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To this edition

Dear colleagues,

welcome to the Michaelmas edition of our *Journal*.

Steiner Waldorf Education celebrates its 90th birthday this year. In 1919, lessons started at the *Freie Waldorfschule Uhlandshöhe* in Stuttgart after Emil Molt, owner of the Waldorf Astoria Cigarette Factory, had asked for a school where the children of his workers could be educated. Steiner responded to this call, assembled the first teachers and began to prepare them for their task. Our editorial by Christof Wiechert closely follows their progress from the beginning, from the first lectures to the teachers (published as *Study of Man*, later also as *The Foundations of Human Experience*), the opening of the school and Rudolf Steiner's visits and participation in teachers' meetings. The overarching question is whether the first years of the Stuttgart School can be seen as the archetype of the Waldorf school and whether the education is therefore time-appropriate. Looking in detail at the years when Steiner actively accompanied the development of the school is very interesting and much of it seems very familiar. The following articles round off the theme of time-appropriateness:

A report on the conference 'Laws of Development in Childhood and Adolescence' that took place after Easter, a contribution on collegial work supported by 'friends', a look at the new block training for class teachers in Kassel/Germany (only in German), impressions from the last meeting of the Hague Circle in The Hague, a report about a lecture given at the teachers' conference in South Africa and considerations about the Astronomy main lesson in class 7.

We hope that you enjoy reading the various contributions and that you find them of use for your own working and planning so that you can adjust them to your cultural and educational environment.

Our special thanks go to the many readers who supported us so generously with donations. We are particularly pleased about this as the money helps us to cover the costs for printing and distributing the *Journal*.

We wish all our readers a good Michaelmas period and much joy with their pupils.

With warmest regards

Pedagogical Section
translated by Margot M. Saar

An education for our time?

Abstract

This paper investigates 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 the 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 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, at 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:

- 7) The 70 teachers' conferences with Rudolf Steiner: *Faculty Meetings with Rudolf Steiner* (CW 300 a-c)
- 8) *Rudolf Steiner in the Waldorf School – Lectures and Addresses to Children, Parents and Teachers*. This includes addresses at monthly school festivals, seasonal festivals and parents' evenings.

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

The Study of Man – stage one

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'*)¹, the first lecture is presented on the following morning.

With simple words, the significance and depth of which can only be gradually grasped, 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 of which we experience the consequences today.

The concentration of intelligence on purely worldly aspects, which was necessary for human freedom to unfold, did not only give rise 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 where 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'*.²

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 ex-

1 From Rudolf Steiners opening address of 20 August 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, 21 August 1919

presses itself in which way? We experience immediately, if we practise 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 only works if you manage to not 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 gives evidence of this capacity in the course of more than 100 child studies).

It is easily forgotten that the understanding and anticipating of the pupils' temperaments is also a way of overcoming 'cultural egotism', because 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.³

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 (age 12 to 15).⁴

The process culminates on 6 September 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

3 Rudolf Steiner, *Discussions with Teachers* (CW 295), Discussion 1, 21 August 1919

4 Rudolf Steiner, *The Foundations of Human Experience* (CW 293), Lecture 14, 5 September 1919

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'*.⁵

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 practised 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'*.⁶

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'*.

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, 21 September 1920

‘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’*.⁷

After presenting the last four virtues in the closing words to the 15th discussion with teachers Steiner added on 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.⁸

The classrooms were not ready yet when the school opened with a festive celebration on 7 September. Lessons could therefore only begin on 16 September, by which time Rudolf Steiner had left for Berlin.

During the first school year Steiner had 14 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 one 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 about *‘the nature of the esoteric’*. The first lecture deals 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 Rudolf Steiner saying this?

7 Rudolf Steiner, *Balance in Teaching* (CW 302a), Lecture 1, 15 September 1920

8 Rudolf Steiner, *Discussions with Teachers* (CW 295), Closing words to discussion 15. 6 September 1919

He was addressing the first college of teachers of the 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.⁹

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, and 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 realise their *'power of ingenuity'*, i.e. their pedagogical imagination and intuition. The first can be practised with the help of inner pictures – Steiner called them meditative images in this context. Intuition is practised by following the digestive process that takes place after one has absorbed spiritual scientific contents.

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

9 see note 7

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 defence. 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 one 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.'*¹⁰

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'*)¹¹ is now explained in detail: how this harmonisation 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.

¹⁰ See note 6

¹¹ See note 2

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 years.

We ask ourselves now: how is it with these qualities in 2009? 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)*. At 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* abates. The connection of memory and feeling, the work with children who have a poor or rich imagination, with cosmic and earthly children – the teaching methods are extended. This culminates in lecture 3 where 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 humour, again proved himself an expert on the adoles-

cent 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 dispersed itself among the college of teachers like a living cloud, as if living spirits were called on to help to instil 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 mentioned introduce 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 three-fold 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.¹²

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.

12 Rudolf Steiner, *Education for Adolescents* (CW 301), Lecture 1, 12 June 1921

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'. Rudolf 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.'*¹³

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.'*¹³

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 6 February 1923 is recommended to all who wish to experience how dramatic a situation it was (this is the meeting where Rudolf 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.)¹⁴

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 15 and 16 October 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

13 *Faculty Meetings with Rudolf Steiner* (CW 300b), 20 June 1922

14 *Faculty Meetings with Rudolf Steiner* (CW 300b), 6 February 1923

Balance in Teaching the beginning is 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 16 October with the teachers' meeting taking place in between.¹⁵

What is the main theme of these presentations? As Steiner spoke about curative education for the first time on 6 February he surprisingly explained here the difference between the healing processes in medicine and in education. They work at a different level. 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 is covering 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.'

On the next morning Steiner gave the teachers 'a summary' of what had been said: the second teachers' meditation.

