



Pedagogical Section  
at the Goetheanum

# Journal



## The Journal of the Pedagogical Section

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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:** Angela Wesser

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## Foreword

*Dear Colleagues,*

We hope you have all had a good start to the new year 2015 and have settled into a good working routine.

Here at the Pedagogical Section we are busy finalising preparations for the imminent conference on transitions and we have also started preparing for the World Teachers' Conference (WTC) 2016.

This year's Easter Journal offers a preview of the WTC but above all it is devoted to the memory of a colleague who was a member of the group carrying this conference over three decades: Stefan Leber. He died on 18th February 2015. We look back on someone who committed all his energy to the world wide school movement, and together with others accompanied and developed it tirelessly.

We are also taking a look ahead at two conferences. The annual conference for learning support teachers (1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> November 2015), which takes place in Dornach each year, will consider the subject of "memory". Claus-Peter Röh shares some fundamental thoughts with us on this topic. Oliver Conradt presents the first World Conference for Teachers of Mathematics at the Goetheanum (5<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> October 2015). Florian Osswald briefly introduces the current situation in education which will provide the foundation for the theme of the World Teachers' Conference (28<sup>th</sup> March – 2<sup>nd</sup>

April 2016). More articles will be published in future journals to help colleagues prepare for the conference in their meetings where this is a wish.

Several articles have been published on the subject of the class teacher. In the meantime two groups have also worked with this topic, one from the perspective of the class teacher actively engaged in the classroom, one from the perspective of teacher training. Short reports on both meetings are included in this journal, as well as the English version of Christof Wiechert's article on class teaching from the previous edition. Tomáš Zdražil's contribution has also now been translated into English and is printed in this journal.

The St John's edition of the journal will be sent out in digital version only. Exchange rates between the Euro and the Swiss Franc are forcing us to economise. The Michaelmas edition will once again be available in a printed version.

We hope that readers will be able to extract useful ideas from the various contributions for their work in the classroom or for their preparation.

With the very best wishes from Dornach for all your good work in all the schools.

*The Pedagogical Section*

## In Memory of Stefan Leber

*Bund der Freien Waldorfschulen in Deutschland, Claus-Peter Röh und Florian Osswald*

**Stefan Leber passed away on February 18, 2015. He profoundly shaped the entire Waldorf movement from the 1970s until the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.**



Stefan Leber was born in Stuttgart on March 28, 1937. After the Second World War, he joined the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade of the Umlandshöhe Waldorf School as a pupil of Felix Goll. He later said that was "the beginning of a wonderful time for him". He was the pupil of many well-known teachers of the second generation and established life-long friendships to many of his fellow pupils.

His family lived in Marbach where his father worked as a janitor at the Schiller Museum. At the age of 16 he left school and did an apprenticeship as a chemigraph. The influences, on the one hand, of a working-class upbringing and environment and, on the other hand, his intensive encounters and exchanges with anthroposophical friends, economic authorities, and priests of the

Christian Community were to shape his entire life.

After finishing his apprenticeship, he studied political science, sociology and philosophy in Berlin where he also came into contact with others, such as Manfred Mackensen or Christoph Gögelein, who were to later play decisive roles in the Waldorf movement. In an Anthroposophical study group, he met his future wife Sigrid, with whom he shared a common passion for opera. At the Berlin State Opera he also met his revered teacher Ernst Weißert – not knowing that he would later follow in his footsteps. After completing his studies, he attended the teacher-training seminar in Dornach and then taught at the Pforzheim Waldorf School from 1962 until 1973. During that time he became increasingly active in the German Waldorf School Federation in Stuttgart. In 1971 he became a member of the executive board of the German Federation. In 1973, he and his family moved to Stuttgart and he began teaching at the Waldorf Teachers Seminar where he worked together with Ernst-Michael Kranich, Olaf Oltmann and Wolfgang Schad. In the 1970s, together with Günter Altehage und Manfred Leist, he succeeded in establishing a secure legal basis for all Waldorf schools in Baden Württemberg – laws which have remained in place until today.

Stefan Leber published more than twenty books on a broad range of themes including the social structures of Waldorf schools, pedagogical anthropology (Menschenkunde), reincarnation and karma, a commentary on "The Lords Prayer" by Cieszkowski and on atomic energy.

More than any other single figure, he shaped the entire Waldorf movement during a period extending over thirty years. His courses for prospective teachers were inspiring and unique and his speeches and contributions at countless Waldorf conferences were humorous, engaging and reflected his ongoing interest in and openness to the world.

*'Freundeshilfe' of the Bund of Waldorf Schools in Germany*  
Translated by Peter Lutzker

### **On the Death of Stefan Leber on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2015**

Stefan Leber's work was instrumental in the growth of the Steiner Waldorf School movement. In 1970 there were 95 schools worldwide; by the year 2000 this number had grown to 877 schools with over 19,000 teachers. Stefan Leber, with his energy for work, was at the centre of this dynamic growth.

What was typical for Stefan Leber was his ability to combine several layers of reality: if we met him in the Eighties as very young members of a founding initiative we were greeted by a deep interest in each one of us but also some serious questioning. Had we then complied with the necessary requirements, Stefan Leber would accompany the founding of our school with endless confidence in the motivation of our young group of teachers. He believed that schools founded through the initiative of parents and children also required an appropriate spiritual quota of teachers. He was asked many times for advice, his valued opinion and active help when schools met with difficulties or went into crisis. He said in an interview in 1992: *"Wherever there is life there is*

*conflict and friction. In this way conflict belongs to life. The only question is whether conflicts are allowed to develop for their own sake or whether they serve the problem-solving process."*<sup>1</sup>

In meetings and in teacher training, Stefan Leber was the "reality politician" among the speakers and lecturers. Due to his deep interest and his inner connection with the three-fold nature of the social organism he was able to combine at any time the clear intellectual study of anthroposophy with concrete impacts in the social life. He would often point to concrete examples from production processes – for example as students we were requested to learn in detail about the production, transport, installation and use of a hob on a kitchen stove. He would then expect the same level of knowledge when considering a Steiner Waldorf school as an institution of the free spiritual life. It would give him pleasure to analyse the complexity of a large school organism in the light of threefoldness: how is a community of teachers able to separate the qualities of the pedagogical meeting from those of the business meeting and the "decision-making meeting", and yet hold on to the spiritual entity of the whole? Stefan Leber would immediately take note if there were those among our student group with a knowledge of anthroposophy who asked poignant questions about how things were done practically in the Waldorf School: exciting and memorable exchanges would often follow. Stefan Leber would present the relationship between the different judgement levels of idealism and reality with quick wit and humorous seriousness.

We thank Stefan Leber deeply for his significant, highly responsible and far reaching

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1 Konfliktbewältigung, Flensburger Hefte 38, 1992, S. 102 f.

work in the development of the Steiner Waldorf School movement.

*Claus-Peter Röh*

*Translated by Steffi Cook*

### **Stefan Leber**

In 1973, Stefan Leber became a member of the International Forum of Steiner Waldorf Schools, formerly the Hague Circle, and he left it on May 3<sup>rd</sup> 2008 in Helsinki. He had always been enthusiastic about those years in which the school movement had grown rapidly, and he wished that the members would continue to be conscious of the international character of the Waldorf impulse.

He backed the growth of the Waldorf movement, but he did not want it to be an expansion at any price. He was convinced that wherever children wanted a school, teachers would always be found. Therefore he supported the founding of new schools. The only question which remained for him was, how those two groups – the children and the teachers – would find each other.

Stefan Leber showed us what it means to carry responsibility for the international school movement. He knew where new schools were starting up and where a crisis was underway. But what is more, he stood up for new schools and encouraged their growth without any paternalism.

I had my first impression of Stefan Leber in Trubschachen, a tiny village in Switzerland. A local association, which aims to implement

Rudolf Steiner's Impulse in state funded schools, holds its annual conferences there. There were about 250 participants attending and for them Stefan Leber represented the established Waldorf Movement. They were extremely critical towards him and I was curious as to how he would fulfil his task. However, the thunder clouds disappeared after the first lecture. Stefan Leber had found the right tone of voice, the appropriate topics and even sparked off the audience's enthusiasm towards the end.

My second impression of him comes from a meeting of the International Forum in South Africa. One night, the South African hosts tried to introduce us to their culture. The Wellington Boot Dance, which originates from the work in the mines, was amongst the many contributions. After the presentation the guests were invited to take part in the dance. And who would be the first to join the dancers? Stefan Leber. It was such a joy to see this mighty man dance.

Every step into unknown territory represents a threshold. Stefan Leber knew that he was choosing his own thresholds and approached them with courage. Often, these were the moments when his distinct humour flared up and expressed his inner orientation particularly well. With every step, the horizon changes and calls for a new orientation. Stefan Leber has led the school movement a few steps forward. We will see where the journey leads to because it is our turn now.

