

***Faculty Meetings with Rudolf Steiner
Commentaries on Selected Discussions
(1919 – 1925)***

During the six years between September 1919 and September 1925, the teachers at the original Waldorf school in Stuttgart, Germany held regular faculty meetings—some 70 in all—to map out the future of the school, even as they dealt with a growing number of seemingly insurmountable problems. As Director of the school, Rudolf Steiner frequently visited Stuttgart to take part in these discussions as well as to observe classes, speak with parents and students, mentor new teachers, and offer guidance to the founding faculty.

Christof Wiechert, former Leader of the Pedagogical Section in Dornach, Switzerland, has prepared a new edition of the official transcripts of these meetings. In the sections that follow, excerpts from his explanatory commentaries on these meetings are here made available for the first time in English. Citations refer to the Collected Works (CW) of Rudolf Steiner.

An earlier English-language version of the actual transcripts of these meetings (published in 1998 as CW300a and CW300b) are available [here](#) in the holdings of the Online Waldorf Library. Wiechert’s notes and commentaries place Steiner’s contributions—rich in practical advice and occasionally blunt in their expression—in a historical and broader pedagogical context.

*— passages selected and edited by Douglas Gerwin,
translated by Jan Kees Saltet*

=====

1919

First Faculty Meeting

Monday, September 8, 1919, 10:00 a.m.

The preparatory courses for incoming teachers of the Waldorf school had ended on September 6 (CW 293, 294, 295). After the last of the *Discussions with Teachers*, CW 295, Rudolf Steiner had convened a “meeting of the inner circle to settle things”. The festive opening of the school took place on September 7. The next morning, the teachers convened for the first faculty meeting. Lessons couldn’t start after this meeting, however, because the school furniture was still in the process of being delivered. Steiner traveled to Berlin on September 10. After a small festive assembly, where the founder of the school, Emil Molt, gave a speech, lessons started on September 16, 1919. E.A. Karl Stockmeyer took on the task of school administrator, in addition to his teaching duties.

The agenda of the first meeting consisted of assigning class teachers to grades 1 – 8 [and additional teachers], the timetable, and foreign languages.

Comments

From the start, Steiner attempted to implement a “hygienic timetable,” the way he had indicated in *Education as a Social Problem* (CW 296): academic subjects and practice in the morning, artistic subjects, religion, and eurythmy in the afternoon. In this first plan, all subject classes lasted a full hour. Steiner

pointed out that meetings were to be “free republican discussions, in which every participant is sovereign.” He recommended teachers keep a concise diary.

Second Meeting

Thursday, September 25, 1919, 8:30 a.m.

Comments

The teachers piled many questions and worries about the day-to-day work on Steiner. It was difficult for them to assess the children’s capabilities. Their many pedagogical questions demonstrated how inexperienced they were. Among pedagogical questions and worries, this conference also showed the particular way the teachers elicited dialogue with Steiner with questions about geology, astronomy, history and botany. We see Steiner’s superior knowledge in all themes he was being asked about. The way he talked about the subjects is an example of the way free, republican dialogue could be conducted. At the end Steiner steered the conversation back to the main topic of the day and urged the teachers not to be put off by “misbehavior and things like that.” “Don’t think you’re dealing with angels in the school.” These turned out to be prophetic words.

When Steiner was absent from Stuttgart, teachers continued their meetings in order to make the necessary arrangements for the school day. Unpublished notes by Stockmeyer show that the original plan of having some main lessons at different times due to lack of space didn’t have to be carried out; two spaces had been kept in reserve and turned out to be available. Another thing these notes demonstrate is that subject classes went down to 50 minutes instead of 60. In one of the meetings, it was abruptly decided to give a day off two days later, because Steiner would be visiting the school. (Note of September 23, 1919). In considering the reports about parent evenings, it has to be borne in mind that the majority of the parents were employees of the Waldorf Astoria cigarette factory, that is to say most of them were “proletarian households.” Out of 253 enrolled children, 143 were from families employed by the cigarette factory. Before he left, Rudolf Steiner encouraged the teachers to cultivate warm relationships with the students, to be in touch with them so that “teachers will form a real unity with the children.”

