

## Love as the Source of Education

Helmut von Kugelgen

---

*“We need as teachers an awakening of living human nature that experiences again within itself the whole child, insofar as we come into a spiritual connection with the child.”*

—Rudolf Steiner

...Without a deepening and internalizing of the idea of destiny, it will become increasingly difficult to come to terms with the questions of education: One sees in every child an individuality, whose path is neither confined by the gateway of birth nor the gateway of death. When a teacher receives pupils in the mood of “having a destiny with them,” a new sense of responsibility is strengthened. When in quiet reflection one directs one’s attention to what is brought into this life individually, and to the capacities and impulses that these children should one day carry from this life over the threshold of death, one obtains an immense power as an elder to support, bear, and help to solve the problems of these youths. The source of strength in the internalized idea of destiny can only become effective, however, if the “modern learning methods,” the technical intermediaries, the cleverly contrived, improved performance programs do not replace the speaking human being. For the sake of a contemporary spiritually and artistically formed teaching process, Waldorf pedagogy holds human to human interaction as the “most modern” educational method. The communication of knowledge through the creatively fashioning human being can alone radiate edifying forces, wisdom and warmth into the lesson.

When Rudolf Steiner still led the school (according to all eye witnesses) he was for teachers, pupils and parents the source of wisdom and warmth for the prosperity of the school. He stepped into the center of the school community, attended classes, gave the teachers examples, confidence and advice, worked in the teachers’ conferences on the inner structure of the school organism and on the spiritual permeation of the whole work, spoke at monthly festivals and parents’ evenings. From him there went forth enthusiasm, momentum and heart-warmth. In all difficult situations he asked first and foremost for that spiritual-human contact between teachers and pupils, indeed he demanded it. Where this contact was given, where work was done with enthusiasm, where in the upper school the love for the teacher turned into love for the subject matter, into interest in the world—then he was thankful, because he saw that his work was rooting itself in humanness. What human beings alone can give to one another, so that we learn the art of becoming human, he showed in exemplary fashion. This is why he repeated so often the single question in his addresses to the pupils: “Do you love your teachers?” and he was satisfied with the joyful “Yes!” of the hundredfold chorus of children.

The science of the human being that Rudolf Steiner placed at the foundation of Waldorf pedagogy bears the power within itself to awaken love when one works with it. It is love that on the one hand always

wishes to become deed and true action in daily life and on the other hand strives to become knowledge, “real spiritual atmosphere.” It is love that Rudolf Steiner integrated in the foundation stone of the school, so that in the Free Waldorf School, the spirit of love could hold sway and lay its foundations wherever it builds places for childhood and youth in the world.

Every teacher rejoiced (as Karl Schubert describes) when he came into the class. It meant so much for the children. The classroom was filled with a festive mood. He always gave motivation and encouragement. He trusted one more than one trusted oneself...It suited him when one sought and entered upon new paths out of one’s own strength, in connection with the spirit of pedagogy in which one stood...he allowed much to happen because he wanted much to happen and much to be done. I heard him once say: “I am not in accord with much that happens, and yet it seems right that it happens, because otherwise nothing would develop.” He laid great value on the artistic element, which he would like very much to have seen represented by us. “Go, go” was his admonition, and then came the pleading emphatically spoken word, “warmth, warmth...”

Rudolf Steiner once came into the drawing lesson of Wilhelm Ruhtenberg, who had given the assignment to express in lines “hatred and conflict.” Soon the opposite assignment followed to draw forms that resembled “love and friendship.” That was the moment when the door quietly opened and Rudolf Steiner entered. He saw that a girl had tried to represent love in round yet melancholic, inwardly directed forms. Ruhtenberg describes in his journal from 1927: “He took her drawing book in hand and drew very plainly with a couple lines two forms that wrapped around each other: above they wish to touch almost tenderly, neither wishes to offend the other, one appears to wish humbly to bow, and the other, as if shielding, wishes to lean over.” A fellow pupil, Berthold Faig, reports the same situation: “In another lesson Pastor Ruhtenberg had given us the task to bring “love and hatred” to expression in an artistic form, and once again Rudolf Steiner came to us in the class. In the blue drawing book in landscape format with colorful tissue paper between the pages a girl had brought “hatred” to expression in a jagged form. We had not used colored pencils, but only the usual black pencil. Rudolf Steiner drew “Love” in the book, as it is reproduced here from my memory. My late class teacher also remembered this drawing in the same form.”



Of the three most commonly used forces of education—fear, ambition, and love—Rudolf Steiner felt that in Waldorf education we must leave out the first two. The symbol at the headings and publications

of the International Association of Waldorf Kindertagesstätten have to do with the third force. We are often asked what it means and who gave it to us. Rudolf Steiner drew the symbol of love before the eyes of the children in a book. We chose with the foundation of the international Kindergarten Association in the autumn of 1969 this symbol.

---

Translated from German by Clifford Venho