*Florian Osswald*

*Translated by Karin Smith*

## 10<sup>th</sup> World Teachers' Conference 2016 (WTC 2016)

On behalf of the preparation team

*Florian Osswald*

*Translated by Karin Smith*

Dear colleagues,

The World Teachers' Conference invites people from all over the world to explore educational questions. The tenth such conference is going to take place after Easter 2016 in Dornach. In this paper we want to describe the topic of the conference and offer some preliminary thoughts.

Since their start in 1982, the conferences have always been connected to decisive contemporary topics such as:

*The Power of Imagination in Teaching, Educating the Will – Awakening the Spirit in the Head or Teaching: When Future is Now – How the Self Finds its Way.*

In the meantime, the world has become a global village and Waldorf initiatives have sprung up on every continent. The Waldorf Movement is going to celebrate its centenary in 2019.

It is indeed significant that the International Forum, which is responsible for organising WTC 2016, has met in Israel to discuss the topic of the conference. The discussions took place in a politically tense atmosphere. Polarising forces were omnipresent and challenged us to recognize not only their destructive but also their creative potential. We were exposed to the polarisation and asked ourselves some questions:

- What is our stance towards the current societal circumstances? How, for example, do we handle assessments? Do we stand

above them? Are they an instrument with which we pat ourselves on the back or do they make us feel depressed? Do we learn from them even when they do not meet our criteria? Do we still try hard to find the precise wording or is talking about the struggle mere babble rather than a moment of waking consciousness?

- Do we overcome ourselves and our prejudice in order to look closely at the children and teens and at the historical circumstances in which they live? Do questions emerge in us? Without real interest in current affairs, we stand still and only come up against what we have always known; do we experience this for real? Are we open to the other or are we stuck in conventions and lose sight of the new?
- How do we deal with answers? Is the power of the answers to be found in the way we arrived at them? What comes to the surface when the inner fire is missing? More than mere mechanical routine? How do we deal with new insights? Do we sow and plant them? Do we care for them?

Let us not forget that our educational activities take place in public. We are part of a society with its particular conventions, even though it might sometimes be appropriate to erect a protective wall around our schools and centres. The political situation, such as we find it for example in Israel, significantly influences the atmosphere in which we teach and educate the children.



The numerous challenges, the increase in external difficulties and obstacles for education call for a strengthening and deepening of pedagogical effectiveness through the empowering sources of anthroposophy. Every teacher and educator has to commit themselves to the inner process and ongoing work through anthroposophy. Thus, the sleeping pedagogical talent is woken up to practical activity in the encounter and cooperation with the children and adolescents. The individual endeavour can be strengthened and deepened through a shared search for truth and in cooperation with the College of Teachers. And as far as people consciously take up their place in contemporary culture as members of an anthroposophically inspired world school movement, education becomes a service on behalf of the Zeitgeist.

Flourishing education and teaching can only emerge through the work of each individual. It is not just given; again and again it has to be created anew. The activity of creation makes teaching come alive and in turn strengthens the teacher's health.

At the 2016 conference we will explore the conditions for creating something new; a process which everyone has to go through and which is the basis for a lively, spirited education.

Rudolf Steiner summed up the Waldorf method on 11. April 1924 in the following three lines:

To spend oneself in matter  
is to grind down souls.  
To find oneself in the spirit  
is to unite human beings.  
To see oneself in all humanity  
is to construct worlds.

(Translated by Anthroposophic Press)

Those three steps encourage us to create an education which is able to defy contemporary conflicts.

No doubt, transfer of knowledge is important. We need facts and information as a basis for knowledge. Digital media are at the forefront of this type of knowledge and we are called to deal with it in a meaningful way. Digital media represent the embodiment of knowledge but also its disembodiment. Our physical existence is deeply challenged by today's scientific and technical prospects, and we urgently need to reflect on its significance for human life.

Real understanding, however, comes about through relating isolated pieces of knowledge to each other. It is crucial to experience unity in which each individual piece is integrated and has its proper place. To meet each other in spirit, means to connect human beings to each other. But even the spirit has a position in today's world which hinders its proper incarnation. The connection between body and spirit often floats about in foggy concepts.

However, it is not enough to connect isolated pieces of knowledge to each other. We need to take one further step if we want to learn to act responsibly. What is the connection between matter and people? Do things exist independently? How am I connected to the cosmos? This third learning step is fundamentally significant. It makes people feel that they are part of the world and thus enables them to become responsible for the world out of their own inner strength.

In this sense, the 2016 conference wants to serve as a powerful impulse for dynamic education. Every one of us creates it, everyone is a creator, everyone can be transformed from creature to creator through in-depth study and responsible action based on a clarified relationship between body and spirit.

We have summed up these thoughts in the following conference title:

*"The Drama of Spirit and Body: Education as the Art of Breakthrough"*

## Anthroposophical Aspects of Memory Formation

Claus-Peter Röh

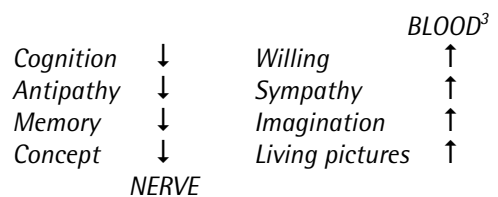
Translated from the German by Margot M. Saar

At the 2014 Learning Support Conference it was decided that in 2015 the focus would be on remembering and memory formation. Our particular challenge as learning support teachers is to identify the obstacles to memory formation in the individual children and to develop suitable remedial steps. A second challenge lies in the problems created by new habits for the memory forces: in many fields of life, the capacity to memorize and remember is replaced by having quick access to the internet. "Gert Gegerenzer, head of the Centre for Adaptive Behaviour and Cognition at Berlin's Max Planck Institute, claims that using the internet changes the way we think because we no longer search for information in, but outside of, our heads. Instead of making use of our long-term memory we take the more convenient route of asking a search engine."<sup>1</sup> The corresponding research results reveal that this change in habits leads to a weakening of the memory forces. Many people, children especially, find it more difficult today to memorize fairy-tales, poems or songs. Another remarkable finding of this research is that the loss of memory formation appears to concur with a change in social skills.

### Memory in the field of tension between antipathy and sympathy

Let us look at the question from the point of view of Lecture 2 of *The Foundations of Human Experience* (formerly *Study of Man*). In this lecture Rudolf Steiner gives an im-

pressive description of memory as being linked with antipathy: in forming mental images, we develop great antipathy, out of our physical organization, towards our experiences. Steiner describes these experiences as going back even to our existence in the spiritual world before birth. We often distance ourselves from events or persons in antipathy in order to gain a better understanding, for instance during teachers' meeting. We might say, "Wait – I need to look at this from a distance, I need to 'reflect' on it (from Latin *reflectere*: turn back)." As we do this, memory is formed through a process of antipathetic cognition, "Memory is only heightened by antipathy. You cannot have memory if you have such great sympathy for your thoughts that you 'swallow' them. You have memory only because you have a kind of disgust for these thoughts which prompts you to reflect them and bring them into consciousness. This is their reality."<sup>2</sup> These forces of antipathy, which are at work in the nervous system, are polar opposites of the forces of sympathy working in the will:



This polarity of memory and imagination, which Rudolf Steiner goes on to describe in

1 M. Maurer in the journal *Erziehungskunst*, issue 11/2010, p. 19.

2 R. Steiner, GA 293, *The Foundations of Human Experience*, Hudson NY 1996, tr. R. Lathe and N. Whittaker, p. 55.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 57.

Lecture 11 of the same book, where he speaks of memory types and imagination types in children, means that we need to look carefully at the individual children: we can, indeed, see school children who connect particularly strongly with the forces of antipathy in their kindergarten years and to an increasing extent during the period of metamorphosis of the second dentition. These children tend to look pale and are often doubtful and retreating. When they draw pictures, they use strong contours and emphasize the outlines of objects, while the overall picture appears rather pale. They are wide awake in their questioning, thinking and remembering, but their will and physical forces tend to be weak. In running games outside they tend to be hesitant, even unwilling, preferring the role of observer. – Then there are the children who connect wholly with their will and imagination: with greatest sympathy and joy they immerse themselves in the lesson activities: moving, writing, painting and relating stories. What they produce is usually colourful, dynamic and rich in content. They can have problems memorizing things clearly, their faces flushing easily when they are engaged in work or inwardly involved.

