



Pedagogical Section  
at the Goetheanum

# Journal



Michaelmas 2014, No. 52

## The Journal of the Pedagogical Section

**Publisher:** Pädagogische Sektion am Goetheanum  
Postfach, CH-4143 Dornach 1  
Tel.: 0041 61 706 43 15  
Tel.: 0041 61 706 43 73  
Fax: 0041 61 706 44 74  
E-Mail: [paed.sektion@goetheanum.ch](mailto:paed.sektion@goetheanum.ch)  
Homepage: [www.paedagogik-goetheanum.ch](http://www.paedagogik-goetheanum.ch)

**Editors:** Florian Osswald, Dorothee Prange, Claus-Peter Röh

**Correction:** Karin Smith

**Cover picture:** Charlotte Fischer: Upper School Biology, FWS Mannheim

## How To Make a Donation to the Pedagogical Section suggested contribution: 30 Swiss Francs or 20 Euro:

**International accounts:** General Anthroposophical Society  
4143 Dornach, Switzerland

**EUR account in Switzerland** IBAN CH37 8093 9000 0010 0605 3  
Raiffeisenbank Dornach, CH-4143 Dornach  
BIC RAIFCH22  
**Marked: 1060**

**USD account** General Anthroposophical Society  
CH-4143 Dornach, Switzerland  
IBAN CH48 8093 9000 0010 0604 9  
Raiffeisenbank Dornach, CH-4143 Dornach  
BIC RAIFCH22  
**Marked: 1060**

**GBP account** General Anthroposophical Society  
CH-4143 Dornach, Switzerland  
IBAN CH77 8093 9000 0010 0601 2  
Raiffeisenbank Dornach, CH-4143 Dornach  
BIC RAIFCH22  
**Marked: 1060**

**From Germany:** Freunde der Erziehungskunst e.V.  
Postbank Stuttgart  
Account No.: 398 007 04  
BLZ: 600 100 70  
**Marked: Pedagogical Section, Journal**

## Index

- |    |  |                           |
|----|--|---------------------------|
| 3  | Introduction   | <i>Dorothee Prange</i>    |
| 5  | Holistic Education<br>– at the Crossing Point of Developmental Streams | <i>Claus-Peter Röh</i>    |
| 11 | The Concept of the Waldorf Curriculum,<br>as Illustrated in Biology    | <i>Dr. Albrecht Schad</i> |
| 20 | Just where are we Heading?   | <i>Valentin Wember</i>    |
| 29 | Agenda   |                           |

## Introduction

*Dear Colleagues,*

It gives us great pleasure to present you with this latest edition of our Journal.

It includes three articles aimed at inspiring your lessons, providing insight into the currents of human development during childhood and youth, and offering some advice on school management questions.

As I write, the restoration of the stage in the Goetheanum's large auditorium is reaching its conclusion. The stage will be officially opened with a celebration at the start of the Michaelmas Conference. We are delighted because the stage is going to look very beautiful!

This means that the large auditorium will once again be available to us for future conferences. Here are some dates of events the Pedagogical Section is planning to hold, partly in co-operation with other institutions or sections:

*Transitions in Childhood from Birth to 14 Years  
Significance, Challenges, Consequences  
30<sup>th</sup> March – 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2015*

*International Conference for Teachers of  
Mathematics  
5<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> October 2015*

*10<sup>th</sup> World Teachers' Conference  
7<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> April 2016*

A little while ago, on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2014, the Swiss newspaper *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* published an article entitled 'Let us talk about the children rather than the curriculum as that is which adds spice to the whole!' A teacher describes how the curriculum pro-

vides a framework for the lessons but it is the pupils themselves who determine how it is applied in any given lesson with any given teacher. So much care and love for the pupils emanated from this article that it was both moving and joyful.

It is this care and love for the pupils entrusted to us which makes us want to explore the following aspects in these three very different conferences: the pedagogical questions around individual subjects, the general methodology, and the anthroposophical background. All of these aspects are designed to enable us to create Waldorf pedagogy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century based on real insight.

It would be wonderful if you were able to prepare for the different conferences in your teachers' meetings.

The three articles start off with the third and last part of Claus-Peter Röh's thoughts on the 2015 conference on transitions. It refers to holistic education and its inherent developmental steps leading up to the age of 14, i.e. the challenges towards the end of the class teaching period in Classes 7 and 8.

Dr Albrecht Schäd's article looks at the biology curriculum in its entirety. We are confident that it will be of interest to everyone and not just the scientists among us.

The last contribution is a letter addressed to colleagues. Our colleague Valentin Wember asks our schools 'Where are we going?' by sharing some thoughts and posing some

quite provocative questions. These are questions pointing to our future, rooted in our pathway through the past. We would like to share this letter with you because we feel that it may prompt some lively discussions in the different schools and even lead to changes where necessary. Not every school will recognise itself in his description but

there will be some elements present in all of our schools, however unwelcome it may be to acknowledge these.

We hope as ever to provide you with some positive inspiration.

*Your Pedagogical Section.*

*\* We will be happy to receive feedback on Valentin Wember's article.*

## Holistic Education – at the crossing point of developmental streams – (Transition – part III)

Claus-Peter Röh

Translated from German by Margot M. Saar

The high goal of Waldorf Education – to “educate the whole human being” – requires an attitude in teachers and educators that is in itself imbued with holistic qualities. As we experience the dynamics of teaching we are challenged at every moment to find an inner measure for each situation. This ongoing gauging and judging will be the more alive and confident the richer the holistic image of the human being the educator has acquired.

If we just take the example, which is much discussed today, of premature and late developments, we realise on the one hand that children are more awake in their thinking and intellect at an earlier age while on the other hand their motor and emotional skills tend to mature later. Where in this gap or dissociation the early intellectual awareness of young children is used one-sidedly as “learning potential” we now often find “infant learning programmes”. A few months ago parents complained in a Swiss newspaper article: *“Now they have grades in Kindergarten already! Standardisation in schools is growing to such an extent that Kindergarten educators have to compile progress reports ...”*<sup>1</sup> From the point of view of Waldorf Education this is hard to bear since the picture is quite the opposite if one looks at the biography as a whole.

### The Meeting of Developmental Streams

In his lecture of 14<sup>th</sup> March, 1914, Rudolf Steiner looks at the phenomenon of premature development in connection with two different developmental streams within the human being. First he describes the development in seven-year-periods as outlined in “The Education of the Child in the light of spiritual science”; from the physical birth to the change of teeth and on to the birth of the astral body in earth maturity. He describes this transformation in seven-year-steps as being effected and guided by high spiritual beings: *“We can really see the progress of evolution in those seven-year-phases and we can say that it is the progressing divine – spiritual powers that guide and direct this evolution in seven-year steps.”*<sup>2</sup>

If child development was inspired only by these powers children would appear to be embedded in spiritual forces for much longer, only gradually emerging from a dreamlike state and acquiring I – consciousness up to their twenty-first year. This development, guided by higher beings, meets a second spiritual stream that emanates from the luciferic powers. They have the effect of making the child self-conscious in their third or fourth year. *“It is the moment that we will remember in later life. ... that we gain self-consciousness so early, that we can say ‘I’ to*

---

1 Basler Zeitung, 7 February, 2014

2 R. Steiner, *Die Welt des Geistes und ihr Hereinragen in das physische Dasein*, GA 150, lecture 1, 14 March 1913, p. 14.

*ourselves, is entirely the effect of these luciferic forces on us ... we become aware of being independent, of our inner individuality and personality as a result of the second stream. We see that there is great wisdom in the fact that this second stream flows into us.*<sup>3</sup>

In observing and describing how children in their third/fourth year gain this early individual inner autonomy (cf. Journal 50, Transitions I), we can find the measure for our educational approach by looking at these crossing developmental streams from a holistic point of view; if we take hold of, or even force, the early powers of consciousness and memory, we would support the luciferic stream. But if we make the decision to orient ourselves on the seven-year-rhythms we work in the interest of the evolving beings of human evolution. If the development of the physical body up to the change of teeth is placed in a health-giving and supportive environment carried by life rhythms our education will provide a harmonising strong foundation for the stream of developing consciousness.