¹⁵ Rudolf Steiner, *Deeper Insights into Education*. In: *Balance in Teaching* (CW 302a) and meeting of 16 October 1923 in *Faculty Meetings with Rudolf Steiner* (CW 300c)

Let us summarize again. The fourth and fifth school years were riddled with crises. In the upper school the contact 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 lifestyle, 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.'*¹⁶

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 refers 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

16 Rudolf Steiner, *Balance in Teaching* (CW 302a), Lecture 3

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?¹⁷

Stage 5

After October 1923 Steiner ceased to give lectures for the teachers only. Between the lectures of 15 and 16 October 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.'*¹⁸ Steiner called it the 'Stuttgart system'. Many of Rudolf 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. ...'*¹⁹

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'* (15 July 1924). The last recorded sentence of the last meeting with the teachers on 3 September 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.

17 See note 16

18 *Faculty Meetings with Rudolf Steiner* (CW 300c), 30 March 1923

19 *Faculty Meetings with Rudolf Steiner* (CW 300c), 15 July 1924

Stage 6

One often hears this sentence quoted out of context as if it was 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.²⁰

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*' only make sense 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 process-

20 in '*Towards the Deepening of Waldorf Education*', Pedagogical Section

es, 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 had risen and come 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 are facing 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.

Christof Wiechert
translated by Margot M. Saar

Laws of Development in Childhood and Youth Education, Medicine and Anthroposophy in Dialogue

Report on the Congress from 14th-18th April at the Goetheanum in Dornach
By *Johannes Denger*

In the Darwin Year Dr. Michaela Gloeckler, head of the Medical Section, Christof Wiechert, head of the Pedagogical Section and Dr. Ruediger Grimm, Secretary of the Konferenz for Curative Education and Social Therapy wanted to call for a dialogue among representatives of education, medicine, developmental psychology and the anthroposophical understanding of man in the various specialist areas.

The contents of several significant contributions are to be briefly summarised here by way of example and then central questions of the dialogue are to be broached. Prof. Hans Georg Schlack from Bonn, specialising in neurological, developmental and social paediatrics, spoke first of all fundamentally about *Variability and Laws governing Development*. Developmental psychology has by and large said goodbye to the paradigm of developmental stages, a traditional hierarchical, deterministic concept of development. In the past a relatively strict canon of developmental tests determined whether the level of the child be-

ing tested is 'normal' or 'not normal'; people readily took deviations from the norm to be pathological. More recent research shows, on the other hand, that development takes a much more individual course than people had previously believed in that it is not an established programme and does not follow a general hierarchy. On the contrary, the individual variability is great. This realisation led to the 'normal range' being extended: 87% of children who learn to stand go a similar way, but the 13% who go a different way are not pathological, but individually different. The current variant-adaptive developmental model takes variability as a precondition of adaptability (so to speak, as if I were to spend my childhood in the polar region or in the desert...). The structure of the brain is formed through the interaction of innate qualities and environmental factors. Every child, from the moment of birth on, bears an active influence on its development, e.g. by selecting its sensory stimuli. Nonetheless, within the framework of these physiological variations there are significant sequences according to developmental laws, such as the three steps of recognising oneself as a person, naming oneself with one's first name and saying I to oneself.

The second contribution by Professor Schlack was entitled *Psychosocial Influences on Health and Development and their neurobiological Correlates*. The most recent research (e.g. the KIGGS- Study on Child and Adolescent Health in Germany with 18,000 participants from 1-18 years) shows a marked link between socio-economic status and intellectual development. This is held responsible for a difference in intelligence of up to 30 IQ points. The increase in the so-called social divide is leading to the result that with children from working-class families behavioural disturbances occur 3.5 times more frequently and eating disorders 1.7 times. The most recent salutogenesis research on childhood clearly shows up the immediate link between health and upbringing. Current health problems in childhood and adolescence are occurring more frequently in modern western civilisation and are leading to the so-called new morbidity: behavioural disturbances (e.g. aggressions) disturbances of functional development (speech, motor functions, learning achievement), obesity (among other eating disorders) and substance abuse (addiction) have grown to epidemic proportions in the last 20 years. The protective factors are personal, family and social ones. Among these is, for instance, the predictability of the person they relate to (security), whereby dependency can also lead to withdrawal symptoms. For the neuronal level of the mirror neurone the principle holds: use it or lose it.

In the subsequent panel discussion the question was raised about the consequences of this recent research for the curriculum that is based on development. Professor Schlack made it clear that it is not learning through instruction but learning with equipment and social learning that has to be taken into account. His first encounter with education in an anthroposophical direction was in curative education. Here he estimated that the (in this case, autistic) children are al-

lowed to be the way they are, that they are primarily not made subject to a normalisation programme, that the work (also emotional work) with the families plays a part and that the children learn through their relationship that has been built up with their teacher: “A child learns only from a teacher whom it likes”.

In his lecture *Pedagogical Anthropology in the Case of the Theory of the Senses* Professor Dr. Christian Rittelmeyer, a psychologist and educationalist, pointed out that every educational theory is based on a more or less conscious image of man (seen historically, for example, the changing picture of childhood in the Romantic Period, in the Enlightenment etc.). The predominant constructionism of our time leads (among other things) to arbitrariness and a feeling of insecurity in relation to educational practice. He demonstrated in a rough and ready overview that we can distinguish four different levels of developmental theory:

- Cognitive theories (functions and achievements in the gaining of knowledge; e.g. Piaget),
- psychoanalytic theories (psychodynamic problem constellations),
- Learning theories (learnt, conditioned behaviour),
- Biologically based theories (morphogenetic occurrences, maturation).

Now, this is really interesting because we are dealing with the levels a) of thinking, b) of feeling, c) of willing and d) of the body. Even if these theories cannot be mixed, are not compatible, it is still important that each of them represents an essential level of human nature! According to Rittelmeyer, the connection to the three-foldedness of the organism according to Rudolf Steiner is obvious in a) nerve-sense system (understanding: antipathy, waking), b) rhythmic system (feeling:sympathy-antipathy, dreaming) and c) metabolic-limb system (willing: sympathy, sleeping); this would now have to be developed scientifically. Rittelmeyer went on to explain his research into school buildings (the effect of the forms of buildings on the children’s development, for example, in the interplay of the sense of sight with the sense of movement), starting with Steiner’s theory of the senses, his research is backed up by manifold experiments with (computer) apparatus, partly developed by himself.

