to find out what things are going on, and bring such ideas into the heads of the pupils in some reasonable form.

EIGHTH CLASS: In the Eighth class one will have to give the children a comprehensive understanding for lengthier poems and prose pieces; so one reads with them something dramatic or epic. Consideration must be given to what I have said about all explanations and interpretations preceding the reading, and that the actual reading is always the final conclusive act with regard to reading the material.

Particularly in the eighth class practical and commercial themes should not be excluded from the language lessons.

Latin: When the children are in the fourth class we shall include the Latin language for them in the syllabus. While we begin English and French with the children as soon as they enter the school, though in quite a simple way, we begin Latin with them in the fourth class. The children listen to begin with and reproduce as far as they are able. As soon as this has been developed a little they repeat short pieces.

The start is made from listening and speaking, and one tries to reach, through the spoken word, the stage that is usually set for the first year.

These Latin lessons will be conducted as indicated in the Didactic lectures and carried on, so that by the eighth class the standard of the "Tertia" is reached.

At the same time we continue with French and English, taking into consideration what has been said in the didactic part of these lectures, and we leave it free, in the sixth class, for those who will begin with the elements of Greek. Here we also follow the lines given under didactics, that is, we endeavour to employ once again the drawing forms for the upbuilding of the Greek letters. And it will be an extraordinary benefit for those who now will learn Greek, to repeat with another alphabet what they did at the very first, when they arrived at writing through the drawing of forms.

Lessons on everyday things: (Sachunterricht)

Now you see that you employ in a free way the material that you have gathered through describing the environment, for forming your lesson on practical occupations. The child of about nine in the third class can very well gain an idea through such a lesson - I can only give instances - of preparing mortar as it is employed in house-building. The child can also have an idea of how to mature and how to plough; what rye and wheat look like. In short, in a free way, you let the child enter into his surroundings as far as he can with understanding.

History:

Then in the Fourth class, from the lesson just described, a transition will be found - still in a very free way - to speak of historical occurrences in the near neighbourhood. For instance, one can relate, should it happen to fit into the facts, how the cultivation of grapes was introduced into the child's own bit of country, how fruit growing started, or this or that industry sprang up, and all such things. Thus, starting from what is near at hand - geography - as I have already described it to you.

In the Fifth class every effort will be made to make a beginning with actual historical ideas, and just at this time in the Fifth class there must be no faltering in getting the children to grasp ideas of the cultures of the oriental and Greek peoples. The reluctance to look back into ancient times has only grown up in present day man, and he has no capacity for applying the right ideas to what he sees when he looks back. A child between ten and eleven years can do this very well, that is, if one continually rouses his feelings in making him aware of all that can give him understanding for the Orientals and Greeks. At the same time one begins just in geography, as I have shown, to speak of the configuration of the land, of how this affects husbandry. All this is dealt with for a limited area near the child's home.

In the Sixth class the Greeks and Romans are reviewed historically and the after-effects of Greek and Roman history up to the beginning of the 15th century.

In geography what was done in the Fifth class is continued by dealing with other parts of the earth in a similar way. At the same time a transition is sought from the climatic conditions to astronomy (yesterday afternoon we brought forward some examples of this.)

In the Seventh class the main thing will be to make thoroughly comprehensible to the children what kind of life modern mankind evolved in the 15th century and to describe European and extra-European conditions up to the beginning of the 17th century. This is the all-important period on which one must lavish much care. It is even of greater importance than the period that follows.

Then in Geography one tries to carry on further with the facts relating to a knowledge of the heavens, and to make a beginning with the spiritual cultural relations of the inhabitants of the earth. But this should always be done in relation to knowledge of the material cultural conditions, gained in the first two years of geography, especially the economic conditions prevailing.

In the eighth class: one tries with the children to bring history up to present times, but in so doing, cultural history must be the main consideration through and through.

Most of that which still today forms the content of history will be merely mentioned in passing. It is much more important for the child to learn how the steam engine, the mechanical loom, etc., transformed the world, than that they should learn all too soon such incidents as the altering of the Emser telegram and such things.

Much still stands in our history books which is of the very least importance for the education of the child. And even Charles the Great and such historical personages should be treated quite casually.

What I said to you yesterday about the way one can help abstract ideas about time to become concrete, is right and can be done in various ways, and it is necessary that much, very much, shall be done.

Now I hardly need to tell you that with the teaching material of which we have spoken up to now, very many things will be developed through the child's consciousness - that spirit permeates everything in the world. That spirit lives in our speech; that spirit lives in what as geography covers the earth; that spirit lives in history. When we attempt to feel the living spirit in everything, we shall find the right enthusiasm for bringing this living spirit to our pupils. And then in the future we shall learn to make good, my dear friends, what has been sinned against by the religious confessions since the beginning of modern times. These religious confessions which have never provided for free human development has furthered materialism from many sides. When one may not use the collective world-material to show men that spirit works, then religious lessons become a breeding ground for materialism. Religious knowledge has taken upon itself the task of forbidding spirit and soul being spoken of in other lessons as it wished to preserve this as a privilege. Therefore Religious Knowledge has dried up the reality more and more, and what is brought forward in the religion lessons has as substance mere sentimental turns of speech and phrases. And what as mere phrase dominates the whole world today is in reality more closely connected with ecclesiastic than with worldly culture. For the emptiest phrases are made use of in religious instruction today, and these phrases, working in man's instinct are carried over into everyday life. Certainly external life also gives birth to much that is mere empty phrase, but religious knowledge sins most in this direction.

We shall see, my dear friends, how the first rubric - Religion which I do not touch upon at all in these talks as that will be the task of the Church communities - You will see how this will influence the other subjects in our Waldorf School teaching. The first rubric must be left an empty space. What comes under Religion Lesson will remain free. The religion lesson will just be handed over to the religion teacher. Here he is a free man. Here he does not listen to us, naturally, here he listens to the method or the official gazette of his Church, Council or Church School Committee.

We shall do our duty in this direction, but we shall also do it by charming spirit into all the other subjects taken with the children.