In the second seven-year-period, after school entrance, the developmental stream crosses yet another stream. In their ninth/tenth year children experience the inner change that transforms their relationship with the world. The 'I'-awareness condenses so strongly that the previous child-like connection with the outside world is broken up. The child no longer sees him- or herself as part of the world but as facing it and they seek to establish their own relationship to things (cf. Journal 51, Transitions II). Rudolf Steiner described

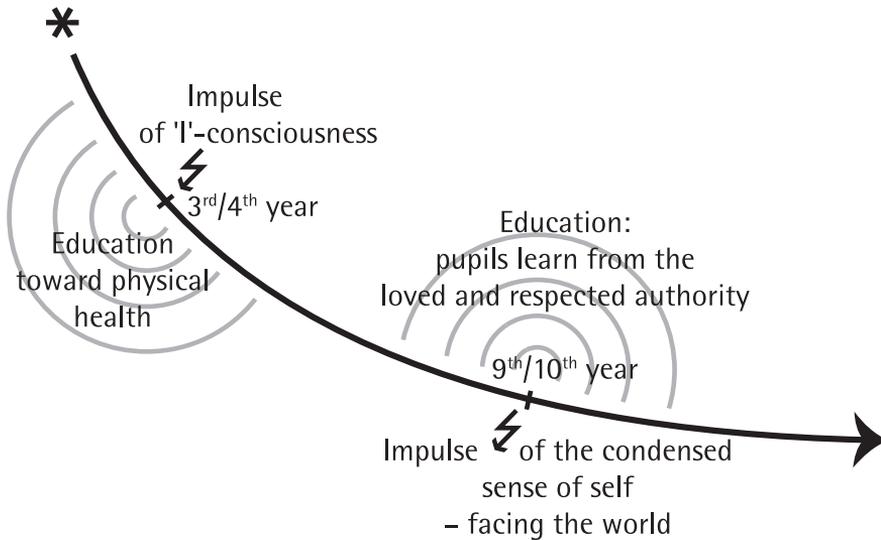
the second crossing of the developmental stream, which has a condensing and consolidating quality, as the ahrimanic counterweight to the luciferic impulse in the third/fourth year. With the latter the danger was that the memory forces would be used in a one-sided way. With the first "Rubicon" the danger is that the judgment which has become independent too early is taken hold of one-sidedly. If we as educators withdrew from the learning process at this age and left children to form their own judgments as early as possible, we would support the ahrimanic forces. *"We can now do Ahriman the greatest favour, if we say: we have to train children to come to their own independent judgment at all times. ... Children are given calculating devices so that they are not even encouraged to learn times-tables by heart."*<sup>4</sup>

The holistic view of this second crossing in the ninth/tenth year shows how Waldorf Education again connects with the stream of human development. In recognising this wise impulse towards independence, teachers will enter so decisively, so warmly and competently, with their whole being, into their teaching, that they can become loved and respected authorities for their pupils. As whole human beings we will teach the young people everything from the Creation of the world to handiwork and crafts, to writing and arithmetic. In summary the transitions mentioned illustrate how the overall view of human development provides new benchmarks for the pedagogical approach to the phenomenon of premature or late development. The holistic approach allows for harmonising and healing impulses:

---

3 Ibid., p. 15f.

4 Ibid., p. 17



### The importance of imagination in the Middle School

Looking at the holistic development of children in the middle school years we see the next incisive crossing and transformation in the twelfth year. As the forces of growth turn away from the rhythmic system of breathing and circulation in order to connect more strongly with the mechanisms of the skeleton the child's entire being changes. The natural swinging with the musical rhythms we see in classes 4 and 5 fades away, while the lawfulness of the bone system moves into the foreground. The children increasingly ask for reasons and origins as their inner experience of causality develops. The curriculum addresses this new capacity by exploring new contexts and concepts in mineralogy, physics and history, and from class seven also in chemistry. With the beginning of causal thinking which is addressed by, among other things, the development of history up to class 8, there is again a danger of one-sidedness. As adolescents take hold of their bodies and move towards earth maturity, with all their senses awakened, their

ideas, thoughts and judgments are in danger of focussing too much on the material outer world. How can we, at this particular time, when, with the birth of the astral body, high individual and common ideas begin to appear, build a bridge between a thinking that tends towards the mechanistic and material and inner, spiritual ideals?

In the fourteenth and last lecture of "Foundations of Human Experience" Rudolf Steiner addresses this question by emphatically describing an inner soul faculty which is of the greatest importance from class 6 onwards. He begins by outlining how the etheric, formative forces that were transformed in the change of teeth enter into the soul life and make it possible for children to learn drawing, writing and reading. – Now, six to seven years later, the forces of the metabolic and limb system push themselves in a transformed process into the young person's soul life. Again a soul quality is set free that is, however, dependent on being developed and enhanced through education. It is the power of independent, free imagination. "And as

*the capacity to learn reading and writing in the first years of school is an indicator of the soul's teething, we can sense in everything that is imaginative and permeated by inner warmth the qualities the soul develops from the age of twelve."*<sup>5</sup>

If we look at this stage of development from a holistic point of view we see from the twelfth year the stream of the growing capacity for judgment which can go in two directions: based on outer sense experiences, the thinking can become connected with material ideas. If we succeed in inspiring the pupils' imagination through their soul life, entirely new qualities of experience and cognition can arise. The outer application of geometrical theorems in the drawing of platonic solids in class 8 is one experience. We bring in an entirely different quality by allowing pupils to imagine themselves as a spider inside these imagined colourful shapes and to discover properties of angles and planes from the inside. "We appeal to the imagination if we endeavour to explain areas not only intellectually, but if we demonstrate the essential nature of the area to the children in such a way that they have to use their imagination even in geometry and arithmetic."<sup>6</sup>

Appealing to the power of imagination as a means of enlivening the learning process could mean in a class 8 grammar lesson that we engage the pupils first in making up familiar dialogues. As they inwardly experience their own activity they can discover the rules of style and grammar. Imagination, at this age in particular, seems to have the power to allow the children to grasp and understand the inner quality of thoughts and contexts. The transformative power of imagination has the effect of placing the lesson content into a holistic and ever new

relationship with the phenomena, their relevance and with the pupils themselves.

From what has been described it is obvious that the enlivening, inspiring power of imagination has to come initially from the teacher, especially at the end of the class teacher period. The more life teachers bring to the lesson content, the more alive it will be when the students absorb and process it. In lecture 2 of *The Foundations of Human Experience* we find the quality of imagination entirely on the side of the will, of the forces of sympathy and the blood or life forces, and this can inspire us to work on our own imaginative powers.

- Any will activity, i.e. artistic work on the topic in question, can lead to new inspiration.
- Repetition, also of previously imaginative approaches, belongs to the realm of memory and concept.
- It is therefore better not to hold on to records of teaching methods.
- It helps during preparation to consider and mentally run through at least one entirely different approach.
- Be unprejudiced: which approach is most promising when it comes to future potential?
- Thinking of individual pupils or the class as a whole can lend wings to one's imagination.

### **The teacher–student encounter in the stream of time**

In the three stages of child development described above the attempt to find a holistic teaching approach led in each case to a field of tension between the changes of consciousness, the physical development and the educational approach:

---

5 R. Steiner, *Allgemeine Menschenkunde als Grundlage der Pädagogik*, GA 293, 2005, lecture 14, p. 226.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 227

Awakening of consciousness –           ↑ 'I' ↑	Education by the ↑ loved authority ↑	↑ Learning imbued ↑ with imagination
----- –           3 <sup>rd</sup> /4 <sup>th</sup> year -----	----- –           9 <sup>th</sup> /10 <sup>th</sup> year -----	----- –           13 <sup>th</sup> /14 <sup>th</sup> /15 <sup>th</sup> year -----
–           ↓ educating ↓ for health	–           ↓ condensation ↓ of consciousness	–           impact on soul ↓ of material world ↓

The vertical gestures indicate that it is the basic task of education to bring the soul-spirit of the growing children or adolescents in harmony with their physical body. Let us look again at the development in the Middle School on the basis of an actual lesson situation. The example shows us that the tension of the vertical polarity is crossed by yet another holistic level:

A class 7 had worked on the biography of Leonardo da Vinci. In the end the students were given the task to present motifs from this biography narratively and in drawing. When the capacity for absorbing any more contribution was basically exhausted, a rather feisty girl pointed provocatively at a somewhat shy boy as if she wanted to say, 'Well, let's see what he's come up with.' Everyone looked at him as he reluctantly opened his book and began to read. With each sentence he read the mood in the classroom was transformed as the initial curiosity turned into intense, astonished interest. Everybody sensed the immediacy of experience that led the boy to emphasize every word. He had clearly chosen a situation that touched him personally and had described it, out of his imagination, in clear-cut, concise sentences:

*"[...] one day his father found the hidden sketches in his room and took them to the well-known artist Verrochio. Verrochio said, 'ask your son to come and see me tomorrow.' Then the father said, 'Go to Verrochio tomorrow.' Verrochio had many trades: he was a*

