



The Task of the College of Teachers¹

Roberto Trostli

The College of Teachers

The teachers' republic that Rudolf Steiner envisioned was to find its expression through The Waldorf School. At the center of The Waldorf School was a new form and a new way of working: the College of Teachers.² Rudolf Steiner broadly sketched out the intentions and tasks of the College, but he left it to us to make this form our own. If we study the remarks that Rudolf Steiner made to the participants of the foundation course that he gave before The Waldorf School opened, we can find clues about his intentions for the College, but these clues are open to interpretation.

Rudolf Steiner gave two addresses at the beginning of The Waldorf School. The first was given on the evening of August 20, 1919, prior to the course he was to give to the teachers of the first Waldorf school; the second was given the following morning. These addresses deal with similar topics but from very different points of view. The first, which I have called *The Opening Address*, deals primarily with *exoteric* matters; the second, which I have named *The College Founding*, deals mostly with *esoteric* matters. I believe that through these two addresses, Rudolf Steiner expressed his fundamental intention for the College of Teachers: to be a group that works in both the exoteric and esoteric realms and strives to bridge the worlds of matter and spirit.³

In both of these addresses, Rudolf Steiner spoke about the goals of education, the context in which this new form of education was coming into being, the tasks of the teachers, and how they would work together. *The Opening Address* approaches these topics from a realistic, pragmatic, even functional point of view; *The College Founding* approaches them from a spiritual perspective. When we examine the two addresses side by side, we can find many correspondences and ways in which they complement each other. It is almost as if the first address poses earthly questions and the second offers spiritual answers. How can teachers work in full

responsibility? By working with our Angels, who give us strength. How can we work together in a teachers' republic? By working with the Archangels, who give us courage. How can the spirit of unity be developed? By working with the Archai, who grace us with the light of wisdom.

These addresses were given to a group of people who were to become the first Waldorf teachers. In *The College Founding*, Rudolf Steiner initiated them into a new way of working together with one another and with the spiritual beings in whose service and in whose name each of them would work. The work of the original teachers lives on. All of us follow in their footsteps: Their tasks are our tasks, and we can view our work in light of what Rudolf Steiner shared with them.

Goals of the College of Teachers

In *The Opening Address* Rudolf Steiner presented the original College of Teachers with three goals:

1. to achieve a renewal of modern spiritual life;
2. to reform and revolutionize the educational system;
3. to accomplish a great cultural deed.

In *The College Founding* he also presented three goals:

1. to view their task as a moral spiritual task;
2. to recognize the importance of their work;
3. to be conscious that this school fulfills something special.

These goals are just as apt today as they were in 1919. We are still trying to renew education, and in order to achieve this, we need to recognize how special the Waldorf school is and to consider the importance of our work. When a Waldorf school creates its own version of the goals that Rudolf Steiner identified, it helps the Waldorf movement accomplish great cultural deeds. How we go about identifying and achieving these goals depends on the time and place in which we live and work. It is up to the College in every school to try to read the signs of the times and the needs of its community. It is up to each College to perceive what the present times need and to determine how their school can

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2 "College of Teachers" is the English phrase for the German term *Lehrerkollegium*. Throughout this book the terms "College" and "College of Teachers" will be used interchangeably.

3 The full texts of Steiner's *Opening Address* and *College Founding* can be found at the end of this article.

strive to meet those needs. If we work toward these goals, we will fulfill Rudolf Steiner's intention for The Waldorf School: to bring about a renewal of modern spiritual life.

Our Work with Anthroposophy

In *The Opening Address* Rudolf Steiner spoke about the relationship of anthroposophy to The Waldorf School. He told the teachers that The Waldorf School would be living proof of the effectiveness of the anthroposophical orientation toward life. It would accomplish this by being a unified school that only considers how to teach in the way demanded by the human being. In *The College Founding* Rudolf Steiner revealed how anthroposophy can be brought to earth: by creating a connection between our activity and the activity of spiritual beings.

Strengthening the anthroposophical foundations of Waldorf education remains as important today as it was when The Waldorf School was first founded. The College must serve as the fount of inspiration for the processes by which teachers can learn how to "transform what is gained through anthroposophy into truly practical instruction." It can support these processes through study, research, artistic and contemplative activity, and through a way of working that brings out the best in each colleague.

