

Lecture I

The Spiritual Impulse of Waldorf Education

Waldorf education is a very concrete, dense reality, a human reality. I am not speaking of perfection or lack of perfection, but actually a concrete, dense, human reality. It is what happens during every lesson — where we meet the children, where children meet the teachers, and where we see what importance these meetings have on the long journey from birth to adult life.

We see what importance these moments have in the development of these human beings as they make small, new steps, as they overcome themselves, as their new faculties increase, and so on. And just as much of a dense, concrete reality is the meeting between teachers in the teachers' meeting and in the meeting of the college of teachers. I do not mean perfection or lack of perfection. I do not mean happiness. What I mean is also a kind of dense, concrete reality in such meetings. And just the same, if you look upon the whole school community, if you follow up what happens there in the founding of a new school, in the early growth of the school community, and during the following years, then you can find a kind of spiritual biography. Moreover, in every school it is a different individuality, a different spiritual being which is found in the whole school community, and this, too, is what I mean by a concrete, dense reality. But if you look around in the present times, this is not the mood that is

usually found. In all cities, in all countries, there is a tendency of masks, of ghosts. You have the feeling that what you see is not, in reality, what it actually looks like.

What is the reality behind the masks? What is going on? Are they really human beings or are they only ghosts who are speaking? That it appears that they think is also, somehow, a non-reality. But if you then once more look at this very concrete, dense reality of human existence and at the development of the students and of the teachers together, you come to a great challenge. For there you find very great human possibilities.

And all of us know those very great human possibilities which are within this path of education and of the possibilities in meeting together with the children and the students. How, then, does this very great ideal live within this concrete, dense reality?

It may happen that after the last lesson one day, we return home and are somehow totally, inwardly, smashed: flat! Somehow we are finished! Impossible to go on! And the same may happen after the college meeting: We return home, and that's the last thing! Nevermore!

It is no easy way. This is no pat way of happiness. But it is actually a concrete, dense, human reality.

We go forward, and, even though we do not realize perfection, and we go through disappointments, we also go through challenges and really move forward to new levels. "Whatever is happening?" we ask ourselves. Yet we move forward to the next step. It is a path of human evolution that we take together, in this meeting of human beings. And, if we look at this, then we can put this into the greater perspective of the present time. I mean by this that we find a true view of the problem, of the great spiritual task, that

is, of incarnation. Human beings, then, as spiritual beings dive into bodily existence in earthly life. How do they do it, how do they succeed in incarnating in such a way that the creative, divine force in the innermost being is really working within matter? How do they work into bodily existence, going forward, forming, transforming, and — yes — changing matter? Does the human being, the Spirit Self, dive into the bodily existence and disappear, only to appear there within matter? What is the pathway for the spiritual beings that leads from the heavens to everyday life with its television, cars, and jet travel? How is this possible? Must the spiritual disappear? For in the whole Western world, there really is a pattern of the soul-spirit diving too much into matter. It dives too much into the bodily existence and automatically sinks towards the animal.

Very often this animal side is taken up with a great efficiency, but this is not human life. It is not the next step in the evolution of a spiritual being. Instead, it is a diving into and a disappearing within. In the Eastern world (and sometimes in the West), the opposite tendency is very often the case. Here the spiritual hardly incarnates, and instead, it only touches and then hovers over and above the bodily existence. Here there is no great faculty of grasping matter and working within and transforming it, but only of touching it and then staying there above it.

If we look upon these two world tendencies (which we can recognize in all places, of course, not just those mentioned), then we once more can realize the great task of Waldorf education. It is to help these soul-spiritual beings to incarnate so that they are not front-line combatants, so to speak, in this spiritual battleground. And at the same time, it is to help them to avoid diving too much into matter, disappearing in it.

Rather, we want to help them to work into matter, changing it for every sense-perception through love. For in the end, this creative force of development is only possible through love.

Into every sense perception, into every conflict with which we must deal, we must bring love. We must do something with each challenge, live with it, go forward by transforming matter and by transforming ourselves. Of course, the children cannot do this out of their own initiative, but they can do it if the teacher helps them so that they gain a little bit at a time. The teachers help them also by giving nourishment and pointing out this great task: the development of the free human being who, more and more, creates faculties and abilities for himself. If we look upon these things, then a brave picture appears on the horizon in which human beings develop new faculties on the world stage.