*goldsmith, sculptor, stone cutter, carpenter, painter, builder, smith. One day Verrochio was commissioned to paint a picture with angels. He started straight away. In the night Leonardo also painted an angel. When the morning came, the apprentices agreed that Leonardo's angel was better than the master's. Verrochio overheard them, looked at the painting and snapped his brush in two. From now on Leonardo was the master. – One day an argument broke out among the apprentices. Each of them was convinced that he was right. When Leonardo heard them he called out angrily, 'You nitwits! You only believe, but you should find out and observe!' ..."*

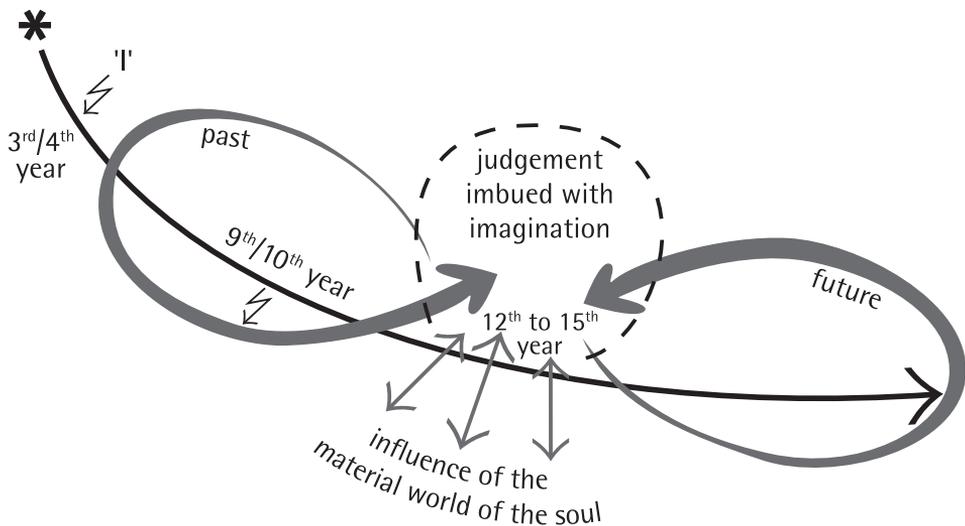
In some mysterious way not only the scene described was strongly present in the room but also the boy's development: his reluctance to speak in front of the class in the first years. – His overcoming of his shyness when he began to speak his report verse calmly. – The interest that lay in his wakeful, observing glance. – His ability to place himself sometimes – unexpectedly – among fighting classmates. –

With these pictures of the past a clear blueprint of the future was suddenly also present, in a different colouring and much less precise, formulated as a silent thought. Something like, 'the scene you chose is your scene. Everything resonates within it. It shows what is important to you. You will now be faced with other challenges in that direction and you will master them.'

The lesson described had shown clearly how other, deeper teaching experiences are possible, especially when students struggle to bring an artistic approach to their work. Such encounters not only show the connection between a topic and the relevant developmental stage, but they can, over and above that, reveal aspects of the wholeness of an individual biography. As the children grow older, the teacher, who accompanies them for a long time, is ever more able to read out of such encounters not only the past but also future impulses and he can use this to enhance his teaching. Rudolf Steiner spoke about this further level of wholeness in the encounter with the children:

*“The teacher works as a whole but has to be aware at the same time of what he has to do in detail with a child. Both aspects must always be present in education; on the one hand the single teaching goal and on the other hand the many thousand imponderable details that work intimately from one person to another.”<sup>7</sup>*

The essential task of the long class teacher period is therefore, especially in the middle school up to class 8, to work imaginatively and artistically so that spaces for encounters are created where the biographical past as well as future goals can be experienced:



Just as the artistic element in teaching inspires holistic experience, Rudolf Steiner also described the teacher's sensitivity for seeing the topic, the situation and the personality of the pupil in one picture as something artistic:

*“It will be part of our method that we always address the whole human being. We*

*would not be able to do that if we did not focus on developing an artistic sense that is part of our disposition. In doing so, we will achieve that the young person will later be inclined to develop, with his whole being, an interest in the whole world.”<sup>8</sup>*

7 R. Steiner, *Erziehungs- und Unterrichtsmethoden auf anthroposophischer Grundlage*, GA 304, p. 83.

8 R. Steiner, *Erziehungskunst, Methodisch-Didaktisches*, GA 294, Lecture 1, p. 11

## The Concept of the Waldorf Curriculum, as Illustrated in Biology

*Dr. Albrecht Schäd*

*Translated by Matthew Barton*

Those who wish to run a school may first ask themselves a few, vitally important questions:

What do we know of human beings, of being human?

How is the human being connected with the world?

How did the human being originate?

These questions can lead to elaboration of a pedagogical concept.

The biology curriculum in Waldorf schools is particularly concerned with these questions. Here, drawing on the biology curriculum, I will try to shed light on the concept of the Waldorf curriculum in general.

The child's early years involve a process of acculturation. The infant acquires basic cultural capacities such as walking, speaking and, through speaking, thinking.

In nursery education, teachers need to cultivate the ether body, a process we can briefly sum up here in the words rhythm and nutrition. At the start of formal schooling, the physical body has matured sufficiently to continue growing without employing all the ether body's powers, some of which can now be transformed into learning capacities. The subject 'biology' is not yet needed in the first three school years. Children's primary task at this age is still to go on growing, and Steiner advises teachers to be a good friend to the child's intrinsic nature, and not impede growth by drawing too soon on intellectual

abilities. Research by Tomáš Zdražil offers striking evidence of this (Zdražil, Tomáš, 2000). Nature figures in lessons at this age, still, in the form of stories which show nature to be alive and ensouled rather than objectively observed. At this age the child is still so much part of nature that the latter, more distanced approach is out of place. Around the age of 8 or 9, many children experience a deep sense of loneliness: you can sense a new gulf opening up between the child and the world. Hitherto the child experienced himself largely as one with his surroundings; now he begins to leave this 'heaven' behind. As the child starts to gain greater distance from the world, he can begin to perceive it more clearly. Knowledge is always gained by stepping aside from something to observe it. Steiner calls this transition the 'Rubicon', since it corresponds inwardly in the child to the step Caesar had to take in European culture before he crossed the river of that name.

**Class Four**, therefore, sees the first main lesson on natural history, starting with what is closest and most familiar to the child, the human being.

*"Here it is of great importance to know that fundamental harm is done to the purpose of natural history lessons for the child if we do not begin by considering the human being. You will rightly say that little can, as yet, be told a child at the age of 9 about the natural history of the human being. And yet the little that can be taught him should be given him as preparation for all other natural history lessons. In doing this you will need to*

*know that the human being is in a sense a synthesis, a summation, of all three kingdoms of nature. There will be no need to tell the child this, but you should engender a sense of it in your teaching: that the human being is a synthesis of all the other kingdoms of nature. You can achieve this by a certain emphasis in describing the human being, giving the child a sense of the importance of the human being within the whole world order."*

(Steiner, Rudolf, GA 294, part 2, lecture 7).

It is somewhat rhetorical to object that little can be said about the human being to the nine-year-old child. By contrast, Steiner proposes giving the child a primary, archetypal account of the human being, and cites his comments in lecture 10 of *Foundations of Human Experience* (GA 293) – perhaps some of the most difficult passages in that cycle of lectures.

There he describes the head as an entirely enclosed, sunlike sphere, and a body complete in itself. The head, he says, is not a great deal more than is physically visible, concealing less than any other part of the organism. He describes the trunk by contrast as the moon-type fragment of a sphere, visible behind as body but invisible in the front by virtue of being soul alone. As to the limbs, he describes them as being the radii of a third, entirely invisible sphere introduced into the body from without. Only very little of them is visible (our physical limbs) for their spiritual aspect enters from a long way out in the cosmos.

The human being is described as a being only perfect in the special nature of his limbs and not by virtue of the "lazybones head". The "Man and Animal" main lesson thus begins with a study of the human being, followed by a consideration of different animals. Cut-

tlefish, mouse, sheep or horse are presented, among other things, to make clear that we are human by virtue of our limbs rather than our head. The animals, says Steiner, should be described in a way that characterizes their most salient aspect or quality: is a particular creature anxious and nervous, or inwardly placid, or vivacious, or aggressive etc.? In other words, we can understand a great deal about animals by focusing on the soul qualities of each. It is also important to characterize the animal's distinctive relationship to its surroundings. Animals lessons continue in **Class 5**, followed by a main lesson on botany. Here the living world manifests in a pure form; and here again the plant is compared and contrasted with the human being. Steiner suggests describing the diverse evolutionary stages of today's plants by comparing them with the way a human being develops from infancy through to adulthood.