Rudolf Steiner described the founding of The Waldorf School in the loftiest terms: as a ceremony within the Cosmic Order. I think that the founding of every Waldorf school since 1919 also has cosmic significance. When a child is born, we celebrate the birth of a soul-spiritual being that has chosen to enter the earthly realm. So, too, can we celebrate the founding of a Waldorf school because it strives to bring the soul-spiritual into the realm of human life. This spirit of celebration should permeate the founding of the College, because it is a moment when a school awakens to its destiny and its purpose. This spirit of celebration can extend to every College meeting because, during each of our meetings, we have the opportunity to experience ourselves as working within the Cosmic Order to midwife the birth of spirit into matter.

The Context in which We Work

In *The Opening Address* Rudolf Steiner described the difficult social and educational context in which The Waldorf School was being founded:

The state imposes terrible learning goals and terrible standards, the worst imaginable, but people

will imagine them to be the best. Today's policies and political activity treat people like pawns. More than ever before, attempts will be made to use people like cogs in a wheel. People will be handled like puppets on strings, and everyone will think that this reflects the greatest progress imaginable. Things like institutions of learning will be created incompetently and with the greatest arrogance.⁴

Much of this description still holds true today. Although most Waldorf schools may technically be free from "terrible learning goals and terrible standards," these goals and standard permeate our culture. They establish expectations among the parents and the community and often become the standard against which Waldorf teachers are measured and by which they judge themselves. Standardized educational materials and the behavioral methods that are almost universally applied in other schools find their ways into our schools, too.

As Waldorf teachers, we need to inform ourselves about and understand the prevailing view of the human being. We must be careful, however, not to allow that view to erode our recognition that the child is a spiritual being who has come to earth to do what it is not possible to do in the spiritual world. The College is the place where this view of the human being is broadened and deepened. The College strives to serve as the source of strength and inspiration for teachers who are trying to "teach in the way demanded by the human being." By keeping the school's focus on the becoming human being, the College remains true to its intention.

In *The College Founding* Rudolf Steiner said, "We wish to see each other as human beings brought together by karma, who will bring about, not something common, but something that, for those doing this work, will include the feeling of a festive Cosmic moment." Many of us who work together in a College most likely have a common destiny, and our current relationships are affected by our past lifetimes.

Remembering this can help us raise our eyes above the challenges we face in our work together. Devoting ourselves to our work together and to our work with spiritual beings can help us bring our best selves to bear on our common tasks.

The Compromises We Have to Make

Rudolf Steiner told the original teachers in *The Opening Address* that they would have to make compromises.

Rudolf Steiner broadly sketched out the intentions and tasks of the College, but he left it to us to make this form our own.

4 Rudolf Steiner, *The Foundations of Human Experience* (Great Barrington, MA: SteinerBooks, 1996), pp. 29–30.

They would have to know their ideals and have the flexibility to conform to what lies far from those ideals. This remains true for us today as well. Every Waldorf school exists in a context—a community, a state, a country, modern society—and it must adapt to that context through positive, creative, realistic means. It behooves us to emulate Rudolf Steiner’s calm, objective attitude toward this challenge. Rather than bemoaning our situation, Waldorf teachers and Waldorf schools must embrace the opportunities and challenges of our time. We must love the age in which we and our students have incarnated because it presents us with exactly what we came to earth to meet.

The College should be the place in the school where a sense of contemporaneity is cultivated, where teachers are helped to become true citizens of the time and place into which they have incarnated. The challenges posed to us by the parents, our communities, and our culture provide us with the opportunities to develop the flexibility and strength that we need to create a truly modern art of education. If the College can stay true to its vision while adapting to its challenges, it will serve as a model that students will emulate in their adult lives.

The strength to make compromises comes from knowing who we are and what we have come to earth to do. Among the main tasks of the College of Teachers are to foster a school’s sense of identity and individuality and to recognize its mission in the context of its community and the times in which we live. Waldorf education has a lofty mission: to bring about a renewal of culture. Each school has the opportunity to bring this mission into reality in the place and time in which it exists.

The qualities we need to develop

In *The Opening Address* and at the end of the preparatory course, Rudolf Steiner described the qualities and attitudes that Waldorf teachers should cultivate. Imagination, courage for the truth, responsibility of soul, initiative, interest in the world, integrity, and freshness of soul—these are the seven “virtues” that Waldorf teachers strive to practice in and out of the classroom in the service of their students. They practice these virtues in the College in service to each other and to the school. They are helped to do so by the Angels, Archangels, and Archai, who grant them the strength, the courage, and the light of wisdom to do their work. By creating a true *philadelphia*, a city of brotherly love in their meetings, members of the College further the work of The Good Spirit of Our Time and of The Spirit of The Waldorf School.