Fourth Meeting

Monday, December 22, 1919, 9:00 p.m.

Comments

From the start, monthly school assemblies were held on Mondays, since that was a day off for schools in the state of Württemberg. There was a slideshow, and classes presented their work to the other children.

Steiner had visited classes and asked teachers to report on their work with the children. His remarks therefore were related to these reports as well as to his observations in the classroom. This was the first time he spoke about teachers not being in touch with the students. When one considers the example he gave at the start of the school, it is clear he wanted everything to arise out of living conversation, in dialogue with the students rather than ‘from the front of the class.’ (See also: *Practical Advice to Teachers*, CW 294, lecture of 8/25/1919.)

Another example of practicing the living, conversational approach—geared towards cooperation between students and teachers in developing thinking—is to be found in the section on teaching grammar in foreign language classes in the lecture of 8/30/1919 of CW 294, *Practical Advice to Teachers*.

=====

1920

Sixth Meeting

Thursday, January 1, 1920, 2:30 p.m.

From December 18 until January 4, 1920, Steiner stayed in Stuttgart without interruption. In addition to attending three teacher meetings, he gave two large lecture cycles (CW 320 and CW 299), as well as public lectures and lectures for members of the Anthroposophical Society. In addition, there were meetings to prepare for what was to become “Der Kommende Tag,” [The Coming Day, an association of businesses to put the ideas of the threefold social organism into practice]. It was a stressful time for all concerned. Without much deliberation, the teachers decided that the holidays would be lengthened by a week. While parents were informed, the teachers forgot to notify the school manager, E.A. Karl Stockmeyer, of this decision, with the consequence that when he turned up for work on the date originally set, January 13, he found the school empty and silent.

Despite their enthusiasm for the work, a considerable number of teachers fell ill during the initial months, which was indicative of a certain degree of exhaustion.

Comments

During the lectures on science of December 26 and 27, Steiner had a few children presented to him who were of most concern to their teachers. Now, during this day’s faculty meeting, the results were discussed. Steiner saw no particular reason to take any of these children out of their regular classes, for the problems were not such that any of them had to be kept back a year or placed in the class ahead. He stressed that the most important thing was to take a strong interest in the children and to have the courage to stay the course and go on teaching without trepidation.

No curriculum had been planned yet for the coming ninth grade. This would have to be developed once the accomplishments of grade 8 were known.

Seventh Meeting

Saturday, March 6, 1920, 4:00 p.m.

Comments

One of the teachers, Friedrich Oehlschlegel, had unexpectedly emigrated to the United States in order to promote the work of the threefold social organism there. He had made a good start in the school, had been part of the first group of teachers invited by Rudolf Steiner, and had taken on the responsibility of building up the free religion lessons, together with Herbert Hahn. His sudden departure was seen as an anomaly, and at the request of Rudolf Steiner, the Viennese physician Eugen Kolisko was urged to come to Stuttgart and help fill the gap. Kolisko did come and took over Oehlschlegel’s orphaned sixth grade.

Once again it was necessary for Steiner to ask the teachers to find alternative ways to treating a class than as one would handle a choir.

For modern ears, Steiner's use of language is often direct, almost crude. It must be borne in mind that these were internal conversations. They were speaking confidentially, as teachers among one another. He spoke of "totally ungifted children," who would have to be "trained" by Karl Schubert [in German: "ganz unbegabten Kinder," "dressiert"]. In the meeting of March 14, 1920, he uses the words "psychopathic children"; in modern day parlance, we would designate them as "children with learning difficulties/challenges."

Tenth Meeting

Wednesday, June 9, 1920, 4:00 – 7:00 p.m.

