

Soul Preparation in the Teacher

Our united search for spiritual efficacy in Waldorf Education

by Colin Price

When we as teachers take up the challenge of providing the children in our care with a Waldorf Education, we soon learn that a very great deal is expected of us. In addition to the natural expectations of the parents and those of our own colleagues, we are also expected to continue nothing less than the work of the angels in whose care these young souls rested, before they chose to incarnate on earth. This was made quite clear by Rudolf Steiner when he spoke to the original group of teachers back in 1919 in Stuttgart, Germany. But how on earth are we to do this? What exactly is the work that the angels do, and how are we expected to continue it?

The fact is, none of us can possibly meet this level of challenge because of the way we are at present constituted. We lack the necessary soul organs that would be required to continue this angelic work. If we really want to help the child grow and rise to his full stature as a human being, we must be able to so shape our lesson work that we proceed in harmony – not only with his physical body – but also with his etheric body, his astral body and his ego. This task is only possible if we are prepared to develop such soul organs within us. It is not a matter of having to develop a clairvoyant faculty but rather of being able, for example, to recognize in the moment, *“Now the etheric forces are showing themselves to me,”* and then to realize out of that very experience, *“Then I must respond in this way to the child.”*

Regular participation in artistic work is essential for the development of these soul organs in the teacher. Modelling and sculpture will eventually create a perception of the etheric forces as they are active in the child; music will bring about a perception of the astral forces; recitation and speech-work will enable the teacher to perceive the working of the ego in the child; and eurythmy will bring the physical body in an harmonious relationship with all these activities. But such artistic activities will do little good if the soul into which they sink is not able to receive it rightly. This difficulty can be overcome when the teacher undertakes to make the soul sensitive to such experiences by means of certain exercises of a meditative character. These can include ponderings on sacred writings, verses and meditations, and moral undertakings. Rudolf Steiner describes two different approaches to this task. The first is set out in his book *“The Philosophy of Freedom,”* and the second appears in his book *“How to Attain Knowledge of Higher Worlds.”* Both books would make a challenging communal study.

Since the challenge is too great for any one of us, we stand in need of at least two things: firstly to ask for the help of the angels in our work, and secondly, to realize that we need each other if we are to bear the responsibility involved as a teacher. Our very interaction can create sparks of initiative and an inner strengthening. Together we can reach for a meaningful interchange of inspiration that creates bonds that build the future.