

1923 (cont.)

Fifty-first Meeting

Tuesday, April 24, 1923, 4:30–7:00 p.m.

On April 24, the opening assembly of the fifth school year was held. Rudolf Steiner arrived from Dornach the day before, and gave a short speech. After a long period of time not asking the question, Rudolf Steiner once again asked the students, “Do you love your teachers?” The last time he had asked this question was at the opening of the third school year on June 18, 1921. After the crises the school had passed through, the question sounded new. Again and again, Steiner talked about how the relationship between students and teachers should be sustained by love.

The school kept growing, and by the beginning of the fifth school year there were almost 700 students in 21 classes. The average class size was 32 children. New faculty members included Martha Haebler, Dagmar Tillis, Martin Tittmann, Hans Strauss (the earliest record of his presence is February 1923), and spouses Olga Leinhas, Felicia Schwebsch, and Anna Wolfhügel.

The two meetings at the beginning of the fifth school year (#51 and #52) feel quiet and concentrated in atmosphere. They have a character of steady striving and the effort to make a success of the Abitur (the final exam of the 12th school year). One can sense the underlying uncertainty whether they would bring it off.

After the meeting of April 25, Steiner was still in the school the next morning to visit classes before traveling to Prague that afternoon.

Comments

The theme of the final state exam predominated the agenda. Steiner was concerned the students were not adequately prepared, because they had not been sufficiently engaged in the work, which he attributed to too much lecture-style teaching. He also thought the Waldorf curriculum for the 12th grade was compromised because of the focus on preparing for the exam. The question about textbooks arose, leading to the suggestion of a two-pronged approach during high school, one being Waldorf education proper, the other being preparation for the exam. In a fundamental discussion about this theme during the meeting of May 3, 1923, Steiner rejected the idea. If, during the period of time that the attempt was made to carry out the threefold social organism, the idea of the *Kulturrat*, (cultural counsel), had not “passed away,” the Waldorf school could have had its own final exam like the church-based schools, Steiner insisted regretfully.

Fifty-third Meeting

Thursday, May 3, 1923, 9 PM

Comments

Steiner talked at some length about the idea, which had come up in the previous faculty meeting, of instituting two streams in the high school, one for the Waldorf curriculum proper, the other in

preparation for the final exam. If that were to be carried out, he said, it would show that the thinking behind Waldorf education had not yet been properly understood. At the same time, he acknowledged that students in the high school did not know enough, also in terms of the educational goals of the Waldorf school. "They're not on a level we can rest content with."

The assumption was that many 14-year-olds would leave the school to learn a trade, as in previous years. Additional courses were given for these students to extend their education. The question was raised whether a separate school could be started out of this effort. This would be difficult, because the state would require certified teachers, and because in any case, the school lacked qualified teachers and sufficient financial resources.

For the 12th grade, Steiner recommended, apart from periodic surveys of history, that the school add philosophic university preparatory courses in order to familiarize the students with "scientific jargon."

Fifty-seventh Meeting

Thursday, July 12, 1923, 8:00 p.m.

Comments

As had become clear when he attended the executive committee meeting, Steiner had observed the boys of the ninth grade and was impressed by their conduct. Once again, he had to point out to the teachers that they had not understood the students rightly and had not met them where they were. It was a bitter experience, both for Steiner and the teachers.

He made an important point concerning "an inner fundamental law of education," and also gave fresh advice about the way one could work individually and have an effect on the class as a whole at the same time.

Fifty-eighth Meeting

Tuesday, July 31, 1923

Comments

The summer holidays had begun in Stuttgart. A number of questions about individual students cropped up. Steiner himself had enrolled a highly gifted 16-year-old for ninth grade, and asked the teachers to keep an eye out for this young individual. Concerning bad behavior, he said, "Even when the boys have done terrible things, you always have to focus on what they did, never on them personally. Once you start scolding them, you won't get anywhere."

Fifty-ninth Meeting

Tuesday, September 18, 1923, 6:30–10:30 p.m.

On September 9, after returning from England, Rudolf Steiner spoke to the members of the Anthroposophical Society in Dornach about his positive experiences in Britain. Some of this elevated mood can also be heard in the faculty meeting of September 18. Steiner had visited several classes in the morning. Summer holidays were over and he expressed hope for “some new impulses in the school.” The next morning, he left again and drove back to Dornach.

Sixtieth Meeting

Tuesday, October 16, 1923, 4:30 p.m.

Comments

This meeting shows that the teachers hadn't yet learned to fully build up a trusting relationship in their years together. Awkward little blunders, not a big deal in themselves, cast big shadows, because an underlying basis of trust had not yet been established.

After the last lectures he had given during the previous days (CW 302, *Deeper Insights into Education*), the teachers received a text which summarized the lectures in mantric form. It has become known as the “second teachers' meditation.”

Sixty-first Meeting

Tuesday, December 18, 1923, 9:00 p.m.