### **The Rhythm of Remembering and Forgetting**

This polarity shows how the organic forces of growth metamorphose in different ways into the soul forces of memory or imagination during the transition between kindergarten and school: some children are pale because they are bound too closely to the alertness of thinking, while others turn red because they are so deeply immersed in their life forces. And their physical organization responds correspondingly depending on whether the

way we teach addresses their memory forces or their imagination. Health in the salutogenic sense is not a static condition but a dynamic wrestling for balance: the very awake "memory type children" need to be addressed differently from the "will and imagination types" who are dreaming, or asleep, in their consciousness. Between these two extremes we see a wide range of individual constitutions. It is very important that (and how) we as teachers perceive these individual manifestations in the child soul and body. Almost five years after the first Waldorf school was founded, Rudolf Steiner wrote, *"The child's memory forces need to be cultivated. But it is essential that, through proper knowledge of the growing child, the teacher should be able to feel and observe how much pressure upon the memory becomes harmful. A very great deal depends on this faculty of good judgment. Teachers who have become artists of education will see in the students' outer appearance something like a barometer, which will tell them how much memorizing they may expect from the students and when to stop appealing to the powers of memory."*<sup>4</sup>

What is too much and what is too little when we address the child's memory? Recent research, for instance in neurology, has shown that a "good memory" is not a linear one that is always awake. An appropriate, healthy rhythm between remembering and forgetting is necessary for us to process experiences. Intensive experience and learning are transformed when we rest or sleep: what we have worked on and practised turns into skills and competence. What is essential is often more pronounced after sleep, while inessential experiences fade away. In learning support – whether it happens daily or

4 R. Steiner, GA 304a, *Waldorf Education and Anthroposophy. Volume 2*. Lecture of 19 November 1923. Hudson NY 1996, tr. R. Lathe and N. Whittaker, p. 175.

weekly – it is also important to see what, out of the work of one lesson, emerges as unconscious or half-conscious skills, or as conscious memory, in the next lesson. This brings up a variety of questions for our work as learning support teachers:

- How do we experience the forces of antipathy and memory, and of sympathy and will in the individual child?
- How do memorizing and forgetting relate in the child?
- How is this relationship expressed in the physical body and how do we learn to read the "barometer" of forces?
- How do we perceive new unconscious skills and conscious memories in the next lesson?
- What ways of supporting children do we develop?

### **Remembering is New Inner Perception**

In order to be able to help individual children with their memory formation we need to have a closer look at the process of remembering. The fact that the memory forces are set free during the second dentition shows the profound connection between memory and physical organization. The strong impact our lessons have on the physical development, depending on whether they are more memory-oriented or more will-and-imagination based, can be observed in everyday school life. In a middle-school class that has been taught in a purely intellectual and abstract way for a whole lesson, we will notice that many pupils grow paler and physically more rigid or congested. We see it even more strongly in upper school students who have

just sat a five-hour exam. – The effect of joy, enthusiasm and rhythmic movement is the exact opposite, even physically: the faces brighten up and posture, breathing, circulation and body temperature change immediately. Everything we experience, especially as young people, in our feeling and willing, is imprinted in our organs. What we experience in the outside world becomes organic inner life; and this is, according to Rudolf Steiner, the basis for memory, "[...] all these organs vibrate in unison, vibrate with our feeling and willing in circulation and metabolism. Just as an afterimage arises in the eye, in the same way a memory arises within the entire human being, though in differentiated and specific ways; it is a memory of experiences in the outer world: The whole human being is an organ that vibrates, and the organs (of which people normally say that they are placed next to each other) are there in reality so that human beings can process and retain experiences of spirit and soul."<sup>5</sup>

If we think that we "retain" our experiences of the external world in all their vividness in the etheric life of our organs, remembering becomes a new perceiving of that experience. Conscious memory arises to the extent to which the astral body, as the vehicle for our consciousness, can newly experience, sense and read the imprints of the ether body. In other words: in the complex process of memory formation the first thing that happens is that the outer experience is imprinted in the etheric life of the organs. The astral body's rich world of feeling that newly senses and "reads" the vivid impressions then becomes the actual vehicle of memory. "But when we remember, we really perceive inner events in the same way we perceive outer objects. [...] We need to know that the continuing effects of mental images and ideas

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5 Rudolf Steiner, GA 301, *The Renewal of Education*, Great Barrington 2001, p. 63 (translation adapted).

*that, later, emerge in memory actually take place in the sphere of our feelings. It is our life of feelings – with its joys, pains, pleasures, displeasures, tension and relaxation – that is the actual vehicle for the enduring qualities of the ideas and mental images that we can recall at a later stage.*<sup>6</sup> This consonance between the memory process and the life processes on the one hand and the feeling life on the other prompts more questions regarding our approach to teaching.

### **Methodical Aspects of Memory Formation**

The foundations for the developing memory forces are prepared before the children reach school age, especially if the physical organization can develop in a healthy way. Excessive and premature demands on the children's memory mean that essential forces are withdrawn from that healthy organic development. Child health is enhanced, on the other hand, by activities that children can engage in with inner devotion, with their feeling and will: movement in whatever form, active lesson participation, playing, games, repeated experiences of stories, songs, games, festivals, etc.

All this changes when children enter formal education. The memory forces that are now released from the physical organization need to be actively engaged. The importance of the feeling life as the "actual vehicle for the enduring qualities of the ideas and mental images" is a crucial factor in Steiner teaching. Educating "the whole person" means addressing and stimulating the students' feeling and will – at any age and in any subject – in a way that allows the inner imprints of the experiences to deepen as a result of the students'

own activity. If we manage to newly kindle the young person's interest and inner participation in ever new ways, their experiences can imprint themselves deeply in their being, furthering the development of a strong memory. *"In other words, you must see why everything that awakens intense interest in children also helps strengthen their memory. We must increase the power to remember through the feeling and will and not through simple intellectual memory exercises."*<sup>7</sup>

We can help children to strengthen their memory forces in learning support by addressing their feeling life. For one child, this might be best done through music, for another through drawing. Sometimes we can gain a lot of insight into a child's feeling life by observing their small habits. We know how strongly the application of our will supports memory, not only from the fact that we walk around when we learn a part for a play: in language learning and arithmetic the accompanying movements that address feeling and will are crucial aids that consolidate what has been learned and make it lasting.

If we notice that a child finds it difficult to form memory forces despite all our endeavours, we are led to ask further questions, including questions of karma:

- How is this child connected with the feeling powers of the astral body, the "actual vehicle" for memory?
- Is the child able to focus on experiences with feeling and interest?
- How does the child live in his or her etheric forces?

6 Rudolf Steiner, GA 302, *Waldorf Education for Adolescents*, Hudson NY 1996, tr. C. Hoffmann. Lecture of 12 June 1921.

7 See note 2, p. 136.

- Were the physical organs prevented from developing in a healthy way during the first years of life?
- What does the child's inherited body or destiny bring to his/her development?
- How do the members of the child's organization work together?

### **The Role of the 'I' in Memory Formation**

The *Curative Education Course* describes a class 2 child<sup>8</sup> suffering from memory loss. Rudolf Steiner recommended trying to make the strongest possible impression on the child in the lessons, as a means of helping the "upper" organization ('I' and astral body) to connect more intimately with the lower organisation of etheric and physical body, "You have to consider that memory depends on the proper organization of physical body and ether body. The astral body and the 'I' do not take impressions retained in memory with them."<sup>9</sup> The following question directs our gaze to the rhythmic system, to the child's feeling life, and from there to a possible pedagogical approach:

*"Now I do not know if attempts have already been made to see if she remembers simple folk songs?"*

*Dr Ilse Knauer: That is easier for her.*

*Try, then, to work on the basis of this existing power to retain impressions, for instance directing attention to short poems where a particular element recurs always after three lines, so that the child gets a strong impression of rhythm, and the time will then come when you can also offer the child impressions that are not rhythmic."<sup>10</sup>*

When children, who are in need of learning support, manage to develop their memory in a particular field through hard work and practice, it is impressive to experience how much they change as a result of their progress. If one experiences this joy and sees how pupils grow inwardly, one realizes how learning and memorizing involve the whole being, including the 'I'. In *An Outline of Esoteric Science* the importance of memory for the development of the 'I' is described in relation to the other members of the human organization: "What death is to the physical body and sleep to the ether body, forgetting is to the astral body. We can also say that life belongs to the ether body, consciousness to the astral body, and memory to the 'I'."<sup>11</sup>

Memory formation clearly involves the whole human being. Gaining deeper understanding of this and other riddles will be our task at this year's Learning Support Conference.

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8 R. Steiner, GA 317, *Education for Special Needs*. Forest Row 2014, tr. A. Meuss, Lecture of 6 July 1924, p. 129f.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid., p. 130.

11 R. Steiner, GA 13, *An Outline of Esoteric Science*, Hudson NY 1997, tr. C. Creeger, p. 40. (An earlier translation is published as *Occult Science*)

## Class Teacher Questions and Everyday School Life

Two meetings on 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> February 2015 on the professional work of the Class teacher

*Christof Wiechert*

*Translated by John Weedon*

This February there were two remarkable meetings on the questions of class teachers and their work, their tasks and much more besides.