Comments

Steiner reported on his experiences in the classes. He once again pointed out that the temperaments are the key to understanding the students. In this meeting, Steiner uttered a wish which was never fulfilled, that the teachers start collecting a list of psychological traits, a "Golden Book" of psychology. He hoped that such a collection would be published in the yearly report of the school.

In reference to history teaching, Walter Johannes Stein asked about the being of Allah. Steiner was hesitant to enter into this subject, because "it is difficult to characterize supersensible beings by putting them in a category." However, he attempt to picture this being in its relationship to cosmic forces of either an ahrimanic or luciferic signature.

Eleventh Meeting

Saturday, June 12, 1920, 3:00 p.m.

On June 10, Rudolf Steiner addressed the children for the first time during a monthly assembly, and it was the first time he posed the question, "Do you love your teachers?" A parent evening was set for the next evening. Steiner spoke about Educational Practices in an Age of Decline and the Educational Practices of the Day to Come (printed in CW 298, *Rudolf Steiner in the Waldorf School*). He criticized state school practices sharply.

Thirteenth Meeting

Wednesday, June 23, 1920, 2:45–5:00 p.m.

Comments

During this meeting, the first part of a comprehensive review was undertaken of the past school. Much had been accomplished: the teachers had come to terms with everyday routines, and progress was also noted with regard to "Lausbubereien" [rascally behavior] of some students. Steiner spoke at length about the necessity to strive towards the right empathy and understanding of students, based on insight and requiring ardent study. He thought the most important goal for the work in the next school year would be to "learn to understand children... to overcome any preconceived ideas about how they should be or behave."

Steiner had witnessed how some girls, who were late to class, showed no sign of hurry and made no effort to get there on time. He also mentioned that he very much regretted that he was unable to attend the festive final assembly.

Fourteenth Meeting

Saturday, July 24, 1920, 6:00 p.m.

Rudolf Steiner arrived on July 23 and remained in Stuttgart until the beginning of August. The next morning, he gave a speech at the final assembly of the school year. "Do you love your teachers?" (See CW 298.) The students received their reports after the assembly, and the summer holidays began. In the evening there was a meeting in which Emil Molt thanked both Rudolf Steiner and the faculty for their work during the first school year.

In Stuttgart, the stock company "Der Kommende Tag" [The Coming Day] began its work. Walter Kuehne became head of the Association for the Threefold Social Organism, and many nightly meetings had to be held. In addition, four teacher meetings were held during this time. Financial difficulties were pressing to the point of putting in question the continued existence of the school.

Other agenda points of the meeting: review of the year, part 2; remarks about materialism, compromising, life before birth. Caroline von Heydebrand's fifth grade, which had 51 students, would have to be split. There was no need to move students up or down a grade. The suggestion was made to offer foreign language instruction in combined grades classes. Physical education and eurythmy. Building expansion. Lack of teacher housing. The World School Association. Financial worries.

Comments

Steiner placed the mission of the school in a historical context. It was necessary to make room for soul and spirit and not lose sight of this in the predominant atmosphere of materialism. Waldorf education did not stand in need of abstract 'right ideas,' but had to base its existence on 'right deeds.' "This spirit has really come alive in your souls during this first year."

Steiner's remarks were followed by a preliminary consideration of the school's financial situation, which demonstrated that they couldn't really continue this way, both in terms of finances and buildings. This was to be the dominant theme of subsequent meetings.

Fifteenth Meeting

Thursday, July 29, 1920, 10:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

For the second school year, 170 new students were enrolled, although no provisions had been made for additional classrooms, teachers, or money. In the meantime, Caroline von Heydebrand and Herbert Hahn had drawn up an appeal, to be read at Rudolf Steiner's lectures to generate goodwill for donations. The results were disappointing.

On the occasion of the new school year, Rudolf Steiner wanted to give a follow-up course to the *Study of Man*. (CW 293) Due to the pressing amount of work, only four relatively short lectures could be given (*Balance in Teaching*, CW 302a). These lectures have the character of being a continuation of the previous year's course for teachers.