Nine weeks had gone by since the meeting with Rudolf Steiner in October. The only time a longer interval (twelve weeks) had elapsed between meetings with him had occurred during the second school year. At this point, in December 1923, the upcoming founding of the General Anthroposophical Society was foremost on everybody's mind. On December 18, there was a discussion with the executive committees of the Anthroposophical Society and the Independent Anthroposophical Society [the two existed side-by-side in Stuttgart]. For that reason, the faculty meeting could only start at nine in the evening.

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1924

Sixty-second Meeting

Tuesday, February 5, 1924, 8:00 p.m.

At Christmas time, the founding of the General Anthroposophical Society took place in Dornach. Rudolf Steiner had founded anthroposophical societies in different countries during the time leading up to that point. The essential new element was that Rudolf Steiner himself now presided over the Society and no longer functioned just as teacher and counselor. The Society and the movement, the impulse, would no longer work separately but function as a single organism. From the Christmas Foundation Stone meeting onwards, an esoteric strain ran through the Society. Everything that happened was to be based on human principles with a soul-spiritual component and would not be run solely on organizational principles. The heart of this new founding was embodied in the inauguration of the School for Spiritual Science, meant to be the source of all further anthroposophical work. Even though Steiner's health was

attacked, from this founding onwards he managed a workload that went beyond what anybody could imagine: The foundation was laid for Biodynamic agriculture as well as for curative education; there were courses given for medical doctors and priests; courses were held about tone and speech eurhythm, and for speech formation and drama, as well as the pastoral/medical course. In addition, Steiner also gave important pedagogical courses in England, Germany, Holland, and Switzerland.

Rudolf Steiner traveled to Stuttgart on February 5, 1924 and a teachers' meeting was held that same evening.

Comments

Many of the teachers had been at the Christmas Foundation meeting, so they naturally expected everything to be different from then on. This explains the questions they asked in this meeting. Steiner very clearly explained the relationship between the Waldorf school, the Anthroposophical Society, and the School for Spiritual Science. As an institution, he said, the Waldorf school would be linked neither to the School for Spiritual Science nor to the Society.

Sixty-third Meeting

Thursday, March 27, 1924, 10:00 a.m.

During the previous months, Steiner had not been able to be present for the Christmas celebration, the closing of the year assembly, nor any other festivals. Now he was able to visit the monthly assembly (see CW 298). He had driven through the night, departing from Dornach in the evening and arriving in Stuttgart early in the morning at 4:00 a.m.

The monthly assembly was held in the morning, after which the children went home. The faculty meeting started at 10:00 a.m.

Comments

In this meeting, Steiner once again adopted the role of advocate for "difficult" students, in that he knew their situation, background, and problems thoroughly. Because of his knowledge and understanding, his suggestions were mild, healing, never judgmental. Neither was he sparing with clear admonitions concerning the teachers' need to feel greater interest in the students. For the coming Easter assembly, he wished not so much clever words, as 'Schwung.' [zest]

Sixty-fourth Meeting

Wednesday, April 9, 1924, 11:00 a.m.

The fifth school year had come to an end, and the teachers had said goodbye to the students. A public pedagogical conference was held in Stuttgart, where Waldorf teachers gave courses and Rudolf Steiner held a series of lectures in the Gustav Siegle Haus downtown (CW308, *The Essentials of Education*). Seventeen hundred participants attended the lectures. After the last one, the audience rose to give Steiner a standing ovation, which went on for so long that Steiner had to come out again and again to

the podium. It turned out that these were the last public lectures Steiner would give. He closed the last lecture with the verse “Dem Stoff sich verschreiben...” [“To spend oneself in matter...”]

On 10 April, Steiner spoke to the seniors, the first group to leave the school after completing 12th grade.

In the midst of all these activities, a faculty meeting was held on April 9.

Comments

When they talked about the idea of adding an additional 13th year after grade 12, Steiner referred to it first as a ‘Paukjahr’, then ‘Presse’, i.e., “a year to drum things in,” “cram.” He asked whether students would want such an additional school year. He wanted to appoint one of the colleagues, Maria Röschl, in Dornach to build up anthroposophy for youth. She was to be replaced in the school by Felicia Schwebsch.

Sixty-fifth Meeting

Tuesday, April 29, 1924, 9:00 p.m.

After a three-week holiday, the children returned to school, moving into the next grade. Steiner traveled from Dornach to Stuttgart by car during the day, and the faculty meeting was held that evening. The next morning, he greeted the new first graders, after which he gave a talk on the occasion of the opening of the new school year. In his talk he first addressed the parents, then the first graders, then the other students, after which he turned to the teachers. His last sentence was “Onwards, my dear children, and my dear teachers, onwards!” (CW 298, p. 177). It would be his last address at the school.

Afterwards he had a conversation with the incoming 12th graders, asking them whether they wanted to do the final exam in 12th grade or afterwards. After that, there was another faculty meeting.