On 13<sup>th</sup> February a group of active class teachers met at the School of Spiritual Science in Stuttgart at the invitation of the School and the Pedagogical Section. Claus-Peter Röh, one of the Section leaders, described the profile of the class teacher and portrayed how the key issue is a faculty, besides the faculty of civility, which includes the idea of the *art of relating*. This is not only directed towards the pupils but includes the parents and colleagues. As class teachers are concerned with various years of child development, this is reliant on the *art of transformation*. And these by no means inconsiderable faculties take on what manifests itself in the child from the conditions prior to birth and what the teachers need to bring towards the future.

In various working groups the class teacher colleagues gave an account of their daily work.

From all these accounts it became evident how complex the tasks of the modern class teacher are. Besides the actual teaching there is the intensive keeping in touch with the parents; family backgrounds, which may well be most varied in character. In the course of this through the internet and email extensive correspondence develops. More-

over, there is the question of getting on with colleagues, something that does not always speak of the quality of co-operation. Then, there are also the new tasks coming up every year over the eight years so that you can hardly rest on your laurels on the basis of what you have developed for yourself. In addition to all this there are the tasks of running the school and the frequently considerable burden with the pupils in need of greater support. Even if one were to fulfil all these tasks, there remains, nonetheless, a great challenge on a soul level, a burden, that calls for it to be worked upon.

How do we deal with such a mixed bag of tasks? On the one hand, we may cut ourselves off and quite clearly define and limit the teacher's tasks for ourselves; on the other hand, we may come to identify ourselves so closely with the everyday tasks of the teacher that in the end we do not know ourselves anymore.

We can see how here before the *art of education* can begin, the *art of living* must be practised. At this point the question was asked whether teachers are prepared for such a form of the art of living or whether each one must seek these ways forward for themselves?

The day following the meeting in Stuttgart the fourth conference of class teachers took place at the Waldorf Teachers' Seminar in Berlin.



This is an initiative of the training committee of the *Bund der Freien Waldorfschulen* (Association of independent Waldorf Schools) and concerns itself with the profile of the class teacher in 21<sup>st</sup> century. The difference between this and the initiative described above is that in this case the focus is rather on the class teacher work from the viewpoint of teacher training. What must happen at the teachers' seminars so that this form of being a teacher, which is the hallmark of the Waldorf schools, can continue.

The much-mentioned question of class size was discussed, but also the question of burn-out. When positive results fail to materialize, exhaustion will appear more readily than when the teacher experiences they have made a right decision in a teaching or social situation.

Here too the question about the 'social-emotional' strains and dealing with uncertainty came up. Then the question of acquiring competence with the various age groups has to be put. Do the teachers have the abilities to develop it in an appropriate way for each age group? Whoever is following the academic discussion about the acquiring of competence knows this concept has had its day. Particularly for understanding the profile of the class teacher it is too limited, for what counts are quite other abilities, which are barely articulated.

However, what stands in the background and must be answered (and is not yet answered) is, are there certain kinds of human

constitution in the present that stand in the way of this profession? We know it from statements like, "the people in the early days, the so-called great personalities, they could do it, everything was much more straightforward ...". This is not to be underestimated, for it is true. 50 years ago everything was simpler, more natural, people could get away with the odd slip without fearing any special consequences; whereas nowadays everything is much 'tighter', and yet the teaching profession is still – even in the present day – a lovely, many-sided task!

The case was put for creating a new image of the teacher, a picture of empowering for the future, which will also enable people to be engaged in their profession with joy, providing you experience that you can do it ...

Philipp Martzog, the co-worker responsible for academic studies at the School of Spiritual Science in Stuttgart, subsequently presented the provisional results of an empirical study, which aims to capture the comparative effects of Waldorf teacher training.

The coming meetings will concern themselves with this new picture of the teacher that is to be created and with the question of how this can be realised in the training courses at the teachers' seminars. The three dimensions of the Waldorf teacher's work, the faculty of imagination, the ability to work with others and, related to it, the transparency with regard to one's own teaching work seem to be central.

# First International Conference for Teachers of Mathematics at the Goetheanum

5<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> October 2015

Learning Mathematics – Between Discovery and Invention

*Oliver Conradt*

*translated by Karin Smith*

Almost 100 years ago, Waldorf education was founded by Rudolf Steiner in Stuttgart, Germany, upon a request by Emil Molt. The mere length of time that this impulse has been alive deserves our admiration. Its centenary is a beacon to the fruitfulness of the impulse and shows that it has served the needs of thousands of people in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

However, after 100 years it is also time to look back and cast a critical eye on what has been achieved. Where does Waldorf education stand today? What are its contemporary tasks? What does Waldorf education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century look like?

Such basic questions, which are an issue at many Waldorf schools worldwide, necessarily lead to the foundation impulses. If we want to look a hundred years into the future, we also need to look back a hundred years!

One of the basic tenets in Waldorf education is to teach on the basis of a holistic knowledge which connects the human being to the whole universe.<sup>1</sup> This motif is connected to the current development of the consciousness soul. It is the consciousness soul which frees human beings from isolation so that

truth and goodness can live within them.<sup>2</sup> In this way, a connection between the human spirit and the cosmic spirit can start to grow.<sup>3</sup>

The teaching of mathematics at Waldorf schools is guided by this basic motif. A well known example are the analytical mathematics which are used right from the start. The basic arithmetic operations are based on a whole, let's say 12. The children then discover that there are various possibilities to divide this entity, i.e.  $12=7+3+1+1$  or  $12=5+4+2+1$ , just to mention two possibilities. The synthetic method, on the other hand, looks first at the parts and then determines the whole, i.e.  $7+5=12$ .

For the synthetic method we need to only imagine what is absolutely necessary to find the end result, but the analytical method lets us experience the soul's freedom.<sup>4</sup>

Modern developments in mathematics are closely connected to the development of the consciousness soul. This is why it is important to further refine and develop the above mentioned motif.

Rudolf Steiner talks about the connection between mathematics and the conscious-

1 Rudolf Steiner, *The Foundations of Human Experience*, Lecture 2 of 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1919

2 Rudolf Steiner, *Theosophy*, Chapter IV about Body, Soul and Spirit

3 *Antroposophical Leading Thoughts*, Leading Thought 1, (in German GA 26)

4 *The Renewal of Education*, Lecture of 5<sup>th</sup> May 1920, Basel, (in German GA 301)

ness soul in a lecture held in October 27, 1909<sup>5</sup>: "Conscious activity must occur in a direction counter to that of the intellectual soul, because the two currents flow in opposite directions. People first learned to calculate once they had developed the consciousness soul, since arithmetic is a conscious activity.

We see these directions reflected in European writing, which is from left to right owing to the involvement of the intellectual soul, whereas their calculation is done from right to left. When they add, for example, they add columns, right to left. We see here, in a picture, the two different currents – those of the intellectual soul and the consciousness soul, one superimposed onto the other."

The first World Conference for Teachers of Mathematics 2015 at the Goetheanum allows teachers to explore various issues having to do with teaching maths based on the connections between Waldorf education, mathematics and the consciousness soul.

Today, there are many pressing questions: successful learning, concentration deficiencies, diverse learning conditions. Every teacher is faced with such questions daily, they are the given circumstances in which we have to become creative teachers.

The questions and challenges are manyfold, some of them connected to local circumstances and some of them more general. I would like to mention just a few:

- What are the connections between learning mathematics and child development? Which methods are helpful and which ones create more problems? This issue is also connected to anthroposophical methodology.
- How can teachers learn to make decisions about lesson content in relation to the pupils' lives and how can the school support the teachers' endeavours?
- Which kinds of difficulties, i.e. dyscalculia, might become apparent through maths and how can they be tackled?
- What are the connections between maths and all the other school subjects?
- What are the links between practice, mastery, experience and lasting knowledge? How can the one support the other?
- What supports and what hinders memory skills?

We aim to back up the development of maths teaching at Steiner Waldorf schools by providing lectures, the opportunity to share your experience and working together in focus groups.

This conference addresses teachers of the lower, middle and high school.

You are warmly welcome to the first World Conference for Mathematics Teachers at the Goetheanum!

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5 Rudolf Steiner, A Psychology of Body, Soul and Spirit, Lecture of 27<sup>th</sup> October 1909, Berlin, (in German GA 115)

## Class Teachers in the Waldorf School

Efficient teaching in Waldorf Schools and a new class teacher profile for the 21<sup>st</sup> century

*Christof Wiechert*

*translated from German by Margot M. Saar*

### Taking stock

#### Preamble

There has been discussion about the position and importance of class teachers in Waldorf schools for some years. Class teachers have, on the one hand, been given too much weight – to the detriment of subject teachers – leading to noticeable imbalances in the social make-up of schools. Some class teachers, on the other hand, struggle with older pupils and pedagogical tragedies ensue, which, according to surveys carried out among former pupils, have long-term effects even after the end of school.

Some schools have introduced a new middle-school concept where class teachers specialize in the middle school, taking over the class or joining the initial class teacher for classes seven and eight (sometimes also nine), a step that has brought some alleviation.

