**Excerpt from Chapter Three, The Teachers Meeting at Heart Organ of the School, from The Child, the Teacher and the Community by Jorgen Smit.**

…It is possible to describe some qualities we must look for in this heart organ, the faculty meeting . I should like to make some contributions, but these are not definitive because it is not possible to describe this and say that the description is finished . This attitude is always wrong . Community building is such a great spiritual realm of the future of humanity that we should be very careful . We can only make contributions in order to make conscious some very important aspects of this community building, but we cannot say that we are describing the whole . **One indispensable aspect is that every teacher in this whole community appears in the consciousness of the other teachers .** All the teachers must be interested in recognizing how one teacher is working . Everyone must be aware of what is going on in the other classrooms . Of course it is not possible to recognize everything that is being done, that is not what I mean, but the interest in it must be there . If you recognize only one event in another classroom, a door will be opened . It is not necessary to look at every detail . One can make a small test after one year to see how it has been working . Suppose we have worked together in the teachers’ meeting during the whole year . We can ask how many teachers have not appeared at all in the consciousness of the others . This is a very helpful exercise .

I will tell a short story . I was visiting a school and was present in the teachers’ meeting . We took up a theme and

I made some contributions, after which one of the teachers spoke to the theme . Then the same teacher spoke once more and then once again he spoke . After the meeting, I reviewed it for myself . Almost all the other teachers had been silent the whole time . One old, very intelligent, very capable teacher had spoken the whole time . This is not wrong, of course, if this happens once in one of the teachers’ meetings . He may have had much to say that was worthwhile . So I asked the others, “This teacher spoke very much this afternoon . How is it in the other teachers’ meetings throughout the year?”

They answered, “We cannot speak at all!” This, then, was the situation . Of course there will always be some teachers who are more capable, who know more than the others and that is not wrong . They ought to make their contributions, but **it is a task of the teachers’ meeting that everyone should speak out,** not at every meeting but at least at some time during the year . One can schedule such things and say that now we are going to go around and each teacher will tell about one of his activities in his lessons . He may choose what he likes, but everyone has to share something out of his activities . In this way, all the others can recognize these things .

In many teachers’ meetings, I have seen it happen that a very few teachers speak while many others are silent until a catastrophe occurs in one teacher’s class . Then we have to deal with this catastrophe . Now this poor teacher is spoken about and we must recognize and deal with what is going on in his class . This is not unusual . We must also deal with catastrophes . That is not wrong . But we ought not wait until they come . Rather throughout the year, we should

tell one another, one after the other, what is going on in our lessons when there are no catastrophes . If this is done, then a mood will be created within which we can deal with the catastrophes . You see, here is a great task . Of course we are not aiming for perfection but to create the interest in making something like this happen so that we really deal

with this human being and that human being and with what is living in this and that classroom . When we do this we are awakening to this higher level where the archangels work at night, and they will pour their forces of courage into the whole college of teachers of the school . Rudolf Steiner called this process the reverse ritual, or the inverted ritual . This is a strange expression with the following meaning . In religious rituals, spiritual beings dive into all the processes of the ritual actions and words, permeating what can be perceived with the physical senses . The spiritual forces permeate the physical processes, the physical actions during the ritual . The spiritual beings dive into these and by letting the ritual echo in their own hearts, those who are participating in the religious ritual can unite with these spiritual beings . This is the usual ritual .

Now what is the inverted ritual? It does not begin with formed physical actions but with free, independent individualities who are working on their own paths of knowledge and who approach, through difficulties, this higher level of the archangels where they awaken to the spiritual activity in other human beings . They do not awaken to the bodies of the other human beings, nor to their sympathies and antipathies, but to their spiritual activities . Then seeds are created on a higher level, and they are reinforced by higher beings . These higher beings are present . It is a ritual, but one which is reversed, inverted, because the individuals must come up to this higher level .

But does it work? Does this inverted ritual work at all? This is always an inner question . We must test ourselves and look for all the hindrances that are preventing it from working . When we do, we come up against all those anti-social forces that we looked at yesterday . These have accumulated throughout the whole life of every teacher . We find all sorts of anti-social forces in feeling, thinking and will . There are many such forces and there must be . These are not bad . They are necessary because they separate us from the whole world and create the basis for our being free, independent individualities . We have arrived at this century when we are at the height of the consciousness soul, when I experience myself confronting the whole world . I am concerned about it and must consider what I think, what I feel, and what I will, and this is right . Of course, it is right .

We must reach this height of the consciousness soul . We must confront the whole world . But it is not necessary to stay at

this point . From this point, it is on the basis of anti-social forces that the consciousness soul, the “I”-consciousness, has been created and exercised . Here it is possible to ascend one more step to the next level . The necessary condition to taking this step is to experience and recognize others .