Comments

There were feelings of animosity towards the school's founder, Emil Molt. Steiner analyzed the situation and concluded that the hostile feelings were really aimed at the Waldorf Astoria factory. The cigarette factory "got something like a good deal when the Waldorf School was set up."

The general public had the impression that the school was well-off, thinking it was being financed by the Waldorf Astoria. In reality, Emil Molt was financing the school almost exclusively from private means. The only thing the cigarette factory contributed was the tuition for the children of its employees. This relationship had to be changed, since the teachers did not want to think of themselves as employees of the Waldorf Astoria firm anymore. Steiner said to Molt, "The school is able to exist because of you." (See also meeting number 18.)

Two students from Dornach were enrolled, the brothers Rascher. Sigurd gained fame by elevating the saxophone to the status of a classical concert instrument. Sigmund became a physician and fell prey to national socialistic ideology. Nevertheless, the Nazis accused him of crimes and arrested him; he was shot before the end of the war.

Sixteenth Meeting

Friday, July 30, 1920, 3:00 p.m.

Many people were eager to participate in faculty meetings when Steiner was present. Steiner began to take a stand against people attending who were not carrying pedagogical responsibility. He also took note of the fact that people just popped up in the meetings as if out of nowhere, coworkers he had not appointed himself. This caused friction, and had to be resolved. Steiner was very keen to welcome new colleagues; he said Hermann von Baravalle should join them soon, as he could also write his Ph.D. thesis while working at the school. He was slated to take over a sixth grade, the other half of Caroline von Heydebrand's class. Steiner also hoped that Max Wolffhügel would join them as a colleague. He called both of them "erste Kräfte" [helpers of the first order], and in their case there was no question that they were welcome to join in the faculty meeting. Looking ahead at the coming ninth grade, Rudolf Treichler and Karl Stockmeyer would be jointly responsible. They still had to figure out how most fruitfully to alternate their teaching of this class.

The first school year had come to an end. Steiner dismissed the teachers for their summer holidays and regretted that things had come up that could not be resolved because there was not enough time to conclude unfinished business.

Comments

Based on remarks earlier in the day, Stockmeyer asked a few colleagues to leave the school. One teacher, Elisabeth von Grunelius, resigned because she thought Steiner didn't value her work as a colleague.

Teachers thought that the World School Association Steiner had suggested would help raise the necessary funds for the school. He argued strongly against this, saying this should not be initiated by Stuttgart. Yes, the school needed help, but a World School Association would have different tasks than raising money for an individual school. He also was apprehensive that an international financial appeal for the school might have a negative impact on international efforts to raise money for building the Goetheanum in Dornach.

Eighteenth Meeting

Tuesday, September 21, 1920, 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon

Comments

During the summer holidays, Karl Stockmeyer had visited Steiner in Dornach and had given him a list of suggested qualifications for board members of the School Association. Even though Emil Molt happened to be in Dornach at the time, he was left out of the loop and was apprised of the list only when it was circulated among the teachers. The document mentioned Molt merely as “advisor to the College of Teachers in all financial affairs.” Molt, however, considered himself a full member of the faculty and had been affirmed as such by Rudolf Steiner. Deeply hurt, he wrote a letter to the College, saying that the proposed document ran contrary to the spirit of the school. This prompted Steiner to declare that “we have to clarify many affairs which – together with other business we were overwhelmed with – we had to stay in the dark about up to now, and today we can bring them to light.”

Twentieth Meeting

Monday, November 15, 1920, 8:00 p.m.

Comments

Compared to other grades, the new ninth grade was small. Many parents of the Waldorf Astoria factory had withdrawn their children from the school after eighth grade in order to enroll them in trade apprentice programs. They could not see the use of a comprehensive 12-year curriculum.

The second grade, led by Leonie von Mirbach, had more than 50 pupils. Since the school didn't have additional room, Rudolf Steiner asked Elisabeth von Grunelius to teach this class together with Leonie von Mirbach.