In other countries the class teacher period was even split into three parts: classes 1 to 3, 4 to 6, and 7 and 8, with a "specialist" class teacher at each level (known as "looping" in Anglo-America). It has even been suggested to have one specialist class teacher for each year. Last year, a colleague took on a class 5; she was their fourth class teacher and the school allowed her to keep the class to the

end of year 6. Some schools have good experiences with a method called "co-sharing", where one class teacher holds the main lesson from Monday to Wednesday and another continues on Thursday and Friday – or other combinations.

And there is still the image of the "good", successful class teacher who reigns supreme behind closed doors – with or without collateral damage. The question is: does the idea of class teachers who stay with their classes for as long as possible belong to the past?<sup>1</sup> What did the class teacher concept originally involve? And is the class teacher system part of the identity of a Waldorf school?

What are the arguments in favour of changing this characteristic element of Waldorf Education?

### 1 Efficient Teaching

If one observes life in a Waldorf School for some time, one can have the following impression: A class is working towards its final exams (e.g. A-Levels) and many pass the exams with surprisingly good results. The teachers know they have spent fewer lessons on exam preparation than specified – and yet the results are astonishingly good.

Rudolf Steiner always thought that the learning process should be made as efficient

<sup>1</sup> Cf., for instance, GA 311, *The Kingdom of Childhood*, Lecture 4 of 15 August 1924; or GA 301, *The Renewal of Education*, Lecture 5 of 26 April 1920.

as possible: the way lessons were taught, the liveliness and focus of the presentation should awaken forces in the students that facilitate fast absorption and comprehension. He was convinced that an artistic approach to teaching in the lower school would accelerate learning in the upper school.<sup>2</sup>

Looking at schools more closely, one also realizes that this efficiency is lost as soon as main stream methods are introduced into the lessons. The uninspired teaching that arises from such methods can eradicate this living efficiency in the long term and lead to the excess of catching-up lessons that attract so much criticism.<sup>3</sup>

The class teacher principle is part of this educational efficiency.<sup>4</sup> Teachers, who can oversee the teaching material over years, build up knowledge and skills step by step and incorporate deviations that lead to the goal faster than the straight route, will work efficiently.

Take as an example a situation which is often seen as purely theoretical but which can be, and has been, practised: Pupils in class 3 ask, for instance, why in the autumn, when the leaves have fallen off the trees, the moon follows them as they walk along? The teacher says, "That is too complicated to explain now, but I will tell you when we get to class 7!"

This may be dismissed as Waldorf romanticism, but Rudolf Steiner attached great

pedagogical value to educational questions that are allowed to lie dormant for a long time. And, of course, this can only be done by a class teacher who stays with a class for many years. (More on this in paragraph 7)

## 2 Generalists vs. Specialists

The question we must ask is: can lower school pupils thrive in the care of specialist teachers or do growing children need the generalist's approach? (We know that in state teacher training specialization is being promoted. Teachers specialize in languages, maths, history etc.).

How do children learn in the lower school? They learn because they are immersed in an atmosphere of becoming. The teacher is learning with them. The secret of education is self-education. Lower school children are on their way and the atmosphere of *becoming* facilitates their learning. The teacher is not a person who teaches but a facilitator, who creates the right climate for learning. Once this climate has been created, young children 'love' their teacher, and it is this, rather than academic knowledge which inspires them to learn. It all depends on the teacher's character, that is, on self-education.

No teacher has ever taught a child to read! Children learn reading by themselves, but they need the right atmosphere for this, and this atmosphere is conveyed by the teacher, by the teacher's relationship to learning. For him or her, everything is new, too!

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2 Rudolf Steiner often asked for economic teaching so that the art of teaching could really unfold its potential. Cf., for instance, *Faculty Meetings with Rudolf Steiner*, GA 300a, the meeting of 16 January 1922.

3 See Randall and Barz's empirical study on former Waldorf pupils (*Empirische Studie ehemaliger Waldorfschüler*, Wiesbaden 2007)

4 Cf. Rudolf Steiner: *Practical Advice to Teachers* (GA 294), Lecture 6, 27 August 1919 in Stuttgart. See also *The Foundations of Human Experience* (GA 293), Lecture 11, 2 September 1919 in Stuttgart.

A (lower school) teacher who knows everything loses the joy in conveying contents and the children are not inspired or motivated to learn.<sup>5</sup> And what is even worse is that this can lead to learning difficulties. (Why doesn't she get it? It's so easy!)

Up to the beginning of puberty, children need a "learning companion" for learning, and this learning companion needs to be an all-rounder. At that age, specialists can inhibit the learning process.

### 3 The Reliable Attachment Figure

This concept from resilience research<sup>6</sup> receives increasing attention: children when they are born need a *reliable* caregiver for their development. Each child needs basic stability in life. In many families we see minor or major fluctuations nowadays, with some children being torn entirely from the security of a family. Someone who accompanies such processes reliably in the background is without doubt a real asset in a school community. And this kind of "reliability" will gain ever greater importance.<sup>7</sup>

Our society, on the other hand, is developing in the opposite direction. If we look at many processes in the social life and in education, we see more *fragmentation* than *unification*.

The same applies to families. As well as families in the conventional sense, we see an increasing number of "patchwork" and single parent families. This fact alone speaks for the

class teacher as the *reliable attachment figure*.

Dividing up the class teacher period is a gesture of fragmentation, one could even say of *disintegration*. These tendencies are characteristic of our time; they have less to do with competence than with *responsibility*. We can also say the prevailing increasing rationalization and structuring puts us in charge of segments only. There no longer is such a thing as overall responsibility. But overall responsibility is the only true responsibility, and it needs to be rooted in moral autonomy. Its presence interferes with democratic processes, with processes that are seen as "proper". The Dutch professor of education, Gert Biesta, has investigated this problem.<sup>8</sup>

The class teacher principle is the antidote for this tendency.

### 4 Artists of Education and Attachment

Looking at the role of the class teacher over the last twenty or thirty years, one realizes that "parent work", as I indicated earlier, is a growing and increasingly difficult factor. For the sake of clarity it needs to be pointed out that "parent work" does *not*, in this context, mean the attempt to convince parents of the value of Waldorf education. What is meant is the subtle and often time-consuming and intensive task of inviting parents to be partners in the education of their children. This process sometimes involves no more than a conversation, in other cases it means years of devotion and concern. (This task is no longer restricted to the lower school. All teachers

5 Rudolf Steiner, *Human Values in Education* (GA 310), Lecture 5, 21 July 1924 in Arnheim. Also very emphatically, even before the Waldorf school was founded, in GA 192, *Geisteswissenschaftliche Behandlung sozialer und pädagogischer Fragen*, Lecture 2.

6 Cf. Pedagogical Section Journal No 33 of Summer 2008

7 Joachim Bauer, *Lob der Schule*, "there is no education without relationship".

8 Gert Biesta, *Good Education in an Age of Measurement*, Pluto Press, 2011

are increasingly required to be learning companions in the wider sense;<sup>9</sup> because upper school parents in particular tend to adjourn their educational tasks more and more, while in the kindergartens we see a growing number of parents who seek help with bringing up their children.)

The fact that teachers, as well as being educational artists, have to become relationship artists. This will increasingly determine the success or failure of the class teacher principle. The teacher training centers need to take this on and they need to cooperate with the schools. Of course, the teachers must become aware of this task and not see it as "a nuisance" or as not being their responsibility. As it is, "parent work" is still too often seen as a "persuading job".

### **5 Diversity as an Inherent Human Quality**

Any class teacher will have had the experience that *they, too, are affected* by the material they present, convey, and work through. We are different people depending on whether we teach a math or a grammar lesson. We are more sanguine, mobile, a little excited, when we teach maths, while we tend to be more phlegmatic, reflective as language teachers, explaining things calmly at the blackboard. We enter differently into a geography main lesson than we do into a history main lesson. With geography the human and spatial aspects predominate, while with history the aspect of responsibility, the historical consciousness is more prevalent.

Rudolf Steiner asked for this. He wanted children to experience human versatility in their class teacher: their ability to develop enthusiasm for a variety of fields. This supports the concept of the class teacher as

'multitasker', because through him, or her, students learn that versatility is an inherent human quality. (It is therefore a pity that some schools leave form drawing, painting, or the class play to specialist teachers).

### **6 Lifelong Learning or the Ability of Adults to Develop**

Once a physics main lesson in the lower school has been taught, the teacher's preparations will no longer be needed and the same is true for all preparations throughout the eight years: What has been developed and prepared is no longer relevant after eight years because everything has changed. The teacher is eight years older, the pupils are new and different from the those in the "old" class. Everything changes. The teacher's ability to convey substance may also have changed. In short: what the class teacher conveys in his lessons has a short half-life.

This has its disadvantages because preparation is part of working life. For a Waldorf school in the true sense it is vital. Replacing preparation with established methods is the death of living education.

But it also has its good sides. Having to take hold of and invent the same tasks in a new way again and again, creates excess mobility which, in turn, emerges as flexibility in dealing with all kinds of situations, even those that seem impossible.