Since the beginning of the 20th century, a great new faculty has been arising. This is the faculty of inner, living picturing. If we look upon the modern world, in all social situations, all over the world we can see things are going to pieces everywhere. One sees destruction and separatism, and this is our great unhappiness. All things are going to pieces are being destroyed. How can we deal with this, especially in social relationships?

Each one will again and again confront the other, but this confronting will be within the innermost living pictures as part of the whole pictures that we have within this, within and outside at the same time, in an embracing, inner, living picture. This faculty is really arising in the whole of humanity out of itself. But it must be cultivated and nourished because otherwise this newly arising faculty will be perverted and go in wrong ways, so that it does more social harm, causing more misery. The faculty is there, in every incarnating soul and in

the sub-consciousness. But it has to be cultivated, and now we turn again to this great task of Waldorf education.

In every human soul, inwardly, is a capacity for creating living pictures. In education, of course, the teacher himself must first live into the content; yet it is not just giving information to the children. At first, there is a living picture of the content in the soul of the teacher. Then, as nourishment, he gives it without pushing it into the children. Instead somehow, he makes it possible that the picture force in the child may arise, not too much as a finished picture, but as nourishment. Then the next step is for the children themselves to form their own activity, artistic activity, and this is made possible from this nourishment that at first had to be given.

At first, the teacher might say: "Teachers, the children must be graded according to achievement within a certain time." And now even that tendency is gone, replaced by the call to be creative. There is a certain attitude which supposes that the creative faculty should come out of the children at once, but this is a great error. It is only animal life, urges, that arise out of the children in this way. For at first, the children must have nourishment, and then this deeper force will be awakened as a result of leaving this "sleeping picture force" in them. And they can go now a small step further. This can be seen as one side of the great task of Waldorf teaching.

But then we have to ask ourselves, has the teacher really a conflict with the pupils, or did he come into the classroom having prepared himself very much with living pictures? There are the children, and he is speaking up into the air, over their heads. Has he a contact when he directly meets the children? Is there real communication with the children or is this only something he has produced in himself? I suppose, it is a little

bit of both. But then, suppose he could give this nourishment somehow to the children, independently, whether or not he had contact with every one of the children. Is there still a gap between the teacher and the children? Can we improve our faculty of overcoming this gap?

We could make an objection as to why we should improve where every teacher somehow already has this faculty in advance. And I would respond with this observation. You can see very many people have, without any training, a teacher within them. Such a teacher goes into the classroom and at once is there together with all the children, from heart to heart. This is what I would call a “teacherly faculty.” And of course this is good, that this is there in advance. But the question is, is this sufficient?

And there I am sure that, as the present time is a very earnest time, we can look upon this reality and see that the gap between human beings is not diminishing but increasing. And it would be a great illusion to suppose it is diminishing only a little bit and that in the next century the gap will be overcome, and all human beings will be in the great, planned kingdom. Error! This is not the case! This gap between all human beings will in the future be increasing more and more, becoming much deeper and wider than it is today. We are going more deeply into an illusion, so that in the future, everyone will be more and more alone. Everyone will feel separated in his own existence, and the gap will be deeper and deeper.

Therefore I am sure that with this teacherly faculty, we, all of us, actually have something beyond this connection with the pupils. And that is that we love them. We go into the classroom, and it is wonderful to live there together with others. We have this content and we can realize that

it is working. Yet, I am sure that even this alone will not be sufficient, because the gap is increasing every year more and more. Therefore, we have the great task of raising ourselves to a new level, where we can overcome this gap. This effort cannot be made only to increase sympathy; it must be at a level beyond sympathy and antipathy. And at this new level, we must work at the conflict with the students.

I will try describing one meditative way of overcoming this gap. But I emphasize that this is the second step. The first is, of course, this inner ability of a deeper picturing, this giving of nourishment. At first this is done in meditative life when those inner pictures may increase, live, and grow. But this is not sufficient. Then I begin with the second, this overcoming the gap. This begins with a working on one's self.