Botany continues in **Class 6**, followed by a main lesson on geology – thus a study of mountain formations and rocks, an engagement with minerals and dead substance. This year also a new subject, gardening, is introduced, as active illustration of working with and upon the earth.

During the following four years (**Class 7/8/9/10**) natural history studies are concerned only with the human being as an accompaniment to the years of puberty, during which so much changes both physically and mentally/emotionally (Schad, A. (2008): in 'Erziehungskunst'). These lessons aim to support adolescents in acquiring a lively and healthy relationship to their body.

With **Class 11**, the inner volatility previously apparent increasingly comes into balance, enabling young people to direct their gaze out into the world again. Here the chief themes are cell biology, protozoa and the

lower plants. These reflections also encompass the origins of life and the corresponding organisms. An initial study of embryology can also be undertaken here.

The curriculum for **Class 12** concludes young people's Waldorf schooling. Alongside a study of the higher plants, the whole animal kingdom is once again considered, followed by a detailed study of the origins of the

human being and his corporeal evolution. The method of study employed here is less one of positing rules and systems than of emphasizing ongoing process and dynamic: the Creation is not a finished outcome, which would be an Old Testament outlook. Instead, the thinking of Class 12 pupils should become mobile and flexible: evolution is an open matter and always has been, and we ourselves can help shape the world.

Below is a summary of what we have described so far:

AN AID TO INCARNATION  
From the human being to stone

PUBERTY

FIRST QUEST FOR  
WHAT WE HAVE LOST

Class 4: Study of the human being  
and animals

Evolution of the human being **Class 12**

Class 5: Zoology/botany

Class 6: Botany/geology  
Gardening

Cell biology/lower botany **Class 11**  
Ascent through the kingdoms of nature

7 8 9 10  
Study of the human being

In many Waldorf schools, the Christmas plays are performed at Christmas. In the scene of the expulsion from paradise, the angel tells Adam and Eve that they must depart from paradise and will meet with fear, great need and pain – not a pleasant prospect. But then comes the phrase:

**"So from the garden forth you go –  
I will recall you late and slow."**

Besides expulsion, therefore, there is also a possibility expressed here of seeking again what is lost. This phrase really expresses the whole Waldorf curriculum in a nutshell.

The four levels of human nature:

Below I relate the four levels of human nature to this picture, accompanied by corresponding indications from the curriculum.

**The I**

*"Now we have a fourth aspect of our being, which other natural creatures do not possess. This is the bearer of the human I ... The task of the 'I' is, precisely, to enoble and purify the other levels or aspects."*

(Steiner, R., GA 34)

Human dignity is sacrosanct. The I endows us with the dignity of uniqueness and is in-

dependent of degrees of physical development, male or female gender, geographical divergences between nations, or religions. What is sacrosanct about it? This is hard to describe. The I is, still, the "baby" amongst our constituting aspects – the youngest and therefore the most imperfect. One could say that it is our spirit core, but what does that mean? Interestingly, it takes us a long time before we say I to ourselves and perceive the I of fellow human beings. At around 6 months we start to activate the sense of I, and at that point begin being shy of strangers. From this point onwards the baby distinguishes between people he knows and those he doesn't. Over the next two and a half years (0.5 – 3) it is important for the child to have a clear attachment figure, and it is this that gives us primary trust in the world. Nothing can replace this, nor can it be made good later if lacking. It is now important to practise self-assertion, which mostly happens, first, in trusting relationships with well-known people. Often it is only towards the end of this period that one discovers oneself also to be an I. In other words, we first notice this of others and then of ourself.

Another remarkable discovery is that, when we sleep and then awaken, we are sure that we are still the same person despite having no self-awareness while we slept. The I knows no discontinuity, only I consciousness. But if the I also exists in an unconscious state, it is not constituted by the cerebrum. I consciousness is only dependent on, not created by it. The consequence of this insight is that the I does not exist by virtue of a nervous system, but can also exist without corporeality.

How does the human soul differ from that of the animal? Certain attributes swiftly come to mind: self-awareness, self-deter-

mination, self-control, self-responsibility, a sense of self. But there is also another side of us: we can go towards others, give our attention to them; and thus we are also familiar with openness and commitment to others, loving dedication. All this belongs to the human qualities of the I. The I includes the capacity to recognize a Thou. Thus the human I has two aspects, one more self-referential and the other more altruistic. If we focus only on ourselves, this is egocentric and not a healthy thing ultimately; but nor is it good to be only there for others, which culminates in a compulsive 'helper syndrome'. We are only healthy in our I being if we can alternate between the one and the other state. Social attentiveness and self-realization are two, equally valid aspects of the I.

If both these belong intrinsically to the I, where is it placed in early infancy, and what element does it live in then? The infant, who as yet has no real self-awareness, lives still in pure devotion to the world. He lives in unswerving primary trust to the people around him. He is composed entirely of existential love; and this still echoes on as a basic mood in the child in the capacity of imitation for many years to come.

For an I to act upon earth it needs a corresponding body: one, therefore, that is not too specialized and thus offers great scope. This body has emerged from a long process of evolution that was not predetermined but open-ended and therefore fallible, and in which freedom was at work. Freedom is dependent on openness to potential unpredictability and random possibility, to things not known in advance. Just as little as we can tell at the start of a life what may happen during it, so there was never any guarantee that we would succeed in becoming human.

### The Soul

*"The third aspect of the human being is what we call the sentient or astral body, which is the bearer of pain and pleasure, of drive, desire and passion etc. An entity that consists only of a physical and ether body does not possess all these attributes, and we can summarize them in the expression: sentience."*

(Steiner, R., GA 34).

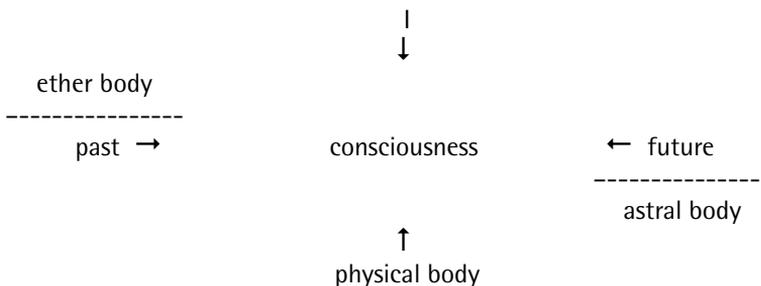
To work upon the earth the I needs the level of the soul or psyche. Natural death does not as yet exist in the world of monocellular life, which is therefore potentially immortal. This applies too to most plant tissues. Soul capacities are purchased at the price of mortality. Nerve cells are the physical basis for feelings and sentience, however simple this may be. Living creatures which we count as animals are defined by the fact that they have neural cells, and in this sense we humans also belong to the animals.

We share with the animals a capacity for subjective feelings, thus possessing our own interiority. If the nerve cell or neuron is the physical basis for feelings, this means that all living entities that do not possess them are without feelings, at least in the way animals and humans have them. Thus plants have no sentience, and do not for instance feel pain when we cut them. In the animal, the I remains peripheral: the creature does not de-

velop its own self-awareness. It possesses only a peripheral group I; but it has interiority of soul.

In 1910, Steiner outlined as follows how human consciousness arises, describing a stream of desire and a stream of ideas: *"Desire, love, hate, wishes and so forth form a stream that flows from the future towards the past"* (Steiner, R. GA 115). On the one hand, therefore, we have the desire nature of the sentient body oriented to what the future is to bring. This 'future stream' intersects with *"the stream of ideas flowing from the past"* (Steiner, R., GA 115). Emerging from the biological past, this 'past stream' is borne upon the biological foundations of the ether body as the causative precondition of consciousness. *"Consciousness is this interaction and encounter"* between the two streams (Steiner, R., GA 115) In the temporal crossing point that Steiner sees as consciousness, I and physical body are perpendicular to each other, and at the midpoint stands an I consciousness awoken from all three aspects (physical, ether and astral bodies). Steiner refers to this discovery of his as 'psychosomy'.

It should be noted here that Steiner is not speaking of a general stream from the future that predetermines or predestines my present existence, but of a human being's wishes, hopes and aims.



## Life

*"The human being shares this ether or life body with the plants and animals. It causes the substances and forces of the physical body to be configured into the phenomena of growth, reproduction and the inner motion of saps and fluids etc."*

(Steiner, R., GA 34)

For the soul to realize itself in the physical, it requires the level of life as connection between body and soul.