To cut a long story short. It is this mobility of the ether body that counts. It allows teachers to grow with their pupils. We enliven our ether body, for instance, by studying anthropology in such a way that it becomes second nature. Those who are artistically gifted tend to find this easier than others.

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9 Cf. the sociological term 'expanded youth'. Young people become adults later today than they used to twenty years ago, a fact that has an impact on upper school education.

It then becomes possible for teachers to grow with their pupils. This growing always involves *leaving old habits behind* that are no longer suitable for the children's age, or rituals which they left behind years ago.

This includes details such as how we address the pupils, how we shape the morning ritual (if there is one), how we speak, how we say good-bye to the children: every school year – which is for the children a year of development – needs its own habits.

Most problems we observe, often acutely, in the way class teachers deal with their pupils in classes 6, 7 and 8, are rooted in such habits rather than in a lack of professional competence.

This complex situation has to do with the ether body's capacity for development after the third seven-year period. It seems that teacher trainings need to urgently hand budding class teachers the tools they need for keeping their habit body flexible.<sup>10</sup>

If my habit body becomes rigid I will struggle as a class teacher and I need to do all I can to avoid this.

## **7 Responsibility in time: Implementing the Curriculum**

As one of the arguments in favour of the class teacher principle Rudolf Steiner mentions the possibility of being able to look back to what the children have learned before and to anticipate what lies ahead.<sup>11</sup> He repeatedly referred to the situation where the teacher will say, "Dear children, this is something you cannot understand yet, but we will talk about it again in class 7, and then you will understand it." According to

Rudolf Steiner it is of immense pedagogical value to open up such forward-looking perspectives in children. (It happened to me more than once as a class teacher that pupils reminded me, when they were in class 7 or 8, asking for the promised explanation.

This fact gives us the chance to look at wider dimensions of development. We need to take responsibility in a new way; we do not bring fragments to the lessons that need to be put together, but create a whole, a living structure – because that is what the curriculum is. Seeing the curriculum as an organic, living being means implementing it in an organic way. That needs time and it needs an awareness that can stretch over long periods of time.

## **8 The Image of the Class Teacher: A King in his Realm**

The Waldorf school will soon be a hundred years old, and we will see that, in many respects, Rudolf Steiner's art of education has become part of the overall culture.

There have been one-sided developments, shortcomings and even counter-images to the real art of education on the way, but they were necessary.

One such distortion is the image of the class teacher as the sole and unrestricted ruler in his kingdom: nobody knew what happened behind the classroom door, but it had to be a "good" class teacher in there. Only gradually would the signs of collateral damage seep through classroom walls.

Such class teachers did not usually feel the need to question their work or to admit to

<sup>10</sup> In my view, this is the reason why Rudolf Steiner never specifies 1 to 8, but always says, 'as long as possible'.

<sup>11</sup> Rudolf Steiner: *Practical Advice to Teachers*, GA 294, Lecture 6, Stuttgart, 27 August, 1919.



themselves that they were struggling with the one or other pupil. But because they were otherwise "good" teachers, the shadows they cast – also over their work with colleagues – were ignored. This is the old class teacher image and it was, to an extent, also justified.

When we favour the class teacher principle in elementary education, we do not mean these kinds of class teacher, because they belong to the past.

### **9 Another Class Teacher Image: *primus inter pares* – The First among Equals**

The class teacher principle needs new people, people who know that everything grows from *cooperation*, from *responsibility* and from actions that are entirely *transparent*.

Even if the door of the classroom remains closed, the new class teachers will show parents and colleagues what they are doing, and why they are doing it. They are team players who have the well-being of the school and of the whole community as much at heart as the wellbeing of the group they lead and its social context. They will lead their classes but they will be happy to do it together with a subject teacher. They speak with the German teacher or with the Eurythmy teacher about the particular interest they have in this class. They will speak about the children together, meet parents openly, offer a weekly "surgery" for parents and open their classroom doors when they are teaching. We need *open door education*. Parents know the teaching practice only through hearsay. Let's invite them to take part in the lessons whenever they wish to come.

Practice has shown that none of the intimacy of the lesson is lost, but there is a sense of relief: Oh, this is how it's done! *Such* experiences have been proved to be convincing: experi-

encing daily life in the classroom tells parents more about Waldorf than lengthy presentations. ("Open days", on the other hand, often have a "show" character and are not real reflections of everyday school life.)

By aspiring to such a new class teacher image we might be able to remedy another kind of damage that has crept in and assumed rather ugly forms unworthy of a Waldorf school.

I am referring to the kind of division into class teachers and subject teachers where the latter are seen as "second-class" colleagues (usually in the lower school). Subject teachers, in fact, often need to be pedagogically more competent than class teachers because they have to achieve a great deal in shorter periods of time and at different levels in the school. It is highly necessary that subject teachers are more integrated.

Why not allocate one subject teacher to every class teacher, so that they share the responsibility for a class?

More questions that need to be worked on remain:

- What do we need to do to inspire people to take long-term responsibility in a 'floating society'?
- Research is needed to find out if there is evidence in mainstream schools that generalists are better in the lower school than specialists. (The study by John Hattie gives some indications).
- The question of competence: How can teacher training programs convey broad general knowledge? (This question is identical with that of learning through studying anthroposophy.)

- The question of the enlivening of the ether body after the third or fourth seven-year period is one that involves spiritual-scientific research.
  - A pilot project would be desirable on class teachers and subject teachers sharing the responsibility for a class.
- Even if things are being done differently in many places, for good reasons, it is – more than ever – the class teacher principle that meets the social demands of a new educational system.

## Education in the old and new Abrahamic Age

In gratitude to the friends in Israel

*Tomáš Zdražil*

*Translated from German by Margot M. Saar*

### **The Art of Reading and its Effect on Humanity**

When children learn to write and read their soul life changes profoundly. Their relationship with the world changes. This means, on the one hand, that their immediate, living relationship with the world comes to an end. I no longer need to ask when I want to know something, when I am curious and really keen to find something out. I can just look it up. I do not have to speak and play with others when I am bored. I can read a book. But it also means that a new spiritual world opens up. When we read we enter into other people's lives, into other times and cultures. We embark on an inner dialogue with the author.

At the same time, reading is a process that can change our brain profoundly down to the smallest anatomical structures.<sup>1</sup> The connection of graphic, that is, optical-visual impressions with phonological speech perceptions is particularly affected. The parts of the brain responsible for the sensory perceptions mentioned are connected via numerous newly formed nerve fibres. But regular reading also affects the adult brain. An experienced brain physiologist can immediately distinguish a reader's brain from that of an illiterate person, because they look totally different. In this way, our modern precise

high-tech research methods help us to understand the impact writing has made on our constitution.

The ability to write and read connects our ether forces with a physical organ, the brain. "In teaching children reading and writing we work in the most exclusively physical domain."<sup>2</sup> In this lecture Rudolf Steiner describes to the first Waldorf teachers how they should approach the problem of writing, discussing artistic ways of introducing script that would save children from the one-sidedness of a merely physical approach and free them from the fetters of mere intellectuality.

### **The Historic Significance of Writing**

We know that writing emerged in the 34<sup>th</sup> century BC. This breakthrough to a culture of literacy first occurred in the regions of Mesopotamia (cuneiform script) and in the fertile delta of the Nile (hieroglyphs). Both scripts were based on pictures and were reserved for a very small but wide-spread part of the population: the educated priests. These priests then developed into clerks or scribes who took on administrative tasks. The written characters reflected objects or processes in the outside world and were, at that time, not related to speech. Writing was initially seen as sacred, its origins being associated with inspi-

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1 Maryanne Wolf, *Das lesende Gehirn: Wie der Mensch zum Lesen kam – und was es in unseren Köpfen bewirkt*. Heidelberg 2009. (English original: *Proust and the Squid: The Story and Science of the Reading Brain*, Cambridge 2008. Stanislas Dehaene, *Lesen: Die größte Erfindung der Menschheit und was dabei in unseren Köpfen passiert*. München, 2009.

2 Rudolf Steiner, GA 294, *Practical Advice to Teachers*, Great Barrington 2000, tr. J. Collis, p. 2

rations from the divine world. Writing was a gift of God to humankind. In Egypt, this God was Thoth with the ibis-head, the God of wisdom. The Babylonians owed their writing skills to Ea, the Lord over rain and water. In Assyria it was Marduk and for the Hindus it was Ganesha with the elephant head, the God of wisdom, etc.

### The Jewish People:

When the Greeks in the eighth century BC introduced a phonetic script, they were, however, not the first to do so; the ancient Hebrews had done this two hundred years earlier. In both cases the letters were adaptations of the Phoenician script. As their writing became more and more abstract and detached from the original pictorial characters, it lost its image-character. This long process from pictures to letters representing sounds can also be seen as a dying process.

