

From GA217 "The Younger Generation", lectures given by Rudolf Steiner

From Lecture 2 on Oct 4, 1922:

"But then, when one strives to speak out of the impulses that can bring life again, those who want to muddle along on the lines of the old spiritual life simply do not understand at all. How little is understood of what is spoken out of life about the founding of the Waldorf school! For the most part people hear something quite different about the Waldorf School from what they ought to hear. They hear only that one speaks to them the way one spoke already decades ago. They can find the mere words that are spoken today about the Waldorf School in books. They find every single word in earlier books. But when one wants to use different words, or perhaps only different ways of putting the sentences together, then people say that it is bad style. They have not the remotest notion of what must be done now, when human beings who still have a soul in their bodies must inevitably face the nothingness.

Waldorf School education must be listened to with other ears than those with which one hears about other kinds of education or educational reform. For the Waldorf School gives no answer to the questions people want to have answered today and which are ostensibly answered by other systems of education. What is the aim of such questions? Their usual aim is much reason or intelligence, of which the present time has an incalculable amount. Intelligence, intellect, cleverness—these are widespread commodities at the present time. One can give terribly intelligent answers to questions like: What should we make out of the child? How should we inculcate this or that into this child? The ultimate result is that people answer the questions for themselves: What pleases me in the child, and how can I get the child to become what I want him or her to be? But such questions have no significance in the deeper evolutionary course of humanity. And to such questions, Waldorf pedagogy gives no reply at all.

To give a picture of what Waldorf Education is we must say that it speaks quite differently from the way in which people speak elsewhere in the sphere of education. Waldorf education is not a pedagogical system, but an art to awaken what is actually there within the human being. Fundamentally, the Waldorf school pedagogy does not want to educate, but to awaken. For today it is a matter of awakening. First of all, the teachers must be awakened, and then the teachers must awaken the children and the young people.

An awakening is needed, now that humankind has been cut off from the stream of world evolution in general. Just as a hand goes to sleep when it is blocked from the circulation of the body, so too humanity fell asleep in soul and spirit."

From Lecture 9 on October 11, 1922:

"What is to be learned must be learned. But it will be learned when there is as natural an urge towards those who are older as the infant has towards its mother's breast, or as the small child feels when, by imitating, he learns to speak. This urge will be stimulated when the young find the artistic coming from the older generation, when truth first appears in the garb of beauty. In this way all that is best will be kindled in the young, not the intellect which always remains passive, but the will which stirs thinking into activity. Artistic education will be an education of the will, and it is upon the education of the will that everything else depends."