

The Hundredth Anniversary of the Birth of Helmut von Kügelgen

Susan Howard



Helmut von Kügelgen (December 14, 1916 - February 25, 1998), a co-founder of the International Association of Waldorf Kindergartens, would have turned 100 years old in December. On this special occasion, we are including in our Newsletter one of his numerous articles, "Love as the Source of Education" and announcements of a new book by the same name that includes selections of his writings.

After working as a journalist and later as a class teacher at the Stuttgart Waldorf School, Helmut von Kügelgen devoted the second half of his life to working energetically on behalf of early childhood "against the background of the increasingly dramatic spiritual struggles of our time," as he said in the introduction to the book "Spiritual Insights." He was very aware of the signature of the times at the turn of the millennium—the dangers and also the possibilities. Many of the phenomena he was concerned about—abysses in human relationships, the dangers of fanaticism, questionable technological intrusions into the lives of children and adults, and the exploitation of the ecological life of the earth—continue today, and his words are timely and extremely relevant as we ponder today's existential social and spiritual questions.

As a response to the growing early intellectualization of children and childhood in the 1960s, together with Klara Hattermann and other experienced kindergarten teachers Helmut von Kügelgen founded the International Association of Waldorf Kindergartens (IVW) in 1969, today named

the International Association for Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood Education (IASWECE). In the Preamble to the statutes, he wrote:

"In our Association, all who serve the education of children, the training of educators, the cooperation with parents, and the development of human culture at large—spiritually, legally and economically, work together. . . The fruitfulness of worldwide cooperation beyond all limits of language, politics and religion is a tried and tested experience."

In its nearly fifty years of existence the International Association has played a key role in developing and deepening Waldorf early childhood education around the world and serving as a voice for childhood; today there are approximately 2000 Waldorf kindergartens in more than sixty-five countries worldwide. The small circle of mostly German kindergarten teachers on the first board of the association has now expanded to an international council of representatives from thirty-two member country associations.

Out of his own deep convictions and his profound commitment to the spiritual/cultural impulse of Rudolf Steiner, Helmut von Kügelgen challenged us again and again as educators and parents to expand our view of education and our own sense of moral/spiritual responsibility within it as participants in a renewal of culture. He saw the deepening of our most human capacities as the essential foundations of this work—reverence, courage for initiative, and most importantly, love.

In this Newsletter, you will find an article by Helmut von Kügelgen on exactly this them. It is the lead chapter in a new book on his life's work and ideals, called "Love as the Source of Education."

Susan Howard lives in Amherst, USA. She worked with Helmut von Kügelgen in the "Kuratorium" of the International Association of Waldorf Kindergartens in the 1990's. Today she is a member of the Coordinating Group of IASWECE and is the Coordinator of WECAN, the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America.