Professor Dr. Wolfgang Schad, the evolutionary biologist, spoke about *The Ontogenesis of the Human Being before Birth*. With the still quite young science of embryology the connection of peripheral and central developmental gestures in the formation of the placenta and the embryo became clear. Thus, in the first three weeks the peripheral human being is developed, whereas from the fourth week the central aspect increasingly commands the main focus. At birth a part of the human being gets lost (placenta), which is the reason we experience ourselves as a fragment our whole life through. I need the you, the friend, the woman, the community as a complement. Schad described the placenta as the

great role model for all educators: it prepares the development of the human being, provides for him, sets off the birth and then steps back!

Professor Heiner Ulrich, educationalist, spoke about *Current Scientific Discourse on Childhood*. He began 24 years ago as a critic of Waldorf schools (doctorate on Waldorf education from Heidelberg). Even if his relationship to it may have developed and changed in the course of the years of discussions, he started off with the motto, “I want to unsettle you about the nature and development of the child”. Among other things he developed two theses: 1. No meaningful pedagogical course of action can be derived from experimental research (e.g. brain physiology). 2. The discovery of childhood in historically changing phenomena is a social construction. In post-modern pluralism there is no longer childhood *as such*, but different patterns of being a child. In Ulrich’s view Waldorf education is made use of primarily by a social class, the so-called post-materialistic bourgeoisie.

Professor Dr. J. Schieren of the Alanus-University gave a lecture on *Epistemological Aspects concerning the Development of the Maturity of Judgement in Adolescence*. His starting point was a quote from Rudolf Steiner, “The greatest thing that we can prepare with the developing human being, with the child, is that it comes at the right moment to an experience of freedom through an understanding of itself ...”. The most decisive pedagogical goal of education for freedom is that the young person arrives at as far-reaching an understanding of him- or herself as possible. Taking themes of Upper School lessons as examples Schieren showed that through the content as well as the teaching method the work is focused mainly on freedom in feeling in class 9, freedom in thinking in class 10 and freedom in willing in class 11. He endeavoured to connect these three aspects, by way of example, using scientific concepts, with current developmental research.

The question whether there is a definite concept of science at all was discussed in several panel debates. Whereas Schad argued that, at the end of the day, scientists are unable to agree about what constitutes ‘scientific’, Rittelmeyer formulated three criteria, to which he ascribed a general validity: 1. Knowledge: acquainting oneself with the subject. 2. Transparency: making your own approach transparent for others. 3. Argumentation: being able to convince through argument. In this respect, Professor Dr. K. Granitschnig made a brief epistemological contribution with the help of the relationship of object-determined, object-determining, and subject-determined, subject-determining, a distinction as it was developed by Fichte in his second lecture in 1804. Also Professor Dr. Dirk Randoll and Professor Dr. Bernhard Schmalenbach, both from the Alanus University, contributed short papers in plenary sessions. Schmalenbach presented a Leonardo Project which had been launched in the curative/social-therapeutic

area. The three-fold approach in the training, that is, theoretical knowledge, art and practical work, put on an equal footing, and the mutual osmosis of these three areas was portrayed as an impressive example of an original research approach into human nature on the basis of best practice contributions from various European training centres. The content of Randall's paper related to the parallels between historical and individual development from the perspective of more recent developmental psychology and findings from cultural anthropology. Waldorf education is the only kind of education that takes account of this in its curriculum. His intention was to examine this 'theory' not in relation to Steiner, but from the view point of modern science. This involved referring to Jean Gebser, Juergen Habermas, Ken Wilber, Jean Piaget and various other developmental psychologists.

Under the title *Future Tasks of Anthroposophical Training Centres* Dr. M. Basfeld produced a synopsis of the questions arising so far concerning the scientific nature of the anthroposophical view of man and how it can be related to other scientific disciplines. The lecture cycle 'Study of Man' by Rudolf Steiner does not contain any academic lectures, but is the foundation of a cultural impulse, which then requires educational theory to be worked through scientifically. As the previous contributions have made it clear, we cannot derive what we ought to do from what there is. Rather this step is based on a resolution of the will, which appears as moral intuition, which is led by moral imagination to practical ideas and by moral technique to actions (see 'The Philosophy of Freedom'). Accordingly, research is always bringing about reality, not just establishing what it is. The problem of dialogue is thus a general one in science. It has an aggravating effect on dialogue, if the decisions, will-directed, made prior to yourself and/or others are not discovered. It would contribute to a better understanding, if we would create reality in a joint research process with other researchers! Research as a practising ground for collegiality is also the secret for forming a good college group, because in this way the various will directions are pulled together to bring about a strengthening of the will. Training should always take place in such an environment and thus shape individuality and character through a smelting process.

In a final contribution with the title *The Thought of Development in Curative Education and Social Therapy*, Professor Dr. Ruediger Grimm led the question, by way of example, once again into a concrete specialist area. Curative education has it easy, on the one hand, because it can reckon with the 'bonus of compassion', on the other hand, it has it hard because of problems of positioning and classification. In the last 15 years in our area one or two doctoral theses have been written. Increasingly bound up with other support measures in society as our movement is, it throws up heterogeneous tendencies running between fundamentalism and conformity. Thereby, old certainties are shattered and lead to

the question that is experienced as completely existential: what ground are we standing on? Using the example of the magazine 'Ohrenkuss', which is written chiefly by people with Down's Syndrome, Grimm showed that, more and more, people are speaking for themselves. The term 'disability' (the stronger term 'handicap' in the German), which is constantly in flux, is *the* agonising question of the profession today. From the principle of normalisation and mainstreaming right through to integration and inclusion the image of the person with a disability is developing in an amazingly dynamic way. The *ability* to develop has become the fundamental motif of curative education. On the one hand, 'handicap' is nowadays seen as a social construction; it is a question of creating social communities that mitigate the handicap or disability (such as, for instance, in Camphill communities) and then, reaching out beyond the community, make people's participation in society possible. On the other hand, a handicap appears as an individual constitutional problem. Then, Grimm developed three polarities against the background of the *Curative Education Course* with newly created terminology. Whereas Paul Moor pointed out, "Curative education is education – and nothing else!", in the present day, the converse counts more and more: education is curative education – or it actually should be.

