

Rudolf Steiner

The First Teachers' Course

# Anthropological Foundations

Methods of Teaching  
Practical Discussions

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Thirty lectures, fifteen practical discussions and one address, held in Stuttgart, Germany from August 21 – September 5, 1919 for the prospective teachers of the first Waldorf School. The entire first teachers' course published in chronological order.

Translated by Margot M. Saar

Edited by Neil Boland and Jon McAlice

A joint project of the Education Research Group of the Bund der Freien Waldorfschulen Deutschland and the Pedagogical Section at the Goetheanum

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GA 293 *Allgemeine Menschenkunde als Grundlage der Pädagogik*, 10th edition, Basel 2019, edited by Urs Dietler.

GA 294 *Erziehungskunst. Methodisch-Didaktisches*, 7th edition, Basel 2019, edited by Urs Dietler.

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## Foreword

This book contains lectures and an address given by Rudolf Steiner as preparation for the opening of the first Waldorf School in Stuttgart in the fall of 1919. This period in Europe, following the end of the First World War, was one of instability and change; it was also a period of potential and possibility. Steiner worked intensively to maximize this potential for change through his work for the renewal of society, the threefold social order.

Steiner's high hopes and expectations for the school are set out clearly in the first paragraph of the opening address (p. 16).

If the Waldorf School is to bring about a renewal of today's spiritual life, it must be a true cultural enterprise. We must expect changes everywhere; the whole social movement is essentially a spiritual movement and the question of education is one of the urgent spiritual concerns of our time. We must use the Waldorf School and the possibilities it offers as a means of reforming, of revolutionizing, education.

Through the renewal of society through education, the Waldorf School would become the "living proof of anthroposophy's great potential."

In this foundational series of lectures, Steiner sought to give to the future teachers of the Waldorf School a full and comprehensive understanding of the human being, one of the most wide-ranging given in any of his lecture cycles. The lectures detail Steiner's understanding of the human being as comprising body, soul, and spirit and how these three aspects interrelate. He gives a picture of the two contrasting streams which come together in the incarnating human being – one from the cosmos and the other of heredity – and how this incarnation process, the coming-into-bodyness of the growing child, can be facilitated and harmonized by education and through the way teachers engage with children.

Steiner describes in great detail how the education of children can be looked at from a spiritual point of view, yet at the same time his approach is intensely practical, right down to the small details of what and how to teach. The uniting of these two approaches – the cosmic and the practical – exemplifies what is possibly unique about Waldorf education and what characterizes the Waldorf approach. The lectures in this volume are presented chronologically, rather than in three separate volumes as has previously been the case. This highlights how closely interwoven the three groups of lectures are, the spiritual anthropological foundations of the education – anthropology being the study of the human being – the practical advice on how to teach individual subjects, and discussions with the

future teachers of the first school.

The lectures give a rare insight into Steiner himself as a teacher, as an educator of adults; for me, Steiner as an expert teacher is more visible here than in any other cycle of lectures. The reader is struck by the immediacy of his introduction to working with maps, how to tell a story or fable, how to teach history. It is remarkable that, even at a century's distance, these characterizations are immediate and alive. They illustrate Steiner's inspired yet strongly practical relationship to the earth, to human interactions and to everyday life.

The chronological nature of this volume also offers an insight into the intensity the participants must have experienced, the huge depth and breadth of content covered and the demands of the tasks they were given to complete overnight, as well as Steiner's response to their attempts. The lectures are permeated throughout by the deeply aspirational and urgent nature of the whole initiative.

This translation has been made possible through the generosity of Education Research Group of the Bund der Freien Waldorfschulen Deutschland and the Pedagogical Section at the Goetheanum. Sincere thanks go to Margot Saar for making this new translation into English and to my fellow editor, Jon McAlice, for all his work. Working with Margot and Jon on this volume was a rare privilege.

Steiner's far-reaching aim to educate students so they could work towards a truly healthy future for humanity remains as valid today as it was a hundred years ago. We too face severe challenges and live in a time of great potential and opportunity, as Steiner says, "Today, inspiration can only come from what we gain by showing interest – in the great needs and the great tasks of our time, neither of which must be underestimated" (p. 17). We hope that this new edition will serve readers seeking to study and deepen their understanding of children and of Waldorf education and that it will guide and inspire the preparation and development of teachers into the second Waldorf century.

Neil Boland, Auckland, New Zealand

## Translator's introductory notes

On April 23, 1919<sup>1</sup> Rudolf Steiner spoke to the workers and employees of the Waldorf Astoria Cigarette Factory in Stuttgart, at the request of the factory director, Emil Molt. In his address, Rudolf Steiner outlined his ideas of a threefold social order, pointing out the need for a renewal of education. Inspired by this, the workers approached Emil Molt asking about such a school. Emil Molt, who had thought about schooling for the children of his workforce for some time, then put the question directly to Rudolf Steiner.