The teacher works upon himself. How? The first step of this meditation is described by Rudolf Steiner at the beginning of the book, *How to Know Higher Worlds*, but only the beginning of this meditation has been described there. It is the meditation that begins in the section entitled "Inner Tranquility," in the first chapter. There he says that it is necessary to have some small periods of time which I choose from my own life all the way back to childhood. Rudolf Steiner says, "Provide for yourself moments of inner tranquility and learn in these moments to distinguish between the essential and the non-essential." And further on he says that these moments of seclusion must be to contemplate and judge our own actions and experiences as though they applied not to ourselves but to some other person. Each must experience the power of confronting his own self as a stranger, to feel what this is. Every human being in modern times has a kind of inner spectator. It is not uncommon to experience oneself going, speaking with another person, doing

this or that, and somehow experiencing these moments as a spectator. Sometimes we don't know what we are doing, but somehow a small, realistic spectator is there within, observing. And if we only observe this inner spectator, and do not do anything with it, this inner spectator may also be very frustrated. I cannot just live continuously and not go into what it is that I am doing. This need to accept the spectator is somehow frustrating and some young people suppose, in very great error, that it would be good to obliterate it. But this is not the way. Then the spectator comes from the other side! There is only one way and that is the strengthening of this spectator, letting him grow, letting him be one with myself, and this will be done through such a meditation.

So now I really am pressing myself into this spectator and looking from above, looking down onto my life as if I were a stranger. Think upon this. Everyone can do this, but the next step is a little bit more difficult.

How can I then distinguish between the essential and the non-essential? I know people who try this meditation and say that the first step, this placing oneself at a distance as a stranger is no problem. "I can do it," someone says. "But to distinguish between the essential and the non-essential, that I don't know how to do. All of it must be there. How can I take something away and say 'non-essential' and 'essential'? It was alive, it was a whole. How is it possible to distinguish between the essential and the non-essential?" And then I have heard persons who were doing this meditation and then stopped doing it when they were unable to differentiate.

But it is possible to learn this, too. There is a key. There are many keys. And there are many ways. I will mention only one in which one has experienced in life, say, something very dramatic, resulting in a "small dent," a social disappointment. Soon, struggles follow and I must look at all the details.

Then I try seeing through it and ask how the forces of inner development have been furthered by going through this experience. It may be a hindrance, it may be a social struggle, it may not at all be what I want, but in every case, in every situation, there is somehow a deeper question: How are the forces of development, of evolution, going further to the next step? And if you look upon this question, it is always more essential than the limited content of thinking, feeling, and will in that passing moment. But this force of development, of ability, of growth, this has importance for a whole life. Therefore it is not only a question of distinguishing the essential from the non-essential, because everything is non-essential at the surface, while everything is essential in the depths, if you go through this process, reaching this real force of striving.

We need, however, language to describe this force. If you observe the German language after World War II, hundreds of English words have flowed into it. There has been an increasing anglicization of the German language. You can recognize this. I would not say this is bad, because if the words in the English language are good, and then they are used in the German language, this is, of course, an improvement. This is good. And so I might make a recommendation that one German word or phrase go into the English language because it is lacking there. The phrase would be: *der werdende Mensch*, which in English is “the becoming or the emerging human being.” This means that the human being is evolving to new levels, changing his inner life. But you have to describe it with many words in the English language. The German has *werde, das Werdende*. The inner changing of the whole emphasis of the spiritual being from one level to a new level can be expressed in this phrase. I believe this phrase to be indispensable. One could take it and

use it. Why not? Just as there are a hundred English words already taken into the German language, one could take this and either pronounce it in German, “werden” or “verden” in English.

In any event, it is just this force, this spiritual ability, which we have to realize, to recognize in ourselves in this meditation. We work through our whole lives, working through to this step, and then a next step will always come. This I will paint in a little more detail. We have our own life situation, a very comfortable and complicated one, somehow. We observe it for some weeks, looking from above upon it, with great objectivity, distinguishing the essential from the non-essential.