In the final panel discussion Dr. Michaela Gloeckler summarised the criteria which were to be gained from this conference: finding our own position individually and locally, holding together with others, standing up for the cause.

Johannes Denger
translated by John Weedon

Midwives of the Self

Meeting the challenges of modern life

(a lecture given by Norman Skillen at the South African Teachers' Conference in Durban, April, 2009)

In a lecture Christof Wiechert gave two days before this one he spoke of our need as teachers to develop an ability to read the “gestures” of young people; in other words, to school ourselves in being able to recognise what the gestures and movements typical of a particular child or student say about that child’s inner being. To put it in my own terms, this means that we must have nurtured in ourselves a *feeling for form* – in the patterns of human behaviour and of nature.

Having a highly developed feeling for form – which could also be characterised as an ability to use imagination to penetrate the realm of becoming – is not only pedagogically important; it is also one of the most important contributions we can make to the direction evolution will take. In striving to achieve this, therefore, we are not just attempting to be good Waldorf teachers, but are at the same time co-creators in evolution.

Christof Wiechert described the pedagogical use of this sensibility as a kind of practical intuition, and in thus bringing it into our teaching we will also, of course, be sowing the seeds of its future development in our pupils. In the face of the challenges to human integrity which are gathering around us, the value of such a developed sensibility cannot be over-estimated. Without it we will be at the mercy of any technological wind that blows. There are considerable storms building up, but before I come to them I need to set them in their historical context.

The currents in modern thinking are manifold, but I want to focus on what I would regard as two of the main ones. Of these two strains of thinking one has been fighting a rearguard, underground action for quite some time, while the other has been the dominant strain; indeed, it has completely overshadowed its underground counterpart (but perhaps not for much longer).

To begin with the “rearguard strain”. Recently in the prestigious journal *Science*¹ there was a paper describing long-term experiments done on the ecology of the savannah in Kenya. A large area of vegetation was cordoned off in order to study what would happen to it when large herbivores, especially the foliage-eating giraffes, were denied access. What was discovered was remarkable. The symbiotic relationship between the acacia trees and a particular species of ant started to break down, and before long more aggressive ant species had moved in, followed by bark-boring beetles, with the result that the vegetation’s powers of regeneration were severely curtailed. Acacia trees, it would appear, need to be eaten by giraffes. This was such a startling example of co-evolutionary mutualism that, in the absence of a “mechanism” to explain it, the researchers found

1 Palmer, Todd et al., *Science* 319 (5871), 1759d.

themselves invoking the great ecologist Clements' idea of the ecosystem as a super-organism. This was, in fact, the original form of the ecosystem concept, put forward by Clements² in 1935. Indeed, around this time there seems to have been a lot of holistic thinking going on. It was the great South African statesman, Jan Smuts, who in 1924 actually coined the term *holism*³. His work, and that of the fathers of modern ecology, such as Clements, set in motion what I am here making bold to call the "imaginative-intuitive" or holistic strain in modern thinking. While those pursuing this line have generally not gone as far as Goethe in regarding the imagination as a tool of knowledge, they have certainly not rejected what imagination, used as such, discovers: namely, super-ordinate organising principles at work in nature. With their strong sense of such dimensions they have formed a kind of "resistance movement". Since the 1960's this strain of thinking has been gaining momentum with names such as David Bohm, Gregory Bateson, James Lovelock, Rupert Sheldrake and many others, and currently seems poised to grow even stronger.

Before coming to the other strain of modern thinking, I would briefly like to continue the giraffe theme. If we consider figure one⁴, it will appear at first as a conglomeration of black splodges. If we continue to look, at some point the



Fig. 1

2 The original paper was published in *The Journal of Ecology*.

3 Smuts, J. C. "Holism and Evolution" 1924 (N & S Press, Cape Town, 1987)

4 This figure is taken from "The Wholeness of Nature" by Henri Bortoft (Florin 1996)

splodges will “organise themselves” into an image – that of the head and neck of a giraffe. Once it has appeared, it is no longer possible not to see it. If we now ask ourselves: “Where is the giraffe?” – only a little reflection is necessary to convince us that what we have here is a cognitive or conceptual giraffe. Since nothing has changed in the black splodges, the giraffe gestalt has appeared through the action of a conceptual organising principle that lives in our perception. The giraffe is a property of our imagination (or cognitive perception), which thus “makes” what we see. Further reflection reveals the fact that perception of *any* phenomenon must have this imaginative or participatory quality. In other words, through the action of imagination in our perception we are radically connected to the world, whether we are conscious of this or not. This basic nature of our perceptual relation to the world (which is itself an outcome of the evolution of consciousness) fits very well when the “object” of our attention is a “super-organism”, but it is liable to be forgotten if we are focusing on causal mechanisms.