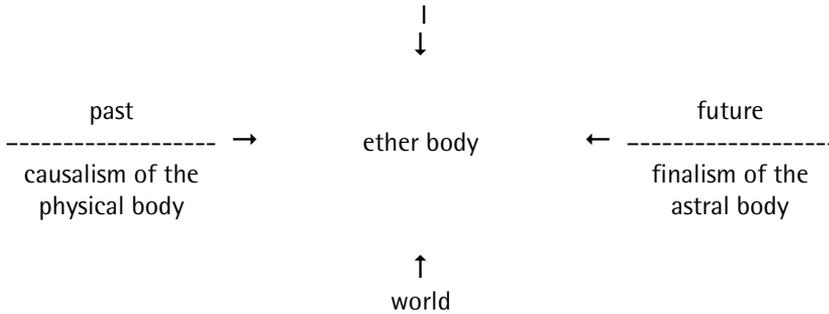
The myth of paradise speaks of two trees: the tree of life and that of knowledge. The human beings Adam and Eve eat the fruit of the second tree, thus sundering themselves from God. This is because knowledge must always initially step back and find distance. Through this distance from God they had to embark on their earthly sojourn, becoming earthly human beings labouring in pain and by the sweat of their brow. The two figures did not eat from the tree of life – a resonant picture of the fact that the dimension of life still remains concealed from our knowledge to this day, which would have meant, after all, distancing ourselves from the capacity to live. There must be a means of access to this mysterious realm of life that involves neither objectivizing nor subjectivizing it. The etheric, as life potency, can after all create the bridge between body and soul because it is not implicated in the objectivity of the former and the subjectivity of the latter – and thus does not participate in this split between inner and outer. (Schad, Wolfgang (2013), p. 187).

The capacity for life is the continual overcoming of the subject/object split and can close this gulf between the two worlds because it is neither the one nor the other and therefore mediates between both. But if we

seek only to know the world through the self-observation of thinking, we start from a position that inevitably closes us off from the riddle of life. This is equally true for those who try to explain the world in terms only of physical reality. Life remains a closed book both to the materialist (who denies spiritual reality) and the spiritualist (who denies material reality).

What Steiner means by the ether body is supersensible in nature. From a material perspective, life is therefore inaccessible because it is non-sensory, not spatial. It cannot be found or located in the realm of space, for otherwise it would figure in the theory of the conservation of energy. If someone were to claim, therefore, that he can measure the etheric by some instrument or other, whatever he is measuring will not be the etheric. Life is likewise inaccessible from the realm of soul or psyche because it cannot be conscious within our body-bound awareness – or in other words, we have no awareness of it. This is entirely consistent with the fact that our waking consciousness is bound to an organ (the brain) that is most susceptible to physical degeneration. If we were able to think with the sleeping liver, we might be able to gain insight into life.

If we place life at the midpoint of the temporal cross, then one boundary is located in the future as the astral body's finalism, while another is the causalism of the physical body emerging from the past. Thus in the realm of life, time is something different from what it is in the realm of the soul. Each of the four levels of human reality have their own time quality.



If we can locate life neither in the spatial dimension nor in our consciousness, the only remaining realm is time. Whenever we consider life, we must therefore always reflect on temporal conditions. Life has an ongoing relationship with time. A mouse is born, develops into an adult, then ages and dies, and this is a process that cannot be held back. We cannot grasp life in causal terms because it does not belong to the spatial realm; and we cannot explain it in final terms, thus from the future, because we cannot encompass it with our consciousness. Life explains itself through its own immediate present. As Goethe put it, "Life is presence."

As we saw already, photosynthesis is a fundamental life process. From dead substances (carbon dioxide and water) glucose, a sugar, is formed with the aid of the sun's energy. Sugar is of a higher spatial order than the two dead substances and contains more energy. As such, the formation of glucose by photosynthesis contradicts all physical laws of the world of dead matter, which strives towards entropy. How can life arise from dead matter if the laws of the latter oppose those of life? In fact, life temporarily raises these substances, ectopically, from the laws they are subject to. As long as an organism lives, the body does not disintegrate. At death it again succumbs to the laws of the dead world.

Plant and animal are thus distinguished from each other by the fact that the animal has the capacity for subjective interiority while the plant does not, also because it has no physical basis for this. We can therefore study life all the more purely in the latter case, in the forms of its leaf surfaces and sheer, unpurposeful growth. The element of soul here remains peripheral, just as the I lives at the animal's periphery. And in the same way that the animal internalizes soul, so the plant possesses life as internalized process. The dead world is then only an elimination of life. Today we know that most rocks are of biogenetic origin (limestone, banded iron ores). First came life, then the dead rocks. It has been possible to show evidence of life in even the very oldest rocks (Pflug, Hans D., 1984).

### The Dead World

*What sensory observation learns of the human being and what a materialistic outlook regards as the only valid aspect of human reality – the human physical body – is found by spiritual research to be only a part, an aspect of human nature. ... Spiritual science ... terms the physical body only that aspect which configures, mingles, combines and dissolves substances according to the same laws that also act and configure substances in the mineral world.*  
(Steiner, R., GA 34)

The dead world, that of pure substance, has only a linear relationship to time. For instance, a crystal grows in a salt solution by external accretion. We can remove it from the solution and, after ten millennia, allow it to go on growing. It makes no difference. We can even dissolve it again a little. Thus a mineral's relationship to time is different from that of living creatures. The current state of dead matter can only be explained in reference to its past. When Charles Lyell (14.11.1797–22.2.1875) realized this, he introduced actualism into geology, for the first time explaining the present states of rocks and the earth's surface in terms of their past conditions. Nowadays we call this 'causal analysis', and it finds useful application in physics, chemistry, geology and geography.

The world of dead substances ultimately strives towards a state we can describe as the greatest possible spatial chaos and the lowest possible level of energy, where all possible chemical reactions have run their course. This is the future awaiting all dead matter, though it may take a great deal of time. We know of rocks that have existed in an uninterrupted state of matter for the past four billion years.

In crystals growth remains peripheral, through external accretion of substance. They are unable to reconstitute themselves from within like living organisms.

Ultimately, the world of dead substances is dark and passive (energy has been consumed), cold (no further exothermic processes), and shapeless (no longer possessing any form). This is a state of all-encompassing chaos, without further evolution.

Conclusion:

Here, therefore, we have a curriculum that does not explain the world in terms of dead

matter but from the multi-perspective reality of spirit, soul and life, deriving its inter-related realms from each other to show that dead matter was the last aspect to emerge. This accompanies children in their journey of incarnation in the class-teacher period up to Class 6, when they arrive fully in the earthly realm, at which point geology and gardening both figure in the curriculum. That is the descending part of the curriculum. The children are supported in gradually connecting with the earth, which at the same time involves loss of their connection with cosmic realities in which we originate. We could see this as a Christmas motif. In terms of Christian culture, the Christ child (the son of God) takes it upon himself to leave the non-spatial realm of spirit and appropriate spatial dimensions. In a sense he passes through the different kingdoms of nature. Thus the Christ child is eventually born in winter when it is dark and cold and everything has assumed fixed and rigid form. In this sense God's son shows solidarity with the creatures living on earth, who are exposed to pain and death. He descends to earth to feel pain with us, to live with us and to take on a body as we do; and ultimately he sacrifices himself.

In the following four years we accompany pupils through the period of puberty. Childhood ends, and they arrive fully in the earthly domain. This engagement with earthly conditions changes young people. Their earthly maturity begins, and is associated with some years of soul pain. Discovery of their own inner realm of soul, the birth of the astral body, as Steiner calls it, is a process that takes several years. And these years are accompanied in the Waldorf biology curriculum by a study of the human being. This is a period marked by a very low incidence of cancer in the general population and a high rate of suicides.

The ascending path of the curriculum in Class 11 and 12 has a quite different character. The main lessons now reverse direction, supporting adolescents in their search for what they lost on the descending journey. A search for their spiritual home begins once again.

As substances of the dead world decay, they serve as nutrients for plants. Plants in turn serve animals and humans as food that the latter eat, break down and assimilate, making soul life possible. And an I can only enter the ensouled, living body where soul life is harnessed. In every case, therefore, the next higher level arises through partial death or withdrawal of the previous one. The search for a spiritual home is the second, rising curve which, in the perspective of Christian culture, has more the character of a Whitsun event. Finally, I wish to make one remark. Answer-

ing the questions posed at the beginning of this article has certain consequences. To be able to run a Waldorf school, teachers need an initial relationship to the nature of the human being, and this is an important foundation. Only if we know something about the diverse levels or aspects of the human being can we create a relationship to the wider world. The themes of incarnation and reincarnation, and that of human evolution, appear of key importance – otherwise the curriculum remains incomprehensible. The task of Waldorf teacher training centres is to expound and clarify these fundamental issues.