We research more deeply into what is really *der werdende Mensch*, what is really emerging there without others. There are always some other people [see Diagram 1] (of course the whole of humanity is there, but I mean the people nearest to us). The next step is looking upon this and discovering that in my own consciousness, all those other human beings are very small, silent and mute around the chief actor, myself. And

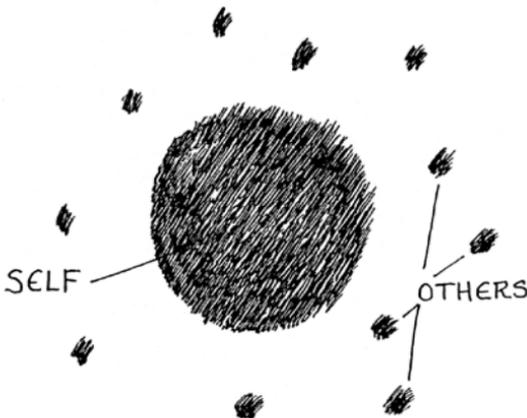


Diagram 1

this, of course, must be wrong. It cannot be true. It is quite sure. It cannot be true.

I perceive this but because I am always searching for the essential, a truth comes up, and now I discover in a new way, what I have not seen before. So now these beings around the central figure grow and I see their importance, for without them, much of the present situation wouldn't be there at all. Each of them is growing. Without them, this would not have been possible. And suddenly I see many human beings around me in this way. And now the central figure really begins to disappear. This experience can be there; it is a feeling for what is growing, and so I can feel that this person is growing and that person, too. All of them are growing and my own person is at the same time diminishing, diminishing and disappearing. And this is a very important point of this mediation. The others are growing. I am diminishing and disappearing into nothingness, into nothing [Diagram 2]. The others, then, are the reality and I am becoming nothing (and this also cannot be true).

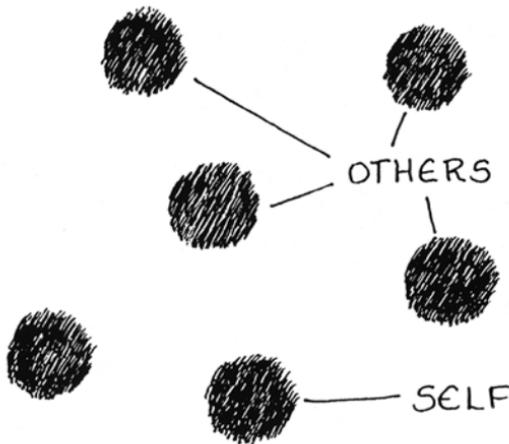


Diagram 2

And now in looking upon this level, something else comes, and that is that this central possibility of freedom of decision is not placed in the others. This possibility is only there in the center. The possibility of love, however, is not centered, but is found in the others here, around the middle. Therefore I discover myself in a new way, on a new level. It was not there in this first chaos [Diagram 1]. This has disappeared. The others are growing. I am at first totally disappearing and then emerging once more.

And now the question: Where is my true self? Here it is necessary to stay within this question for a long time and not take any shortcuts. For then I discover the surrounding essentials; those are just as indispensable if I would search for my true self. It is only possible to find it at the same time both in the center and in the circumference, in the periphery. In other words, to find it in the others. It is totally wrong searching for my higher self by going deeper and deeper there in the middle. It's not to be found, for it isn't there. Yet it is also there! It is not only in the others; this also would be wrong. It is at the same time just as much in the innermost center and can be found there, but only if, at the same time, I find it in the others.

And this experience can be carried through further steps into life. If I recall how I was at five or fifteen or eighteen years of age, step by step this exercise can be widened going through all the years, back to early childhood. And now this is one way of overcoming the gap with the children because you are overcoming your own non-essential and going to the essential. In this way, you go beyond your small person to the greater embracing one.

And now, if you are teaching in the first grade, then this exercise must be done in such a way that you, in your own

life, are going backwards until you come to this time when, as a child, you, yourself, were in the first grade. So you are able to reconstruct this. "I was sitting there on a chair together with my friend. There was a teacher, a lady who was around very much, but she was a little bit frenzied at the same time..." and so on. You see, we paint a concrete picture of the lady and the situation. And now going to this step, we find ourselves within ourselves, and within the class.