Thus it is that the other main strain of modern thinking, while paying lip-service to the mind’s contribution to perception, resolutely ignores this fact in practice, preferring to distrust the senses and adhere to a rigid principle of objectivity. This is the analytical strain of mechanistic materialism. The Great Ancestors of this line (we are, after all, in Africa!) are Galileo, Newton, Descartes etc., and their atomistic, reductionist sensibility was the main influence on Darwin when he came to formulate his theory of evolution. It was Nietzsche’s encounter (through Haeckel) with the wider implications of this formulation that led him to proclaim the death of God at the end of the 19th century. The same analytical path was relentlessly pursued in the 20th century, culminating in the gene-centred theory of evolution with its militant atheist apologists (Dawkins, Dennett etc.). With the discovery of the structure of DNA in the 1950’s it did indeed seem for a while as if the atomists, through their strict scientific rigorousness, had uncovered the secret of life. But then in the last decades of the century something remarkable happened. In the attempt to push analysis to its ultimate goal of full, atomistic knowledge of the human genetic make-up, it was as if the bottom fell out of the whole enterprise. The Human Genome Project, rather than delivering this ultimate knowledge of genetic mechanisms, exposed untold complexities in the genetic process; so complex as to call into question the very identity of the gene, and, even more alarming, to *implicate the organism* in the regulation of genetic processes. This has led Craig Holdrege⁵ to proclaim that “the simple deterministic gene, the foundational ‘atom’ of biology, is dead.” How strange and how wonderful that the century that began with the death of God should end with the death of the gene! (The gene, of course, is not going to lie down as easily as that, but the writing is on the wall.) What we are witnessing in this is the potential “rebirth of the organism”. It would seem that the rear-

5 In “Beyond Biotechnology” (2008)

guard resistance, who spoke of super-ordinate organising principles and of the human imagination's ability to mediate direct experience of their activity, have been right all along.

If we characterise the analytical path – which is the main tradition of the Western mind – as the consciousness soul's descent into matter, then the problematical outcome of the Human Genome Project must be regarded as a significant low-point. From here we either begin the construction of a new organicism (and there are signs that this is happening), or we continue on downwards.

From this second possibility will come, indeed, are coming the challenges of which I spoke earlier. Since pursuing this path involves full commitment to the idea that all organisms, including ourselves, are machines, it seems to require a peculiar kind of self-deception. By way of illustration, consider the following from Steven Pinker's book⁶ "How the Mind Works". On page 43 he asks: "Was the human mind ultimately designed to create beauty? To discover truth? To love and to work? To harmonise with other human beings and with nature?" And straightway he continues: "The logic of natural selection gives the answer. The ultimate goal that the mind was designed to maintain is maximizing the number of copies of the genes that created it." Possibly realising that it might be rather alarming for his readers to have beauty, truth and goodness so glibly dispensed with in favour of a purely mechanical process, he later goes on: "Contrary to popular belief, the gene-centred theory of evolution does not imply that the point of all human striving is to spread our genes People don't selfishly spread their genes, genes selfishly spread themselves. They do it by the way they build our brains. By making us enjoy life, health, sex, friends and children the genes buy a lottery ticket for representation in the next generation Our goals are sub-goals of the ultimate goal of the genes, replicating themselves. But the two are different. As far as *we* are concerned, our goals, conscious or unconscious, are not about genes at all, but about health and lovers, children and friends."

This is pure doublethink. We're really genetic machines, but we are protected from this knowledge because we are so involved in the pursuit of happiness! What a splendidly American solution to the riddle of existence! And isn't it kind of natural selection to hide the nasty truth from us by clothing the world in beauty, love and friendship!

Are such cute rationalisations of the terror of our situation enough to protect us from the depredations and technological consequences of mechanistic thinking? I rather think not. What are these challenges?

Well, we are very familiar with the deleterious effects of television, of the possibility of addiction to computer games etc. But the possibilities now emerging go much further than this. Much of the research behind these developments is being driven by funding from military sources. It involves a world-wide coalescence of

6 Penguin 1997

four areas which are at the cutting edge of mechanistic thinking: the fields of robotics, artificial life (A-life, as it is known), nanotechnology and biotechnology. On the one hand, the aim is to produce machines which closely mimic living organisms; in other words, they are mechanistic caricatures of the organic – a sort of negative organicism. The US Army, for instance, is already testing artificial insects that can be used as reconnaissance or surveillance devices. Robot tracker-dogs and front-line soldiers are also being developed. It may also soon be possible to construct devices the size of bacteria which, like their organic counterparts, can mobilise the resources for their own manufacture and so reproduce themselves. There is a new discipline known as haptics, which is a branch of “psycho-physics”. It is developing software that enables *touch at a distance*. While this is being used already for worthy purposes such as training surgeons using “virtual” rather than real patients, the prospects of its commercial use on the internet are rather alarming to contemplate. It will add a tactile element to the realm of cyber-sex. On the same tack, life-like human robots, programmed to be “emotionally responsive”, are being seriously considered as sexual partners.

In addition to such life-simulating technologies, there is, on the other hand, a strong tendency towards merging advanced computer technology with human subjects, thus creating semi-robotic hybrids with supposedly enhanced intelligence. In all the literature one reads about this there is no question but that the simulation processes going on in the machines are essentially the same as those going on in the human subjects they are to merge with. If one takes the mechanistic view of things, indeed, there can be no possible objection to such procedures, since we are merging like with like. Progress here can only be impeded by scruples about the organic. It is entirely as Daniel Dennett⁷ says: “If we are to make any progress in artificial intelligence, we must lose our awe of living things”.

All these developments are a logical, and therefore inevitable outcome of the way the history of consciousness has unfolded in the West – they are on the main line, so to speak. I have tried to show how this main line has recently reached – or is now at – a major turning point. The new organicism is evident in new attitudes to technology, to food, to the natural world, and in scientific voices raised in criticism of the main line. Many biologists, for instance, do not agree with James Watson that we have a right to tinker with the germ-line. Other voices have been raised against cloning, and against the patenting of living organisms by biotech companies. Even the nanotechnologists themselves are aware of how dangerous their science might be. Nevertheless, the mental and financial investment in the main line is considerable, and so many of these mechanistic possibilities are sure to be realised. What are we, as teachers, to do in the face of such challenges? Are we already doing it?