Dr. Albrecht Schad is an upper school biology teacher of biology, chemistry and geography, and a professor of upper school pedagogy in Stuttgart.

## Bibliography

- Pflug, Hans, D. (1984): *Die Spur des Lebens*. Springer-Verlag. Berlin, Heidelberg, New York, Tokyo.
- Schad, Albrecht (2008): *Warum Pubertät?* *Erziehungskunst* 2008, p. 529-534.
- Schad, Wolfgang (1966): *Biologisches Denken*. *Elemente der Naturwissenschaft* No. 5, p. 10-19. Dornach.
- Schad, Wolfgang (2013): *Verstehen wir das Leben in Entwicklung?* In: *Jahrbuch für Goetheanismus* 2013, p. 187. Tycho Brahe-Verlag.
- Steiner, Rudolf (GA 115): *A Psychology of Body, Soul and Spirit*. Anthroposophy, Psychosophy, Pneumatosophy
- Steiner, Rudolf (GA 34): *The Education of the Child in the Light of Anthroposophy*
- Steiner, Rudolf (GA 293): *The Foundations of Human Experience*. Lecture 10
- Steiner, Rudolf (GA 294): *Practical Advice to teachers*. Lecture 7
- Zdražil, Tomáš (2000): *Gesundheitsförderung und Waldorfpädagogik*. Dissertation

## Just where are we heading?

### A letter to Colleagues

*Dear colleagues,*

*The more Waldorf schools you get to know, the more – with all the joy with so many wonderful initiatives – it gets you thinking too: how will the Waldorf movement's development continue? And: what role do the schools play in Germany – above all, in view of the tsunami-wave of people retiring that is rolling towards a lot of schools? Are we still on the right track? Where do you want to be with each individual school in 7 or 12 years' time?*

*My letter to you has become very long. It will take 20 minutes to read it. However, I hope that despite its daunting length as many of you as possible will find the time to get to grips with the thought-provoking questions. I do indeed believe that we shall have to make important, fundamental decisions in every single school. For if we do not take them, other factors will decide.*

*In this sense I would like to share some thoughts and questions with you.*

*With warm greetings,*

*Valentin Wember*

*Translated by John Weedon*

#### **1. 'School Leadership' and the 'Mission' of Waldorf Schools**

'Running a school' in the sense of 'giving it direction' is something other than 'management'. Marvin Bower (1903-2003) expressed it through two book titles, 'The Will to Lead'<sup>1</sup> and 'The Will to Manage'<sup>2</sup>. Stephen Covey (1932-2012) found an impressive picture<sup>3</sup> for the same distinction: if it is a matter of forging a way through an undeveloped area, it is a *management*-task to organise it. (Where will roads or ways be built? What sort of work force do we need and how will we recruit them? How and at what cost will mate-

rials be acquired? How can the costs be kept down and yet the highest possible quality of the roads be assured?). The *leadership*, the people in charge of the school, – in distinction from the management – has an altogether different task: they must determine the area concerned and must have good reasons for doing so. In Covey's words, "Are we in the right forest?" And further, "It is no use making an enormous effort and optimizing the procedures, if you are in the wrong place, just as it is no use climbing up a ladder higher and higher, if the ladder is against the wrong tree."

---

1 Marvin Bower, *The Will to Lead. Running a Business with a network of Leaders*. Harvard Business School Press. Boston 1997.

2 Marvin Bower, *The Will to Manage: Corporate success through programmed Management*. McGraw-Hill, 1966.

3 Stephen Covey (1989), *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*.

What we have been doing for decades in most Waldorf schools in the so-called 'college meetings' or 'inner' college meetings has been far more than 90 % working on *management* tasks. And of these – if we look at it self-critically – 90 % have been 'hand-to-mouth management'.

The failure in Waldorf schools to distinguish between the 'will to lead' and the 'will to manage' is understandable and also forgivable. Nonetheless, the consequences are regrettable.

The mistake is understandable because we Waldorf teachers are educators first and foremost and – in our view of our position – are at most secondly or thirdly 'leaders' in charge of running a school<sup>4</sup>. We are occupied with the daily business of educating and teaching and from time to time these demands push a lot of us to our limits. There is not all that much feeling and space left for fundamental leadership questions. The lack of distinction is also understandable and forgivable because the great majority of us have not been trained in the issues of leadership. We have done the self-administration tasks because they were there to be done. But that was not our main concern. And, of course, we have carried out the self-administration – in the Goethean sense of the word – in an amateurish way, as lay people and sometimes

even as enthusiasts; to sum it up, with an immense amount of good will, a high degree of earnestness<sup>5</sup> and at times even poetically. Nevertheless, it is unfortunate if the central leadership tasks do not get their due.

According to Marvin Bower, everywhere in the world and in every organisation or company 'leadership' has two main tasks;

The first task: to intensify the company mission from year to year.

The second task: leadership means enabling as many co-workers as possible to lead.

*If* the mission of a company is seen in the shareholder-value principle, as it was once formulated by the chairman of a big car company, then *this* goal must be striven for year on year. And at the end of each year whether this goal has been reached or not needs to be carefully examined.

The number one leadership task in a Waldorf school is to realise the 'mission' of Waldorf education and to strengthen it from year to year. However, the difficulty starts just here: what is the *mission* of Waldorf education?

The answer to this question can take two basic directions. The one direction consists of

---

4 It had certainly already been discussed at the planning stage of the first Waldorf school that taking on management tasks and tasks of giving the school direction should belong to the responsibilities of the future teachers. In fact, there was a *pedagogical* reason behind it: a teacher, who has learnt to take responsibility for the school right through to the economic and legal areas, grows through this responsibility and thus stands in front of the children as a different person. He or she is more 'grounded' and thus supports the pupils as a model for their 'grounding' – via imponderable channels. *Collegiate* self-administration (as opposed to self-administration *with a headteacher*) was, therefore, a consciously imposed, strenuous project for self-development; not only – as with every company – to do justice to the second task, but with the additional pedagogical motivation.

5 Parent observers in the bodies running schools turn out to be amazed as a rule by the great scope of the work and the earnestness, with which people struggle to reach the best decisions.

each member of the college expressing their own ideas of this mission. The collection of all the ideas can then be distilled into a common denominator.

The other basic direction consists in gaining clarity about which task or 'mission' Rudolf Steiner originally gave the Waldorf schools (and actually it is a whole bundle of tasks which Rudolf Steiner imparted to the schools).<sup>6</sup>

Now it is an undisputed fact that than meanwhile at numerous Waldorf schools a lot of teachers have little knowledge of this bundle of tasks; for understandable reasons. The consequence of this lack of knowledge, though, is always that people are unable to make *free* decisions. Without knowledge there is no genuine freedom.

If 'leading' or 'running' an organisation or enterprise means constantly strengthening the company mission and developing it further, then every Waldorf school and each individual member of it *must* actually come to realize what they understand as their 'mission'. Secondly, they *must* decide through which of the two ways they want to clarify it. And thirdly, above all, they must *develop instruments or organs for strengthening* the mission from year to year and for examining the success or failure of the process in an honest and objective way.

'Must' really? Do they *have to*? Yes, they *must* do so; unless they have a watered down concept of *responsible leadership*.

1. What is our mission or task?
2. By what means and by when do we want to answer this question?
3. What instruments and organs are we developing in order to improve the realisation of our task/ our mission from year to year and develop it further?

Each college of teachers should find its *own* answers and, of course, it would be a legitimate answer to say, "We have already developed our own model and according to it we are working on the basis of Rudolf Steiner's pedagogy. A more far-reaching '*task*' or a '*mission*', which Rudolf Steiner gave to the Waldorf schools, is of no further importance for us *as a school*. We consider it a private matter." A statement of this kind – blunt in the first part as it may be<sup>7</sup> – would at least be clear and honest in the second part.

In other words, those schools that *shirk* making the above decisions – hard as it may sound – are doing a poor job of *leadership*. Yet, what does it mean, 'those schools'? A 'school' is not an individual human being and therefore cannot carry responsibility and make decisions. It is only human beings as individuals who can carry responsibility and make decisions. Therefore, the above sentence means "Those teachers, who *shirk* making these decisions, are doing a poor job of *leadership*". The sentence sounds terrible, I know, but the reason for it is that it expresses an unpleasant truth: I am responsible. I cannot hide behind a term like 'the

---

6 Between the two basic directions there are numerous and meaningful in-between forms and mixed forms. On what Steiner described as the 'mission' of the Waldorf school see '*Zur Vertiefung der Waldorfpädagogik*' (Giving greater depth to Waldorf education). Dornach 1990 or Peter Selg, '*Der geistige Kern Waldorfschule*' (The Waldorf School and its spiritual Core). Arlesheim/CH, 2009; or else, Eugen Kolisko, '*Vom therapeutischen Charakter der Waldorfschule*' (About the therapeutic Character of the Waldorf School). Essays and Lectures. Dornach 2002.