The old Jewish script had twenty-two signs for consonants, while the vowels were added by the speaker. One special aspect was that all members of the community – whether they were women or men – learned to read and write. Alphabetization began very early indeed. To this day children start learning to read at the age of three (!) in the traditional Jewish religious schools (*Cheder*), before they go on to study the Torah and Talmud. "*Am HaSefer*" is the name given to the Jewish people: the People of the Book. Their God revealed himself to them in the book. He gave Moses handwritten Tablets of the Law to pass on to his people (Ex 31:18). God can really only be approached through reading; no image of him should be made (Ex 20:1-5). He

wants to be known as "I am that I am" (Ex 3:3-15). The impulse underlying the ancient Hebrew development promoted an early culture of the 'I', a culture of the individuality and of abstract logical thinking. There is hardly another culture in which the metaphorical aspect of reading, writing and of the book is so deeply rooted.

### The Old Abrahamic Age

Rudolf Steiner described the particular gifts of the people of the Old Testament that included the ability to connect the forces of the etheric head with the physical brain, and to promote physical-factual, logical and rational earthly thinking. "The head first had to be fully formed, similar to the ether body, to hold this brain."<sup>3</sup>

We need to see Abraham, the forefather of the Hebrew people, as "truly the first to develop the physical instrument of thought in such an excellent way."<sup>4</sup> Abraham – "whose forehead was formed in a way that allowed him to become the patriarch of an entire people that would pass these qualities on"<sup>5</sup> – was the one whose mission led him out of the Chaldean city of Ur. This movement symbolizes the transition from the ancient Chaldean civilization, to which Rudolf Steiner referred as a "culture of revelation", to a culture of individuality and intellectuality. For the Chaldeans, the outside world still represented the writing of the Gods, the revelation of a divine-spiritual reality. They looked at nature and at the stars with a dreamlike, clairvoyant consciousness. "The Abrahamic Age was significant in that it was the period when the ancient clairvoyance faded away."<sup>6</sup> With Abraham humanity ac-

3 Rudolf Steiner, GA 105, *Welt, Erde, Mensch, deren Wesen und Entwicklung sowie ihre Spiegelung in dem Zusammenhang zwischen ägyptischem Mythos und gegenwärtiger Kultur*, p. 193.

4 Rudolf Steiner, GA 123, *According to Matthew*, Great Barrington 2003, p. 60.

5 Rudolf Steiner, GA 117, *Die tieferen Geheimnisse des Menschheitswerdens im Lichte der Evangelien*, p. 57.

6 Rudolf Steiner, GA 118, *Das Ereignis der Christus-Erscheinung in der ätherischen Welt*, p. 119.

quired a sober, rational view of the world and a sharp earthly 'I' consciousness.

### **The New Abrahamic Age**

We live 2000 years after the Christ event and the age of Abraham was 2000 years before that event. Rudolf Steiner calls our attention to an important mirroring process in post-Christian times. "We are on the path that will lead humanity away again from the merely physical-sensory perception of the world, away from the mere combining of physical-sensory facts; we are on the path that will lead us back to the realms we used to inhabit before the Abrahamic Age. We are on the path that will allow humankind to return to natural clairvoyance, to the natural clairvoyant forces."<sup>7</sup> As part of that process the human ether head will become increasingly separated from the physical head, and as a result our faculties of perception and thinking will be transformed: they will become more subtle, refined, lighter, and at the same time more alive. The outside world will become more transparent and more permeable to the spiritual reality. In 1910 Rudolf Steiner described the transformation of human perception, "In the coming decades people will say they see human beings in a totally different way. They will no longer be content with science."<sup>8</sup>

The development Rudolf Steiner describes here can also be seen in connection with the central task of Waldorf Education. He outlined this task in the second lecture of the introductions he gave to the first Waldorf teachers<sup>9</sup>, where he spoke about the two sides of the soul, one being related to the

head and the other to the limbs. The one complex of forces is associated with the forming of mental images, memories and abstract concepts, the other with will, imagination and imaginative perception.

Education in the first, pre-Christian, Abrahamic era focused on the head and its cognitive forces. Its task was to promote the necessary transition from the old mythical-clairvoyant consciousness to one of outer intellectuality.

### **The New Way of Learning to Write and Read**

In the new Abrahamic Age, the pedagogical activity needs to focus on the other pole of the human being. "*You must not mix too many abstract concepts into the education you bring to children. You must bring more pictures. [...] These pictures are living pictures that go through imagination and sympathy. Concepts are abstractions, and they go through memory and antipathy. [...] As we as educators develop our capability to act through pictures, we must continuously have the feeling that we work upon the whole human being, that we create a resonance in the whole human being when we work through pictures.*"<sup>10</sup> Waldorf education is right for the age that will lead humanity "away from the merely physical-sensory view" towards a new imaginative consciousness.

The first, and probably most fundamental, example Rudolf Steiner gives to the first teachers in this context is based on the teaching of writing. Our – by now entirely abstract – phonetic script should really be

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7 Ibid.

8 Ibid., p. 193.

9 Rudolf Steiner, GA 293, *The Foundations of Human Experience*, Hudson NY 1996, tr. R. Lathe and N. Whitaker, p. 49ff. (Title of former translation: *The Study of Man*)

10 Ibid., p. 61f.

taken out of school altogether, he said. If we were to teach young people reading in a healthy way "we would have to keep [them] in school until they were twenty."<sup>11</sup> Since this would be impossible in our society, Rudolf Steiner devised and developed an artistic and imaginative method for learning to write and read. But its approach to learning to write and read is only one particularly plausible example of how this kind of education promotes the evolution of our human consciousness.

### Reading in the Book of Creation – A Hidden Stream of Jewish Spirituality?

Speech, which is closely connected with writing, has, according to Jewish tradition, from the very beginning of the world been God's creative tool. God used speech to create, and bring order to, the world. The divine mysteries can be comprehended if one learns to read the letters of creation. "*Language [is] the substance of reality. [...] all things exist only by virtue of their degree of participation in the great Name of God, which manifests itself throughout the whole Creation. [...] the letters of this spiritual language are the elements both of the most fundamental spiritual reality and of the profoundest understanding and knowledge.*"<sup>12</sup> We find this view in the mystery texts, such as the "*Sefer Yetzirah (The Book of Creation)*"<sup>13</sup>. It flows into the Jewish spiritual tradition of the *kabalah* and is further disseminated from there. The phenomena of the world are no longer seen as gods, or as one God, but as divine script and as individual letters: the whole world is a text written by God. The world becomes a document of his spiritual creativity

and effectiveness, it becomes his handwriting, in other words, it has coagulated into, has become, a literary work. The *Gemara*, the traditional commentary on the *Torah*, applies the image of the book to children. The child in the mother's womb resembles "a folded writing tablet [...]." When the child enters the world "the closed organ opens and the open one closes."<sup>14</sup>

The reading in the book of nature, particularly in the book of the human being, appears to be an occult, esoteric aspect of Jewish spirituality that is, however, gradually penetrating into general consciousness.

### Raymond of Sabunde

In his *magnum opus*, Raymond of Sabunde, the early fifteenth century Catalan philosopher and theologian, held that all things created were letters written by the finger of God (*littera, digito Die scripta*). In their entirety, these letters formed a book: the book of creation (*liber creaturarum*).<sup>15</sup> Capital letters represented the human being. God could be found in the *liber creaturarum* as much as in the Holy Scripture (*liber scripturae*) that was revealed to sinful humankind. There was an important advantage to the Book of Creation: it was accessible to all and not exclusive to the clergy. Raymond of Sabunde thought that human beings needed the Book of Revelation because they had lost their ability to read in the Book of Creation. The prerequisite for the ability to read in the Book of Nature was a rationality freed from the original sin and illuminated by God. Rudolf Steiner made emphatic reference to Ray-

11 See footnote 1, p. 26

12 Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, New York 1961, p. 133.