Since these new technologies are expressions of tendencies that have been inherent in Western thinking for a long time, there is, in a sense, nothing new

⁷ Quoted in “Pulse” by Robert Frenay (New York, 2006)

about them. It would be a mistake, therefore, to think that we must re-design ourselves in order to meet them. Since its inception, it has been the essence of Waldorf education to be the midwife of the modern Self. Waldorf schools have been, and are in the business of nurturing in their students a highly developed sense of individual integrity, and since this, more than anything, is the living refutation of mechanistic thinking, there is no immediate need to re-invent ourselves. We must simply be well-informed about the challenges, and aware of the pedagogical effects of what we do. This is where, from day to day, our intuitive feeling for form – in the way we structure lessons, “read” our students and choose material – is of supreme importance. An essential aspect of this overall sensibility is the realisation that being imaginative does not necessarily mean constantly finding something new. The tried and tested may well be exactly what is required. For instance, nothing in my experience has ever led me to doubt that the Parzival story is the right material for class 11 – even at the very tip of Africa. Having accepted this, however, the big question is: what do I do with it? This is where the work of imagination comes in. As Christof Wiechert so aptly said: “I renew a given context – that is Waldorf education”.

As a fairly graphic example of what I mean by an educational process that nurtures individual integrity, thereby creating resilience to the challenges of modern culture, I would like to attempt to reconstruct a lesson I gave recently in the context of the Parzival main lesson. Our school has what is by now a traditional approach to Parzival. Much of the work on the story is not done in the classroom, but in the context of a 5/6-day journey – from Cape Point to Table Mountain (mostly on foot) – in the course of which the story is told (rather than read). This basic idea has remained the same for the past ten years and, for this reason, renewing the Parzival context every year is quite a challenge to the imagination. This year there were two weeks of preparation before the journey, and one of these mornings was devoted to a particular aspect of journal writing (one of the main tasks on the journey is to keep a journal). This lesson had actually started two days previously, but the class did not know this. All they knew was that they had been sent outside for 15 minutes to sit by themselves (practising “quiet time”), and that during that time alone they had had to make a list of sense impressions. This involved simply naming them: a shuffle of feet, the sighing of the wind, a screech of brakes etc., etc. By the time the lesson here under consideration arrived many of the class would have forgotten about the sense impressions exercise – which is all to the good. Now they found themselves confronted by a large, projected image of the “giraffe” we considered previously. Once they could all see it, the same question was asked: Where is the giraffe? After a short discussion we arrived at the conclusion that we are connected to the world, although we are normally unaware of it.

Then came the (apparently) completely unrelated question: can you be in love with a forest? (It will become apparent later why the question was framed like this.) Feelings were mixed about this, even after I had shared my experience of

and admiration for a small indigenous forest that exists in a valley near my house. Discussion about why we go to such places led quite naturally to the next phenomenon in the sequence. I spoke about sitting on the mountainside, again at a place quite close to my house, and letting my gaze sweep from the urban settlements in the valley up to the wilderness on the mountainside. It did not take long to make the class understand that here you not only have a spectrum in space – from built-up to wild; but also in time – from modern to very ancient (or some kind of special eternal present – I remember getting quite poetic about this!) Thus, when you go up the mountain into that landscape you are, in a sense, going back in time – towards the time of the beginnings, when we may well have been much closer to nature than we are now. The problem is, however, that when we get into that wild landscape (which is where the Parzival journey would soon be taking us) we bring the consciousness from *the other end* of the spectrum with us. What might the consciousness at the wild end be like?

This led on to the next image, which was one from the Parzival story itself. I am referring to the episode of the three drops of blood on the snow. Parzival sees in them the image (“symbol” is probably not too strong a word here) of his wife, and, transfixed by the image, goes into a trance. Wolfram describes him as being in thrall to Lady Love. In this state he has become so immersed in the sensory phenomenon that he has lost all distinction between the inside and the outside, so unified with the world (remember the giraffe?) that he has “lost his senses”. When he is disturbed sufficiently to “return to his senses” (although in doing so he has lost connection to the three drops of blood), Wolfram describes this as Lady Reason re-asserting herself.

The class all agreed that the Lady Love state is the one closer to the “time of the beginnings”, and that it is in fact this kind of communion we are seeking when we go into wild places. The trouble is – and now we were at last getting to the point of the lesson – that to write journal entries about such “Lady Love” experiences you need “Lady Reason”! In other words, you need to have disengaged yourself and returned to the consciousness of the other end of the spectrum! There is no easy way to do this. But it is good to be aware of the problem. As a possible way of bringing Lady Love and Lady Reason together, I then suggested the following⁸: “Take out your list of sense impressions.” “What list of sense impressions?” “The one you did on Tuesday.” “Oh yeah, that thing” “Yes, ‘that thing’. Now, write the words ‘I am’ in front of each one.” Sounds of “Jeez, bru, that’s weird!” and “Wow, that’s sooo cool!” were heard on all sides.

The reason for these various expressions of surprise was that the class had just been brought face to face with something that is manifestly true. Class 11 students are still far from realising the full implications of what we learn from the giraffe exercise and this “I am” exercise, but at least they may in this way have

8 This is the last stage of an exercise I learned from Paul Matthews. It is described, along with several hundred others, in his book “Sing me the Creation” (Hawthorne Press).

been alerted to some of them. And when such an experience in class 11 links up with the many others through the course of an individual school career that have contributed to the midwifery of the Self, then the birth, when it comes, is likely to produce the desired result – human beings with a sound sense of the reality of their own individual selfhood. Such individuals are unlikely to allow themselves to be treated as machines, much less turned into one. They will also be in a position, like their teachers before them, to be authentic co-creators in evolution.