Twenty-first Meeting

Monday, November 22, 1920, 4:00 – 6:30 p.m.

Comments

Steiner pointed out once again that choral speaking presented an obstacle to learning. “Please don't think you have to tell the children to speak chorally as soon as they get restless.” Rather one should make the children curious, so that they “feel a certain tension which makes them follow the teaching, prompted by the thing itself, not by pedagogical tricks that have nothing to do with the subject matter.” At the end he asked for the teachers' assistance in promoting the threefolding efforts that were being made.

Twenty-fourth Meeting

Thursday, May 26, 1920, 8:00 p.m.- 2:00 a.m.

Comments

This year, the school year ended on June 11. The new school year began July 18, the summer holidays lasting just one week. This was the reason why Dr. Steiner wanted to have a real festival, so that the students would experience the transition as consciously as possible; after all, a new tenth grade and two new first grades were to be added. The general situation led Steiner to conclude that the Stuttgart

school would be the only one for now, unless a World School Association were to ignite a large pedagogical movement. Steiner expressed regret about the cessation of monthly assemblies; they should be re-enlivened.

Footnotes to summaries for this year:

1. The special help class

Understandably, parents of the Waldorf Astoria cigarette factory were keen to enroll their children if they had difficulties making progress in state schools. That's why every class had about four or six 'difficult' children, some of them very challenging. For children with severe problems, Rudolf Steiner organized a special help class as early as 1920. About ten children from grades 1 - 6 were taken out of main lesson, i.e., between 8:00 and 10:00 a.m., and given separate lessons. The idea was for them to receive the same material they were studying in their grades, but at a very slow and emphatic pace. They were also given special exercises. After main lesson time the children were to go back to their regular classes. Steiner assigned this special help class to the beloved teacher Karl Schubert.

Regrettably, this class could initially only function until June 1920, because Schubert had to replace a class teacher who had fallen ill, at which point the children in this special group just returned to their regular classes. A year later, in September 1921, Schubert was able to resume teaching his extra help class.

2. The World School Association

Contrary to Molt's original intent, more and more children were entering the school who had no connection to the Waldorf Astoria factory at all. At the opening of school in 1919, the numbers were as follows: 191 children from the Waldorf Astoria factory, 65 others for a total of 256. At the beginning of the second school year, the relationship was 50-50, and thereafter the number of children from outside the Waldorf Astoria factory increased year-by-year.

There was no reason for the factory to cover the tuition of parents who were not employees, so tuition amounts had to be determined for the other children. In the process, input from parents was solicited about the amount they were able to afford. The question presented itself as to who would administer this, because this certainly wasn't the business of the factory. For that reason, the school had to be incorporated, and the legal entity first had the name Verein Freie Waldorfschule, [Independent Waldorf School Association]. It was commonly referred to – and still is – as the “Waldorfschulverein” Waldorf School Association.

The firm continued to pay tuition for the children of its employees, and Emil Molt wanted to use his influential position to secure additional funds to benefit the Association, to 'squeeze more funds out of the firm'. But for the factory board, the founding of the Waldorf School Association meant that it would take care of school support from then on.

Apart from minor changes, the structure of the Association has largely remained as it was from its inception. First of all, there was the danger, since oppositional forces could use any tactics, that the Association, as the owner of school buildings and grounds, could be “overpowered” if membership was open to anybody. For that reason, only the seven founders were regarded as being legitimate members with the right to vote. Rudolf Steiner called them at one point “the seven wise men who are counseling the school.” In order to secure the firm's goodwill as a sponsor, the head of the Waldorf Astoria board was made Speaker of the Association. This was merely an honorary position. Next to Rudolf Steiner as

the *de facto* president, the board consisted of Emil Molt, Karl Stockmeyer, and Emil Leinhas. Ordinary members were Herbert Hahn and Eugen Benkendörfer.