Three more lectures on the renewal of education followed on May 11 and 18 and on June 1, 1919, and soon after, in early fall, Rudolf Steiner gave the First Teachers' Course – in preparation for the foundation of the Waldorf School. That Teachers' Course is the content of this book. It began with an address on August 20, 1919. From August 21 to September 6 the 24 prospective teachers of the new school then came together three times every day: at nine in the morning for lectures on the anthropological foundations of education from an anthroposophical point of view; at 10:30 a.m. for lectures on teaching methods; and at three in the afternoon for several hours of practicing teaching. On September 7, the day after the conclusion of the course, the school was founded.

This edition of the First Teachers' Course is the first to present the lectures in chronological order just as the first teachers experienced it, allowing readers seeking to study and deepen their understanding of Waldorf Education to get a sense of the course's intensity and inspirational energy.

New to this edition are the names of the prospective teachers who attended the course as well as their individual contributions to the practical teaching sessions in the afternoon.

The new German edition of the Teachers' Course published in 2019, the year when the Waldorf movement celebrated its centenary, also offered the opportunity for a new translation that includes previously unpublished material and brings the former three volumes (*Foundations of Human Experience* or *The Study of Man*, *Practical Advice to Teachers*, *Discussions with Teachers*) together, with consistent terminology used throughout.

I would like to thank all earlier translators of this teachers' course and of other works of anthroposophy. As so often, the metaphor of standing on the shoulders of giants applies here, too. Furthermore, I thank Sven Saar for his advice, arising from his work in the classroom and in teacher education. I am also grateful to Alexander Murrell and Wolfgang Held for their help with clarifying some mathematical and astronomical questions, to Matthew Barton

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<sup>1</sup> English translations of the four lectures mentioned are included in Steiner, R. (1919/1997). *Education as a Force for Social Change* (R. F. Lathe & N. P. Whittaker, Trans.). Hudson, NY: Anthroposophic Press. GA 296.

for his poetry translation, and to Sibylle Eichstaedt for her advice on the speech exercises. Special thanks also to Jon McAlice and Neil Boland for their careful and sensitive reading of my translation and for the many suggestions they made that considerably improved it.

Margot M. Saar, Gloucester, England

### *Concerning the publication of Rudolf Steiner's lectures*

Rudolf Steiner always lectured without notes. Much of his preparation for lectures consists only of single words or phrases, sometimes short sentences, diagrams or sketches. In a few rare instances, there are written summaries prepared for a translator. He did, however, approve the publication of manuscripts based on the notes taken during his lectures, although he rarely had the opportunity to read them through and edit them for publication.

The lectures published here are based on the notes and stenograms produced at the time. Both the transcripts of the stenograms and the notes of participants were subjected to careful examination. Special care was taken concerning meaning, sentence structure, accuracy in regard to quotes, names, and technical expressions. When questions arose, for instance when sentences or phrases did not appear to make sense or there were holes in the text, the original stenograms were taken into consideration.

Concerning the published versions of his lectures, Rudolf Steiner felt it was important to mention that these were oral presentations, not meant for publication. He asked his readers to keep in mind that “since I did not personally revise the transcripts of these lectures, there are, no doubt, faulty passages in them.”

### *Anthropological Foundations*

The lectures were taken down in shorthand and, according to the memoirs of Alexander Strakosch, one of the participants, were typeset and printed every night and handed out the following morning. These scripts survive for lectures 1 to 6. For lectures 7 to 14, the typed scripts of the shorthand notes were used. Square brackets indicate where notes of individual participants indicate variations from the original script (e.g. text informed by notes from participants).

### *Methods of Teaching and Practical Discussions*

The lectures and discussions were taken down in shorthand. The typed script of these notes forms the basis of the present text. It has been supplemented with notes from participants. Square brackets in this edition indicate where the text translated diverges from the original typescript (e.g. text informed by notes from participants).



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*Saturday, September 6, 1919*

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The first Waldorf school opened in Stuttgart, Germany in the fall of 1919. It came into being out of a historical convergence of social forces, spiritual insight and personal biographies. Combining a radical understanding of the learning process and collaborative governance structure, the school was unique in the pedagogical landscape of the time. In the weeks leading up to the opening, Rudolf Steiner worked with the prospective teachers to prepare them for what lay ahead. The lectures published here comprise the first Waldorf teacher education course. They are published chronologically—three presentations each day—offering the reader the opportunity to experience the shared intensity that culminated in the birth of Waldorf education.

"We must not confine ourselves to our own particular endeavors. Our interest in the world will awaken in us the enthusiasm we need for the school and for our work. This requires flexibility of thinking and dedication. Today, inspiration can only come from what we gain by showing interest in the great needs and the great tasks of our time, neither of which must be underestimated."

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