About a week after the lesson described, the students were asked, during the journey, to use one of their quiet times to repeat the “I am” exercise, and to use two of the resulting images as starting points for poems about two of the characters in the Parzival story. Here, to finish, are two of the results:

*I am the lone hooves of a horse on dark silent soil
I am that which cannot be
I am that which cannot be me
I am the bird that soars the skies of solitude
I am the blood that looks out of my heart and into the black hole of life
I am the luminous snow of wonder that embodies me so*

*I am the silent whisper of the tree's leaves
I am the ant that tramples men
I am the other half of ideal beauty*

*I am the moon that whispers silent nothings into a blue sky at noon
I am the sun that shoots beaming rays of bewildering yellow
I am the opposite of green on a colour wheel that spins in a particular direction
I am a night*

I am Parzival

*I am
I am innocence
I am a busy world demanding
I am an innocent plea for salvation
I am a world wherein I find a hold
I am light on the face of reality
I am a sense of myself within myself
I am a work in progress
I am a freedom of thought, feeling, action
I am myself
I am*

Norman Skillen

The Stars as a Means of Orientation and Inner Support

Class seven pupils would like to encounter new things, like the discoverers who set off for unknown territories. They want to get to know the constellations in the astronomy main lesson. A well-tried introduction to it is a blackboard drawing of the stars of the Great Bear and the Little Bear. The Pole Star is drawn the same size as most of the stars of the Plough, of the brightest and best-known parts of the Great Bear. On the first day only the stars themselves are put in, the forms or lines can be drawn in later in the week.

The teacher will awaken great amazement when the pupils find out how easily we can orientate ourselves by the colours of the brightest stars. They appear shortly after sunset while the earthly surroundings are still full of colour. If we gaze calmly at the blue sky, all at once a point of light may appear like lightning: there, I see it! And we are surprised that we had to search so long for it before. The darker the sky, the more clearly the colour of the stars may be distinguished. If their shine is bluish, the solitary point of light is called Vega. If it twinkles with a yellowish light, we are looking at Capella. If the twinkling star is orange-coloured and, besides, is situated close to the Plough, its name is Arctur.

Anyone who has once perceived the colours of these three points of orientation, can find the signs of the zodiac, even in cloudy weather. For example, to the right below the yellowish Capella there is a small unique, little group of stars, the Pleiades or the seven-fold divinity of Babylon. The orange-coloured star a hand's breadth distance away is Aldebaran – the Arabic name 'Al Dabaran' means the follower, it follows the Pleiades. On old sky charts it marks one eye of the Bull.

If the pupils look for Capella, the Pleiades and Aldebaran at night, they may find out that their positions change. A view of the starry sky will call forth the impression of eternal peace. However, if I become inwardly active and compare their present position with my memory picture, I will discover that the stars are either rising (like the sun in the East) or are sinking (in the West).

Stars are phenomena, constellations are not, they are a cultural gift. We have got to know them from the Romans, the Romans from the Greeks and they in turn from the Babylonians. The Bull, whilst rising, has a similar posture to Zeus in the Greek myth when he took on the shape of a bull so as to abduct the beautiful princess Europa from Asia to Crete. The young girl sat on his back and, while he swam across the Mediterranean with his back arched, the water was quite unable to touch her.



The picture: the Bull as it rises, high in the South and as it sets.

However, when the Bull sinks in the western sky, it looks completely different (see picture). Gazing at the constellations as they rise and sink stirs the observer inwardly. The signs of the zodiac look more impressive, more full of character when they rise than when they set. It is remarkable that the Babylonian priests, who gave the constellations their names, gazed at the heavens at dusk and dawn. When the Pleiades, the orange-coloured Aldebaran and its neighbouring stars, rose in April-May shortly before sunrise, they experienced the rising of the Bull. They gave the stars, which became visible in the second month of spring, the name of their god the Bull. The Greeks further developed Babylonian astronomy, starting off from their questions and needs. The month of the strongest vegetative development became the month of the Bull. From about 20th April to 20th May the working of the sun has bull-like qualities.

The early days of astronomy were marked by the knowledge of the sequence in which stars take it in turns to rise. It is a very great help to us when we know the sequence of the zodiac signs by heart, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer etc. (backwards too). The Babylonians observed which constellations rise and set at the same time as each other, e.g. the Bull rises as the Scorpion sets. The heavens provided the Babylonians with help to orientate themselves in time. We can vividly imagine that all citizens of the world have the same stars around them, every human being is standing in the middle between Taurus and Scorpio.

Class seven pupils like drawing the zodiac signs and are able, like the Babylonians, to follow the events in the heavens inwardly and even to predict them. They see from the setting Scorpion that the rising of the Bull is beginning. At the end of the main lesson epoch the pupils can have the experience that the interrela-

tions of the stars that they can recognise through their thinking appear in the sky, the experience “it is true”. The class seven pupils learn to work with the interrelationships of pictures, to find their way into their beloved surroundings.

Liesbeth Bisterbosch
translated by John Weedon

Literature:

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Report on the "Circle of Friends" at the "Windrather Talschule"

The "Windrather Talschule" is a Waldorf school in the little village of Velbert-Langenberg, located between Essen, Bochum and Wuppertal, cities of the Ruhr area. For 14 years we have been trying to realize a pedagogical concept which enables better mutual penetration of Waldorf education and the anthroposophical curative educational approach for pupils with special needs. This can partly be seen by our teaching children with and without special needs together in our, meanwhile, 12 classes. Against this background the founding years created a constant pioneering atmosphere in our school. Each new class required new concepts: the daily timetabling, learning together or in mixed-ability groups, methodical approaches and artistic penetration of the subject matter, the love of learning, which is already encouraged at an early age, teachers' cooperation with one another and, last but not least, the cooperation with parents. We were only rarely able to draw on the experiences of other schools because the initial position of our school was so different.

When our first upper school class finally left our school, it was soon clear that a new phase of creating concepts had to begin. In contrast to the founding years, when we were challenged to transform the qualities of the lower classes according to the crucial stages of educational development and when we tried to shape the character of the different classes, we now had to look at the school as a whole. How can the school's spirit be perceived by observable phenomena? Have younger or upper class pupils acquired habits that are mutually supportive and which lovingly apply what has been ingrained in them, or are we about to go separate ways. Are our children content with their school? Are there any positive or weak elements that exceed the impact of individual teachers, and is it possible to observe them?