Comments

In the fifth school year the curriculum of the 12th grade had been dominated by the final state exam. The Waldorf curriculum had been largely sacrificed in the process, so now they could catch up and work on it. He presented in broad terms the most important elements for the 12th grade curriculum. In addition, he gave individual indications on what to do for individual students. Next to Erich Gabert, Verena Gildemeister was appointed to teach Latin and Greek. Altogether forty-seven teachers were in charge of twenty-three classes in the school’s sixth year, an organism comprising almost 800 students, still in cramped quarters.

Sixty-seventh Meeting

Monday, June 2, 1924, 10:00-1:00 a.m.

On the afternoon of June 1, the fourth meeting of members of the Independent Waldorf School Association was held. Rudolf Steiner spoke about the contact of the teachers with the parents in the light of Waldorf pedagogy. “There is no obligatory rule or pedagogical principle which would require Waldorf teachers to find a way to the parents but it should spring from a heart-felt need, the same way

that the essence of Waldorf pedagogy is a pedagogy of the heart.” The question had arisen whether the classes were too large. Steiner replied, “Instituting smaller classes on pedagogical grounds is based on a pedagogical weakness” (GA 298).

A faculty meeting was held the next day. The day after that, Rudolf Steiner left Stuttgart and prepared for the great conference in Koberwitz to lay the foundations of Biodynamic agriculture (CW 327, *The Agricultural Course*). After a closing meeting in Weimar, Rudolf Steiner traveled back to Dornach and stopped in Stuttgart on the way. On June 19 he returned again to Stuttgart for another meeting.

Comments

So many new teachers had joined the faculty that it was necessary once again to present the methodology and practical aims for foreign language teaching.

However, one can also notice resignation on the part of Steiner in the face of teachers’ inabilities. If problems in stenography are insurmountable, he said, the lessons should no longer be obligatory. When writing student reports becomes onerous and can no longer be written out of love, it’s better to give grades. He felt repudiated to a degree by the teachers in that they had been unable to properly assess the special gifts of the student he had brought to the school (i.e., the highly gifted A. V.), and had treated him instead according to pedantic standards. “No attention was paid to the individual case. Yes, he is difficult to handle, but there is insufficient will to individualize. I have to say this radically, otherwise it will not hit home.”

On another front, one could experience Steiner’s largesse and broad-mindedness in the way he viewed the Christian Community and the free religion teaching not as opposites and simply recommended that they work side by side in a friendly way for that reason.

Sixty-ninth Meeting

Tuesday, July 15, 1924, 8:30 p.m.

Comments

Three 11th graders had left the straight and narrow. They had been in school three or four years, and all of them were more or less ‘schwachsinnig’ (feeble-minded), as Steiner put it, a word we wouldn’t use nowadays. Yet he reproached the teachers that they didn’t care enough about the students. Even though the teachers were overburdened, he thought people could have mustered more interest and enthusiasm. He used sentences such as: “If the Waldorf school should continue to exist...” and “Before the school starts up anew, if the Waldorf school is to go on, it is imperative, prior to the beginning of the new school year, that we have a series of teachers’ meetings where we deal with this very thing: questions of morality in the school.”

Again and again, he told the teachers that they showed insufficient interest in the personalities of their students, and that the “psychological pictures” of the students were not sufficiently formed during meetings when he was absent (a practice now called “the child study”).

Ernst Lehrs asked for indications. Steiner answered, "Make no mistake: this is primarily a question of interest in children and youngsters, and a matter of enthusiasm."

He started off by analyzing what had taken place and said among other things "... when our faculty is as overburdened as it is at present." In conclusion, however, he stated, "We cannot be tired when we're supposed to live in the spirit. Being tired, after all, comes down to lack of interest."

Seventieth Meeting

Wednesday, September 3, 1924, 7:00-9:00 p.m.

Coming from England (Torquay and London), Rudolf Steiner had traveled to Stuttgart in order to carry through final steps in settling the affairs of the "Kommende Tag." The Waldorf School Association now leased the school grounds from the "Kommende Tag."

In the morning, former students of the 12th grade who had graduated the previous school year came to Stuttgart to report back to Steiner on their first experiences after leaving school.

Early that evening, a short conference was held, after which Steiner drove back to Dornach at night.

The amount of Steiner's work that September exceeded anything that had come before. This continued until the lecture of September 28 in Dornach, when Steiner had to stop after 20 minutes. It was to be his last public appearance.

Comments

The former students had made clear how much they valued the school. The present 12th grade didn't want to do a final exam this closing year. As a result, a 13th grade (without giving it that name) was organized, to prepare for the Abitur.

Steiner closed the meeting, saying, "In September or the first week of October, I want to give lectures about moral aspects in the practice of education and teaching." It was not to be.

This was the last time Rudolf Steiner could be with the faculty, and the last time he was in Stuttgart. He fell ill on September 28 and continued his work from his sickbed at the Goetheanum until he died on March 30, 1925.