7 What does 'On the Basis of Rudolf Steiner's Pedagogy' mean concretely?

school'. And just for this very reason, because the truth is unpleasant, the temptation to dodge a decision and responsibility is so great. People forget, though, a decision that has been avoided is nonetheless a decision. And like every decision it has consequences. The consequences may not be immediately apparent, but they will be in the long run. And then they are all the more obvious and more difficult to correct: when two ships leave the port of Biarritz and, to begin with, are set on courses with a few degrees of difference, after 30 minutes there are only a few kilometres distance between them. After 3-4 weeks one ship lands in Boston and the other in Patagonia.

A Waldorf school which evades the question of leadership will be at a different point after 7 years from a school which has made a clear decision and implemented it. It was not without good reason that the 'Red Indian' chieftains had to weigh up in their decision-making what consequences a decision – for instance, the moving of their main settlement – will have for the next three generations.

Three generations – that is asking a lot. We do not have the faculties of 'Native American' chieftains. But contemplating the next 7 to 12 years is part of the requirements of the directing of every organisation. Above all, in view of the retirement of teachers on a massive scale which is facing a lot of Waldorf schools in Germany what answers will be found to the above questions in the near future is fraught with considerable significance.<sup>8</sup> The *responsibility* corresponding to this, is objectively present; we cannot escape it. Basically we only have the choice of recognising this responsibility or ignoring it.

In earlier decades most schools presumed that the 'task' and 'mission' were generally well known. There were few instruments for strengthening the impulse year by year. For one thing people believed that the work in the college meetings would have this effect. Secondly, people trusted that the individual teachers would deepen their work. And thirdly, people trusted the effectiveness of conferences and further training courses (and similar events of *their own arranged by the school*). These instruments had had a powerful effect in the past; thousands of teachers owe a lot to them. And many schools owe their stability at the time to them. However, for years there have been doubts as to whether these instruments are still adequate in the present day. All the more does the college of every single school need to clarify and decide what changed (or new) instruments they want to develop and apply. Only the chief task of those in charge of the school remains constant: how can the implementing of the mission be *strengthened* – despite and actually in the face of changed frames of reference?

## 2. Essential Requirements of the *collegiate Running of a School*

The second task of those running an enterprise is: "Leading means enabling as many people as possible to lead". Here too the question of *how* to do justice to this leadership task arises. In earlier decades people thought that the process of qualifying comes about, so to speak, of its own accord, namely within the framework of self-administration through the participation in the inner college meetings and through taking on so-called offices or delegated tasks. In the meanwhile even this must be called into question.

<sup>8</sup> According to where a school wants to go and what instruments it uses for its further development, it will attract new staff or put them off.

The concept of 'self-administration' was for decades synonymous with 'collegiate leadership' in the Waldorf schools. However, in the first place the term 'self-administration' is a purely political term. Its sense is remarkably simple and only says: the state does *not* administer the establishment. The term 'self-administration', however, has nothing to say as such about the question in which form the 'self-administration' is practised.<sup>9</sup> The majority of the millions of self-administering establishments in Germany (companies, associations, universities) are run by directors or CEOs. When Waldorf schools practise 'self-administration' in the form of *collegiate* running of the schools, then this goes back to Rudolf Steiner. However, we need to take a closer look at it.

Rudolf Steiner has indeed emphasised a number of times that the first Waldorf school, which was founded in Stuttgart in 1919, had *no head*. If we look more closely, then we will have to say: no head *in the usual sense*. For in the first place Steiner himself was definitely the head of the school: he represented the school externally and ran it internally. He set up all the structures from the curriculum to the timetable, he employed teachers and dismissed them.

He changed teachers around, if a class could not manage with a teacher, and, above all, he made very direct demands regarding the teaching methods, and intervened with penetrating remarks, if he saw the educational principles of the Waldorf school being violated: "Thus what I (...) require *as head* of the Waldorf school is that (...) everything that (...) is fixed science in books (...) should be left out of the school lessons."<sup>10</sup>

How does this action fit together with the statement that the Waldorf school is not run by a head teacher?

The apparent contradiction is, in fact, resolved. Strange as it may sound, the anthroposophical understanding of man and its method were seen by Steiner as *the invisible head of the school*. They – the anthroposophical understanding of man and the teaching method – were addressed by Steiner in 1919 as the *spirit of the school*, which should fire all those working at the school with enthusiasm.

We are dealing with one of the most strange headteachers in the world: one that is neither physically visible, nor works with *com-*

---

9 Universities in Germany are self-administering organisations, just as business enterprises, doctors' surgeries and solicitors' chambers are. It is a different story with state schools, where the state takes on the administration. However, with self-administering schools too the state can take on the administration, namely in those cases when the self-governing fails to such a degree that a school becomes incapable of acting. In such a case the state intervenes (via the courts), revokes the school's powers of self-administration and puts it under special measures. The administrator put in by the court is then as head of the school equipped with a complete set of decision-making powers and authority. Quite a lot of things going wrong in a *weak* collegiate form of self-government (such as high-handed granting of leave for conferences, shirking decision-making, unpunctuality of the teachers and things that are much worse) are then brought to an end in an authoritarian way. (The appointed administrator declares his instructions to be 'official' and punishes contraventions with cautions). An unpleasant scenario but one that is instructive.

10 This statement must not be misunderstood. If it is read in context (in GA 310, p61), it will be clear that Steiner was *not* concerned with keeping science out of the lessons. But what he was concerned with was that the teacher makes *science his or her own in a living way* and only lets this personally enlivened science flow into the lessons, but does not work with science that is fixed.

*mand and control, but it expresses itself individually in every individual teacher who seeks it.*<sup>11</sup>

The *invisible educational head*, namely the spirit of the new form of education, makes it possible. It lives in an individual way as one and the same in the heads and hearts of the various teachers. It lives in them and they live in it. Only in this manner will the unity of the school, according to Steiner, be established, which would otherwise be assured by a headship:

*"In a genuine teacher republic we shall not have the bolsters, the directives that come from the headteacher, but rather we shall have to adopt (carry within us?) that which gives us the possibility, gives each one of us the full responsibility for what we have to do. Each person must be completely responsible themselves. **The replacement for the work done by a headteacher can be created by setting up this course of preparation and thereby, through working on it, taking in what makes the school a whole entity.**"*<sup>12</sup>

An amazing and fascinating project: the greatest possible uniformity in a school at the same time as the greatest possible individualisation of the individual teachers!

Conversely, it means if more and more people in a school lose the connection to this *invisible educational director* or fail to find it in the first place, then, according to Steiner, the *collegiate* running of the school will not

function. Then, according to Jürgen Smit (1916–1991), the former head of the Education Section, "then the new educational impulse will *vanish* after three generations".

Therefore, when Steiner intervened as head of the school with particular demands, then he saw himself in such moments only as the mouthpiece of this invisible head of the school firing the teachers with enthusiasm or admonishing them. He preferred it if this physically invisible spirit of the school could be heard *coming from the inner core of the individual teachers*.

As with every good head of an organisation, Steiner considered it important to make himself redundant as a head in the course of time. This will then become possible if the head succeeds in developing the qualities of leadership in as many individual members as possible. At the end of the founding course in 1919 Steiner got each one of the 12 individual designated teachers to personally promise that they would get involved in this.

Nowadays people do not have to agree with this very unusual form of running a school. But people should definitely know about it. Above all, the collegiate way of running a school in the sense Steiner intended had a *necessary precondition*, namely a strong inner relationship of every single member of a school college to the *living* spiritual basis of the new way of education. If this precondition is not fulfilled or too weakly fulfilled, then collegiate running of a school will become highly problematic<sup>13</sup>.

11 Steiner was therefore glad when he saw how the teacher of class 5a was teaching in a completely different way from the teacher of class 5b, but in both cases the same new spirit of education was living.

12 From Rudolf Steiner's address of 20<sup>th</sup> August 1919, reconstructed by Ernst Gabert. Quotation from 'Zur Vertiefung der Waldorfpädagogik' (Deepening Waldorf Education). Dornach 1990, p.69. The addition in brackets is a version added by the editors. The emphasis in the last sentence is by V. Wember.