When we noticed that a "stranger's" perspective could be useful in answering these questions, we asked good "friends" to help us. A small group was then formed. It consisted of former and current teachers who have known our school from a distance, but are not involved as colleagues. First, Telse Kardel, a former class teacher from Hamburg, currently working as a mentor in northern and eastern Germany, became involved. Then, Klaus-Peter Freitag, who has been working as a member of the representative council of N.R.Westfalia's Waldorf schools and at the Institute for Waldorf Education in Witten. was found. As a third person, Florian Schulz, who is working as an upper class teacher at the Rudolf Steiner School in Witten and at the teacher training seminar in Kassel volunteered. The last in the quartet is our own colleague Matthias Braselmann, who is a kind of a "bridge-builder". These four individuals form our "circle of

friends”. Three times a year, we invite these four to visit our classes, having them take into consideration the theme previously chosen by our colleagues. In practice it looks like this: we gather on a Wednesday evening, play together as is the custom in our classes and try to tune in to our topic. On Thursday morning the visits take place and in the afternoon we exchange our impressions.

Two of these meetings have already taken place and were very productive. The first task we had given our “circle of friends” was the following: Go through our classes and school building. What is your first impression? What do you hear, see, smell and feel when you enter our school for the first time? Could you say something general about it? What do you perceive of the “Windrather Talschule” when you encounter it for the first time? All the teachers had opened their classes. The friends could move freely between the classes, linger in the corridors or accompany groups of children for a while.

For the second visit our task was more concrete: Again and again, we teachers painfully observe how the close relationship we try to establish with our pupils “dries up”, breaks down in certain phases, how individual pupils or an entire class are difficult to get motivated, how the common joy for working gets lost. During your visits, observe whether you find aspects through which learning and practicing engender enthusiasm and when we lose our pupils. Can you detect any typical patterns?

In both cases, our colleagues’ reflections were highly productive. First, our friends sat in the middle of our circle, sharing their impressions. Then, we continued talking in a larger group. Often, short characterisations of an incident, searching questions or simple descriptions were still recalled by the one or the other colleague weeks later. Many observations were also surprising, some deeply touching. To hear that there is something like the “Windrather Talschule” method, which can be perceived immediately and which is appreciated by such experienced colleagues, has increased our colleagues’ self-assurance and self-confidence. In addition, we felt supported by realizing that our “friends” were well-acquainted with the concrete pedagogical challenges and could sometimes help us greatly to move on with only a little piece of useful advice.

That’s the reason why we want to continue with this kind of work. In a next step, we want to take up the suggestion of asking one more “friend” to join us for each new visit, somebody who won’t get involved for a longer period of time, but just adds his impressions of a single visit. This might further a mutual exchange between many different schools. After all, does not our entire school movement form a big “circle of friends” around every single school?

Bärbel Blaeser
translated by Ulrike Creyaufmüller

Report from the meeting of the International Conference of the Steiner School Movement (Hague Circle), 21-24 May 2009 in The Hague, Holland

Around thirty Hague Circle members came together in The Hague at the end of May for a four-day meeting. The Conference welcomed its new members Frances Kane and Dorit Winter (USA), Iryna Kokoshynska (Ukraine), Noomi Hansen (Sweden), Cristina Laffi (Italy) and Lot Hooghiemstra (Holland).

As usual, there were two main themes on the agenda. First was the presentation and consideration of experiences relating to current affairs and the school movement, which are a reflection of the *zeitgeist* and its underlying evolutionary laws. The growing insecurity, lack of orientation and paralysed forces of initiative and creativity are sadly also often found in the Waldorf schools and colleges. It can be observed in particular in the tendency of teachers to withdraw from the administration and leadership in their institutions and the transference of these tasks to specially employed managers, principals etc. Schools and training colleges give up areas of independence which they had fought for and yield without resistance to government regulations. On the other hand, there is a new generation of teachers and students (outside Europe more so than within Europe) who wholeheartedly commit themselves to Steiner Waldorf education: personalities who have brought their spiritual intentions and decisions with them into their life.

A theme that the Hague Circle considers to be of central and long-term importance, was picked up again and worked on for the second time: cultivating the inner life in the teaching profession. Three speakers from three continents (USA, South Africa and Sweden) elaborated on the theme, and the focus of their presentations and the discussions was often on the artistic aspect of teaching. Numerous examples illustrated the idea of an inner path that leads to an intuitive pedagogical instinct. The Circle agreed, however, that this topic was not yet exhausted and should be on the agenda again at the next meeting in Dornach.

The Circle strives to become better acquainted with the school movement of the country where the meeting takes place. The meeting with the Dutch Waldorf School movement was particularly intense this year. Various organs reported from their work followed by a discussion about how this relates to the situation of the schools. The main administrative body, the *Stichting Rudolf Steiner Pedagogie*, the teacher training college *Helicon* and the Association of Steiner Schools in Holland described their tasks and the problems they are struggling with at the moment. The interference of the Dutch government with the pedagogical work of the schools turned out to be a particularly sensitive point. The Association's

representative spoke about the strategies with which they are planning to increasingly counteract these assaults by the state on the freedom of the schools (tests, excessive administration).

The meeting concluded with the presentation and discussion of the design for an internet portal of the International Conference with the purpose of presenting its endeavours and achievements to the interested public.

Tomáš Zdražil
translated by Margot M. Saar

Agenda

Coming Pedagogical Section Conferences and Events at the Goetheanum, 2009

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| 25. – 27. September 2009 | Tagung zum 7. Vortrag der Allgemeinen Menschenkunde |
| 16. – 18. October 2009 | Meditativ Erarbeitete Menschenkunde |
| 30. October – 1. November 2009 | Klassenspieltagung ' <i>Klassenspiel und Entwicklung</i> ' |
| 01. – 04. November 2009 | Förderlehrertagung |
| 06. – 08. November 2009 | Die Kunst der Kinderbetrachtung, 2. Kolloquium, 4. Teil |