And now I am standing together with the children in first grade with this inner feeling: I am in those children and they are in me. Both of us on a higher level are beyond sympathy and antipathy. As spiritual beings they and I are each *ein werdender Mensch*. This spiritual being who is "on the way" is always in the center and in the circumference at the same time, working together, embracing and creating social reality. And always, where the teachers are unable to work for this we are falling out of this mood, staying with the non-essential. If we are here [Diagram 2], if we are standing in the world in this way, then we are finally with the children from the outer and the inner sides.

So, too, in the upper classes when the students reach sixteen years old, I must go back to the time when I was that age. In this way, I dive in to discover something from the inner side. At the same time, of course, I too look at them from outside, recognizing how they are, their way of behaving and so on. This is also necessary, but it is not sufficient. If we look upon the children only as objects of psychological research, then this will be the predominant attitude of every teacher. This is not bad in itself as a first point of departure. You have to look at all manner of behavior from outside first, but you must not stay with that only. You must dive into these deeper realms coming from the inside, so that all the

outer behavior, attitudes, and the sum of the observations are able to speak in a new way.

Thus, the spiritual being speaks and, therefore, I would call this the meditative path and begin here with the words in *How to Know Higher Worlds*. Here there are described only the first two parts of this meditation. The other part, described in other lectures, is more fully described there. Having taken these two steps, they have to move on to the next step also. So here we see the two great ways of teacher training. The one uses inner, living pictures that are artistically activating and give nourishment to the children. The other goes back into one's own life, to the essentials, diving to the deeper essentials of the children where we can meet them as human beings.

The next question is: "When in my whole life was this force of *der werdende Mensch* the most powerful?" And now we come to the crucial point. It was greatest during the first three years, from birth until age three. At first this is a bit difficult to understand until we remember that the child goes from immobility to walking during this time. If we take away this faculty of the development from creeping on all fours to an upright position and then to walking, if we take this away, we must think about how different the human being would be without this ability. Or we can consider the development of the next faculties from age nine: from sleeping to learning to understand and to artistic breathing; if we take this faculty away, the whole of later life will be disoriented. And third, we can consider the development of the thinking faculty, where dramatic development can be seen. Those three faculties are the great fundamentals of *der werdende Mensch*. *Der Mensch* is the true human being in this development, in his evolution, overcoming what is given. And just during those three years, when the "I" consciousness has not yet come, it is strongest. This is reality.

Now Rudolf Steiner describes out of spiritual research how the inner forming of the young child appears. He says that the inner forming of the young child is quite different before three years old and after, in other words, before the moment at which the “I” consciousness comes. We can, of course, see that the consciousness of the child is in quite another place. What is this like? To answer, we have to realize the following: Here we have the young child, before the “I” consciousness is there. [Diagram 3] The whole supersensible ordering is open to the spiritual world, which streams down from the primal spirit into the young child. Then “I” consciousness is awakened in the child, and the stream to the spiritual world is closed up after this “I” consciousness comes. [Diagram 4] Of course, freedom could never come then without this divine support of *der werdende Mensch* in the young child.

But the divine does not disappear totally. A small gleam appears throughout one’s whole life. Where do we find this stream going still further through life? It is always there



Diagram 3



Diagram 4

when this human being overcomes himself; then this force is there. The young children also overcome themselves, while adults many times are not able to do likewise, only repeating themselves for their entire lives. Overcoming oneself is seen in the child when it creeps and walks, and next, in all artistic activity; you cannot overcome yourself without changing both matter and self. You overcome yourself when you go somewhat more instinctually to *der werdende Mensch* in all artistic activity.

In still another realm, it is also possible to overcome yourself through healing an illness. This varies in people; some linger in illness while others rise to new tasks after overcoming illness. This self-healing force is the same as that referred to in *How to Know Higher Worlds*. The meditative way can only be done out of this force of *der werdende Mensch*.

We can see that the teacher can recognize and further this element in himself. And in this whole question of education, it is a matter of reality, true, open reality on the path of development. This the children are in need of, meeting adults who are on the path of development and then nourishing this development in their own beings on their path of development.

But a new question arises. One side of this development can be called the “general” reality, or the same for all people. But how does each of us develop as individuals? This whole realm has two sides and we must deal with both. One comes as part of the general, human development, while the other deals with a specific human being. We will consider these two streams in our next lecture.