It is a rule, as I mentioned in my first lecture, that there is the center and there is the periphery, and in discovering others, I find myself not only in myself but also in the others at the same time . When I emphasize myself, I can never come to my higher self — never . I find the higher self in the innermost being of myself but also in others at the same time . In order to truly meet another person, we must not meet merely in sympathy and antipathy, but we must recognize the spiritual being of the other human being . We must have an interest in doing this, and each of us must take a few steps in this direction .

There is a great meditation recommended by Rudolf Steiner that can help us . Make a picture of another human being in your inner consciousness . Not just one picture but also a second and a third, each one in a quite different way . In the first picture we must embrace all that we recognize of this person . We must try to make a portrait, a painting, or a picture of this human being . We should finish this picture in all its details, as much as we can . Of course, it will not be perfect, but we must bring all that we can together and create a picture . Now, a picture, a portrait, is never identical with the spiritual being who is the subject of this portrait . It may be a good portrait of the spiritual being, but still it is a picture . Now that I have this portrait, I can say to myself: I have a picture of this spiritual being, I do not, of course, have the spiritual being itself . This is the first picture .

Now you can ask how it is possible to make a second picture when you have taken all that you know and made it into one finished picture . The second picture ought to be quite different . This first portrait must be finished . The second cannot be finished, not finished at all . It is always being painted . If I dive into this second picture, then I will make a very astonishing discovery . There exists in every human being a tendency, like a heavy gravity or pull, to stick with the first picture . I feel that I know this person, who he is, and that my picture of him is finished . When he comes through the door, I already know who he is . But I can never know just what he is thinking now, or just what he is feeling . I can only know what I experienced yesterday . Only yesterday is fixed .

For example, yesterday I had a strong conflict, an argument with another person, and I discovered that she was lying . My picture of this is terrible and it is finished . The next morning the door opens, and this “liar” comes into the room . At first, when I speak to her, I do not speak to her but to my picture of her, my finished picture from yesterday . Ghost-like, unreal, unfinished pictures may be true, they may be untrue . But while I speak to the picture, there is a human being standing before me who, in the meantime, has discovered that she was lying and has regretted it very much, and she is now trying to go beyond it . This is all possible . I do not know . My second picture of a person must develop every moment, every second . It is never finished .

If I compare the two pictures I have made within myself of each of the other teachers in the faculty, I will discover how heavy, what gravity there is in the first picture . This picture is not wrong . We must make this first picture . We must include our experiences exactly as they have happened . But we must not stay with the first picture but be open to the next, the second picture, in order to see what is happening now .

Then we come to the much more difficult third picture . This picture will be painted in the future . If I have one picture formed from my experience and a second created in the moment, I still do not know what will come of this human being in his next incarnation . We do not even know what will become of him the next day, not even tomorrow . We cannot yet know . In every human being, there is a great, unknown future . A very great, unknown future lies within this spiritual being . If I am oblivious to this and hold only to the first picture, in reality I am only looking at the past . In the second I am open to what is happening in the moment . The third is just as necessary . We must also concern ourselves with the future of the children in our classes . I have pictures

of them garnered from many experiences, and I must be open to what is going on in the moment, and I must ask what will become of this child when he is grown and when he is reincarnated . I must leave this question open and carry it in my consciousness .

Rudolf Steiner recommended another exercise, one that is done by picturing the physical body . First, one pictures

to oneself the head as it is composed of finished forms . The second picture should be made of the lungs and heart, which are never finished but are changing at every moment . When we look at the limbs, which are the focus of the third picture, what is significant is not their particular forms, for example, the form of the fingers . What is significant is also not, as it

is with the heart and lung, the activity within them . What is significant is what a person does with his fingers, what he will do in the future . Thus the physical body can only be conceived by forming three different pictures in three different ways . This is also true when we try to conceive the whole existence of another human being . When we

approach other people in this threefold way, in carrying out these exercises, we begin the great task of building a higher level of community within the teachers’ meeting from which may flow a great stream of courage into the whole life of the school .

We must now go into details of the life of the teachers’ meeting . We will look at what happens, what qualities must be found there, and some of the dangers there . We need to deal with the difference between the faculty and the college and ask wherein lies the difference and whether there must be a difference . Also, we must ask how the college of teachers works together with the parents and how the parents in the school community deal with what goes on in the whole school . Can the school community develop as a living entity, can it be a spiritual organ with its own biography that develops through different phases? Then there is the much deeper question of how this school community, with its individual biography, lives within society as a whole in the present time . How is the Spirit of our Time living within the school community? This last question will be the theme of our last lecture tomorrow .