13 On account of psychological laws collegiate self-administration – without a strong connection to the mission by those in charge – *always* leads to a weakening of the mission and *always* to defects in management (even if it only emerges as a general rule in the course of a number of years). Overall it leads to a

For this reason the collegiate running of Waldorf schools is no dogma; on the contrary. It is a possibility, which is tied to conditions.<sup>14</sup> Holding on to old forms 100 years later merely out of tradition or habit without fulfilling the necessary preconditions is therefore not a good option. In this case people should look around for alternatives within the self-administration framework. Or else people find ways for each individual member of the college to form a steadily growing connection to the *spiritual head* of the school. This is – if people want to have this form of *collegiate* leadership – the task of running a school per se. And this is not the only thing; the resolution of all *management* tasks draws its strength and its colouring from this dimension.

In the present day people are working on structural reforms in quite a lot of schools or else they are holding on to what is suppos-

edly tried and tested. However, every reform can go astray (and quite commonly what is supposedly tried and tested as well) if the main task of heading every school is not put *in the centre*.<sup>15</sup> And that means the overriding task of heading a school always consists in *strengthening* the connection to the mission and not leaving it to arbitrary influences or exclusively to private initiative. For the school founded in 1919 this 'mission' was what Rudolf Steiner had said about it. 100 years later people will have to reflect afresh how they want to relate to it. And if anywhere a mistake could be made, then it is that of believing in and permitting the possibility of faking this process of reflection and decision-making.

In 2019 there will rightly be plenty to celebrate in the world-wide Waldorf movement. And with the abundance of people with a talent for celebrating, there will be no need

---

downwards spiral with occasional upswings in between (which proceed from the initiative of individuals). The deficiencies include among other things: high-handed behaviour (e.g. granting leave to oneself), the tolerating of deficiencies in teaching, because "birds of a feather flock together", the increased susceptibility of individuals to feeling they are victims ("I am far too badly paid for what I am doing", "I get too little recognition", "I am underestimated"), lack of willingness to take on tasks, being prone to conflicts with colleagues, defence of cushy benefits, grotesque self-deception about the actual amount of work (measured as fewer than 1,300 working hours per year with a full teaching load) as opposed to the amount of work 'felt' ("I work here 2,400 hours per year"), declining involvement, resignation and defeatism ("we cannot change anything after all!"), blaming others while letting one's own blind spots grow – and whatever else these kind of pests are called. All these deficiencies always appear as a hairline crack to begin with and are – with collegiate self-administration – *systematically underestimated*; (whereas every burst dam starts off with a hairline crack). The underestimation of hairline cracks is symptomatic and is part and parcel of collegiate self-administration, which believes it can get along *without a constantly strengthened inner connection to the mission*. (Above all people underestimate the negative synergistic effects of several simultaneous hairline cracks). The 'thoroughly researched tendency of collectives to irresponsibility' becomes obvious when contrasted with airlines: with them after a certain number of flight hours every aeroplane is completely stripped down, examined, repaired and put together again. Something equivalent for the structures of schools exists only exceptionally and is far removed from being standard.

- 14 The self-administration of Waldorf schools is not an 'achievement', but is a provision of *the state*. It applies to all independent schools and is in this respect trivial. Though, the state does reserve the right to withdraw the right of schools to run themselves, namely when, for example, a school trust has become incapable of acting. In such cases a school trust is put under 'special measures'.
- 15 Sometimes reform efforts – for all that is justified about them – even show aspects of unconscious avoidance of the central task. It is a matter of a quite natural psychological reflex. We can encounter it by asking, "Are we running away from the actual task?"

for concern about it. However, the celebrations may run the risk of being founded on clay feet if the decisive question of running the school is not raised and answered honestly. And no matter how the answers turn out, the decisive question is: *Just where are we heading?*<sup>16</sup>

### 3. The spiritual Dimension

From an anthroposophical side the reproach has been made against the thoughts presented here that they would disregard an important spiritual dimension.

Rudolf Steiner gave – this is little known today – the so-called anthroposophical 'branches' an eminently spiritual task: through the common study of anthroposophy a kind of spiritual substance should arise, which is offered to the so-called spiritual *masters* of the spiritual world. What these spiritual masters then do with the spiritual substance that has arisen and in which way they employ it for world development, this needs to be left to the masters. Common study of anthroposophy in the 'branches' was thus established by Steiner as a kind of service to the world. The question was not what the individual would gain by studying anthroposophy or whether it would satisfy him or her. The point was and is what the individual through working with the other members puts at the disposal of the *spiritual world*. To put it in nutshell, an anthroposophical 'branch' is not a fitness centre.

In a fitness centre it is a matter of *one's own* fitness. With the anthroposophical branch work one's own spiritual fitness is not even a secondary matter.

Countless people, unknown to us in the present have worked for decades with this inner

attitude with great energy. But it is not only that: right into the 1980s there were several people in the colleges of a lot of the Waldorf schools who understood the work in the college in this sense. For them it was a matter of creating spiritual substance for the world. The question of what someone might gain from a college meeting would have appeared absurd. Their question ran the other way, what can we put at the disposal of the spiritual world and the children through our work?

These people knew that faithfulness towards the task that had been understood in this way was of considerable significance. Just this *faithfulness towards the spiritual task* was taken to be an effective spiritual force. And in so far it is not so astonishing in retrospect that these people were always present with a reliability that can hardly be imagined now; not because they had to be, but because they *wanted* to be for the reasons given above.

Such viewpoints sound disconcerting for most people today. But whoever has experienced the people described above with their very special inner attitude will remember also what inner power of upright bearing streamed into a school through them. Maybe – but this is only a hunch – these people also drew a considerable part of their often astounding resilience from this kind of work and inner attitude.

If one reads the brilliant study of the late Frank Schirrmacher (who died in June 2014), *'Ego. The Play of Life'*, with this background in mind, then it may be more comprehensible why this inner attitude is only to be found occasionally in schools nowadays. Schirrmacher was co-editor of FAZ (Frankfurter Allgemeine

<sup>16</sup> From: Ingeborg Bachmann, *'Reklame'*

meine Newspaper). With an astonishing wealth of knowledge, an amazing depth of assimilation and unerring clarity he shows in his book the driving forces and impulses that dominate the world today. It is chilling when you get all that presented in such detail; the devil himself in a live concert. Schirrmacher describes it all soberly, objectively and, above all, is deeply concerned about the human being. At the same time we may well realise in the course of reading it that the gigantic forces that are centring everything around the golden calf of the ego will not stop at the gates of the Waldorf schools. We, teachers and parents of the present day, – whether we admit it or not – are just as much affected by these tendencies. Whether it is a matter of putting a monetary value on school tasks, which it would have been grotesque to pay for 30 years ago, or whether it is a matter of the inner attitude to the common college work: what Schirrmacher describes in his book is *everywhere*.

A spiritual understanding of the common work in a school, as it has always been in previous decades, has a difficult stand in the conditions of modern life. Yet it is not impossible. On the contrary, it belongs to the signature of modern life – or as Steiner said, 'the consciousness soul epoch' – that *all* healthy processes die away or else are attacked. This unpleasant fact will go on spreading continually. As Steiner puts it, there will in future *not*

be *any more* constructive impulses that will not be fought over. Rather it is the *natural tendency* of the best forces that they die away if left to their own devices. But that is just the point at which, he continues, consciousness can awaken; and precisely that is something 'modern'. All natural developmental processes will lead to death in future, according to Steiner. This 'natural tendency towards death' will not stop its forward march even or just for the best processes of development. People may be sad and depressed because of it, he tells us; however, we can also reckon with it, be prepared for it and roll up our sleeves. "Yet another wonderful spiritual impulse that is gradually getting lost. A pity, but it was to be expected. The challenge is therefore: wake up! And not just react, but invent a *re-sponse*."

That is definitely not easy. However, it throws a gauntlet down to our creative forces. And deep at heart, if unconsciously, every human being presumably wants to have their creative forces called upon. With the pupils this is no different from with the teachers.

This article is intended to do nothing other than serve as a *reminder*. And it is intended to encourage people to *reflect* carefully on their own situation in order to then see ways forward into the future (perhaps even to see *it with spiritual vision*) and make essential decisions.

---

## Agenda

### 2014

October 26 – 29  
Conference for Educational Support Teachers  
(German, English and Spanish)  
To Understand Learning – Finding the Individual Approach

### 2015

February 13 – 15  
Meditative Praxis (only in German)

March 30 – April 3  
Transitions in Childhood from Birth to 14 Years:  
Significance, Challenges, Consequences  
Tasks for Educators and Teachers

May 29 – 31  
Conference for Religion Teachers  
(in German and English)

October 5 – 9  
International Conference for Mathematic  
Teachers

November 1 – 3  
Conference for Educational Support Teachers

### 2016

March 28 – April 2  
10<sup>th</sup> World Teachers' Conference