13 Klaus Herrmann (ed.), *Sefer jezira. Buch der Schöpfung*. Frankfurt 2008. Verlag der Weltreligionen.

14 Gemara, Tractate Niddah, [http://www.come-and-hear.com/niddah/niddah\\_30.html](http://www.come-and-hear.com/niddah/niddah_30.html)

15 Raimundus Sabundus, *Theologia naturalis seu liber creaturarum*. Sulzbach 1852.

mond, "[...] that is the impulse of Michael: to enable humanity to open and read the great book of nature again. Everyone who is part of the anthroposophical movement ought to feel that they can only understand their karma if they realize that they are personally called upon to read, spiritually, in the 'Book of Nature', to find the spiritual foundations of nature."<sup>16</sup>

### **Martin Buber**

There were a number of teachers in the last century who made reading in the Book of Humanity the basis of their education.<sup>17</sup> Like Raymond de Sabunde, they saw the human being as a particularly speaking part of creation that needed to be newly deciphered, spelt out and read. Martin Buber and Janusz Korczak are two examples of how – influenced by Jewish spirituality – the capacity of imaginative physiognomic reading can become the foundation of a modern education. Martin Buber, the philosopher and founder of dialogical teaching, gave a vivid example of the pedagogical art of reading in the faces of students, "But then his eyes meet a face which strikes him. It is not a beautiful face nor particularly intelligent, but it is a real face, or rather, the chaos preceding the cosmos of a real face. On it he reads a question in which there is something different from the general curiosity: 'Who are you? Do you know something that concerns me? Are you bringing me something? What are you bringing? In some such way he reads the question.'<sup>18</sup> The reading Buber describes is twofold: the teacher reads the pupil's face and the pupil reads the teacher's

face. This is the dialogical principle that, for Buber, underlies all pedagogical, and human, relationships. The 'I' needs the 'you' which is revealed when we listen to, observe, devote ourselves to the other, when we read the other. Only then will we be able to "react in accordance with the uniqueness of every situation which challenges [us] as an active person."<sup>19</sup>

### **Janusz Korczak**

There is another great twentieth century educator, apart from Martin Buber, who was also deeply rooted in Jewish spiritual life and who saw the human being as a script that needs to be read: Henryk Goldszmit, who is better known under his pen name of Janusz Korczak. His works show how intensely this physician, artist and educator, devoted himself to literature. He was a very erudite scholar who studied all kinds of books on and for children, writing a great number of essays, stories and books for and about children himself. Throughout his lifetime he was better known as a writer than as an educator. He nevertheless protested against a science that publishes books and fails to take the living reality seriously: against a "bald-headed, bespectacled science" that reduces the "living human being to an insignificant speck on the great monument erected from the dead bodies of human beings and the corpses of books."<sup>20</sup> The art of observation, of practical research and reflection, of the most active interest and involvement is his maxim. "I have read interesting books. Now I read interesting children. [...] Once, twice, three times and

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16 Rudolf Steiner, GA 237, *Esoterische Betrachtungen karmischer Zusammenhänge*, Dornach 1991, p. 129. (*Karmic Relationships*, Volume III)

17 Tomáš Zdražil *Menschenkenntnis durch physiognomisches Lesen. Ein Beitrag zur pädagogischen Spiritualität*. In: Loebell, P. (ed.): *Spiritualität in den Lebensbereichen der Pädagogik*. Berlin 2015 (at press).

18 Martin Buber, *From Man to Man*. London, New York 2002, tr. R. Gregor-Smith, p. 133.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 134.

20 Janusz Korczak, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 8. Sozialmedizinische Schriften, Gütersloh 1999, p. 34f.

ten times I read the same child and I still do not know very much."<sup>21</sup> Korczak compared the child to "a piece of parchment, tightly covered in minute hieroglyphics, only a very few of which you will ever be able to decipher [...]."<sup>22</sup>

Korczak has, justifiably, become famous for his "creative 'I do not know';"<sup>23</sup> for his "pedagogy of not-knowing" that is open to experiences with uncertain, incalculable outcomes. The child, the human being, becomes an enigma. "Deciphering twenty new children, like twenty books, written in a language one only half knows, damaged in some way, with missing pages. A picture puzzle, a crossword."<sup>24</sup>

A puzzle is a text form that activates the solver's forces of imagination, thought and interpretation in particular ways. The meaning, which is the riddle's solution, is hidden at first. One has a questioning attitude towards the riddle. To solve a riddle means to look out for and discover a higher meaning or a (new) relationship in the elements that seem incoherent at first. Riddles always point to something hidden behind them, at some deeper or higher level, that holds the meaning and the solution of the riddle. Riddles live wholly in the pictorial or metaphorical element. Children particularly love riddles for their imaginative, symbolic qualities, for the mystery they hold that augments their emo-

tional involvement and stimulates their pre-scient imagination. For the educator children are therefore the true study- and workbook. "The child teaches and educates. For the educator the child is the book of nature; in reading it he grows more mature."<sup>25</sup>

Korczak not only wrote about letters that needed to be deciphered, he was also concerned with the language that is hidden in these characters. The child, for him, is "a book composed in a foreign language. [...] Based on five different expressions the educator needs to decipher a whole page. [...]"

Out of ten comprehensible words three contradict each other."<sup>26</sup> The enigma that is the child is likened to the riddle presented by a book written in an incomplete script and in a language one only knows half of or not at all.

### **Anthroposophy and Waldorf Education**

Rudolf Steiner devoted his life's work to the language through which the inner human being reveals itself in an endless variety of expressions. He developed his anthroposophy as a "practical, sentient" science of the human being,<sup>27</sup> a spiritual science that has to prove its worth in practical application. Rudolf Steiner described the human spirit-soul not only metaphorically, but as something that can be directly experienced and known and that manifests itself in differentiated ways in the human body. He spoke of a

21 Id., *Sämtliche Werke*, Vol. 9. Theorie und Praxis der Erziehung. Pädagogische Essays. 1898-1942. Gütersloh 2004, p. 473.

22 Id., *Wie man ein Kind lieben soll*. Göttingen 1967, p. 5.

23 Id., *Sämtliche Werke*, Vol. 4. Wie man ein Kind liebt. Erziehungsmomente. Das Recht des Kindes auf Achtung. Fröhliche Pädagogik. Gütersloh 1999, p. 10.

24 Id., *Sämtliche Werke*, Vol. 15. Briefe und Palästina-Reisen; Dokumente aus den Kriegs- und Ghetto-Jahren, Tagebuch – Erinnerungen; Varia. Gütersloh 2005, p. 82.

25 Id., *Sämtliche Werke*, Vol. 9. Theorie und Praxis der Erziehung. Pädagogische Essays. 1898-1942. Gütersloh 2004, p. 247.

26 Id., *Begegnungen und Erfahrungen: kleine Essays*. Göttingen 1973, p. 35.

27 Rudolf Steiner, GA 174a, *Mitteleuropa zwischen Ost und West*. Dornach 1982, p. 183.



"beyond" the threshold, which, for most people, constitutes the boundary of knowledge, of science, even of life itself. In his own perception and in that of very close pupils and coworkers (such as the first Waldorf teacher Caroline von Heydebrand), he gained his knowledge not from tradition or from "reading" in books, but he took it "directly from the world that is the home of the human soul and spirit."<sup>28</sup> Anthroposophy does not invent new programmes, "it reads them from the existing reality. But what it reads becomes a programme," Rudolf Steiner wrote in his first pedagogical essay.<sup>29</sup> The reading of the outer reality that "is carried by the anthroposophical spirit" is an inherent method of Waldorf education: the questioning ap-

proach to the riddle, the observation of the picture, the reading of the child.<sup>30</sup> As a "physiognomic education", Waldorf education radically demands that teachers focus on the individual child, "not yet knowing how to educate"<sup>31</sup>. Teachers should study how to educate in the book "that lies open before them and that is the child itself."<sup>32</sup>

One needs a particular inner constitution for reading in the child and this constitution has to do with the capacity of physiognomic-imaginative perception. Teachers will need these faculties increasingly in the future if their work is to make pedagogical sense. Anthroposophy offers us a wealth of tools for cultivating them through self-education.

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28 Caroline von Heydebrand, Rudolf Steiner und die Waldorfschule. Erinnerungen und Gedanken. In: *Zur Pädagogik Rudolf Steiners*, No 3/4 (Ten Years of Waldorf Education), 1929, p. 152f.

29 Rudolf Steiner, *Luzifer-Gnosis. 1903-1908*. Dornach 1987, p. 311.

30 Rudolf Steiner, GA 260a, *Die Konstitution der Allgemeinen Anthroposophischen Gesellschaft und der Freien Hochschule für Geisteswissenschaft*. Dornach 1987, p. 221.

31 Id., GA 307, *Gegenwärtiges Geistesleben und Erziehung*, Dornach 1986, p. 91. (Available in English as *A Modern Art of Education*, Great Barrington 2004, tr. J. Darrell, N. Whittaker, R. Lathe)

32 Id., GA 310, *Der pädagogische Wert der Menschenerkenntnis und der Kulturwert der Pädagogik*. Dornach 1989, p. 110). Title of English translation: *Human Values in Education*, Great Barrington 2004, tr. V. & J. Compton-Burnet.

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## Agenda

### 2015

- March 30 – April 3                      Transitions in Childhood from Birth to 14 Years:  
Significance, Challenges, Consequences  
Tasks for Educators and Teachers  
(different languages)
- May 29 – 31                                Conference for Religion Teachers  
(also in English)
- May 31 – June 4                          Training Course for Religion Teachers  
(only in German)
- September 11 – 13                      Study of Man, Lecture 13 with Wolfgang  
Schad (only in German)
- October 5 – 9                              International Conference for Teachers of  
Mathematics
- November 1 – 3                            Conference for Educational Support Teachers  
(also in English and Spanish)

### 2016

- March 28 – April 2                      10<sup>th</sup> World Teachers' Conference  
(different languages)