The tasks of the College of Teachers were identified at the founding of the original College of The Waldorf School. These tasks remain relevant for every College in every school today and in the future. During the two weeks of the preparatory course, Rudolf Steiner helped the teachers to recognize and embrace these tasks. In our Colleges throughout the years, we have the honor of continuing to work on them.

Finding the Balance

A College of Teachers has earthly tasks and spiritual tasks, and every College must strive to find the proper balance between them. This balance will change as a school matures and as its circumstances change, and it can even change during the course of a school year. At every meeting, the College must find

the balance between its earthly focus—administration, personnel, facilities, finances, etc.—and its spiritual focus—anthroposophy, child development, and pedagogy. Whether a College focuses more on earthly or on spiritual matters depends on the needs of the school. What is most important is

that earthly matters be informed from the point of view of the spirit and that spiritual matters be informed by down-to-earth practicality. By working in this way, the College will fulfill its mandate: to find a living relationship between matter and spirit.

The word “balance” comes from the Latin name for scale. It is derived from the words *bi* and *lanx*, which mean “two dishes or trays.” The trays of a scale hold what is to be weighed. Unequal weights cause the dishes to move vertically, with the heavier dish ending up lower than the lighter. Equal weights result in the trays reaching the horizontal, the balance point.

We can look at *The Opening Address* and *The College Founding* as resting on the two pans of a scale. In one pan lie our earthly tasks; in the other, our cosmic tasks. These two sides of the scale complement and balance each other. A scale also has a bar that links the trays. This connecting bar pivots around a central fulcrum, mediating the polarity of the trays. When the trays are “in balance,” the opposites are held in dynamic equilibrium. To achieve balance we need polarity, but we also need something that mediates the polarity. What mediates the polarities we encounter: matter and spirit, individual and group, past and future? What strikes a dynamic equilibrium between these opposite but complementary realms? Our work with one another. Aided by our spiritual helpers and by Michael, The Good Spirit of Our Time, we can strike the necessary balance.

It is up to the College in every school to try to read the signs of the times and the needs of its community.

In the constellation Libra, the goddess Astraea holds the scales of justice. Here on earth the College of Teachers holds the scales of the school. But as members of the College, we need to do more than hold the scale; we need to *be* the balance in the school, we need to transform the noun *balance* into the verb *to balance* and find a dynamic equilibrium in all that we do as individuals and as a group.

Working as a College

The ideas and ideals that have been presented in the previous chapters are based on my understanding and interpretation of Rudolf Steiner's work. Those that will be presented in [what follows] are my own. During the past decades, my colleagues and I have realized only some of these ideals, but they continue to serve as beacons for our earnest, heartfelt striving.

A Whole School

A Waldorf school is an organism that has a physical body, an etheric body, an astral body, and an ego. Just like our physical body that expresses what we are made of, a school's physical body is expressed by its grounds, facilities, and location—what and where it is. Just like our etheric body that expresses itself in our life processes and our thoughts and memories, a school's etheric body is expressed by its program and by the life of the school—its rhythms, traditions, and memories. Just like our astral body that expresses itself through our perceptions, sensations, and emotions, a school's astral body is expressed by the school's staff and community—their character, personality, and soul. And just like our ego which expresses itself through our individuality and by everything we do in our lives, a school's ego is expressed by the school's unique identity—its biography and its purpose, its reason for being.

Our ego enables us to take a stand in the world and to act on our convictions; the ego of the school seeks to realize its mission.

Just as each of us came to earth to do what we could not do in the spiritual world, the ego of a school incarnates in order to bring a spiritual impulse into reality. The College of Teachers in a Waldorf school embodies and expresses its ego. It has the duty to try to nurture and support the other bodies of the school. When a school is ailing, it is the College's responsibility to read the symptoms, try to diagnose the causes, and determine what the school needs in order for health to be

restored. As the school's ego, the College needs to try to perceive the destiny of the school and to consider the karma the school creates.

The Physical, Etheric, and Astral Bodies of a Waldorf School

A school's facilities express its physical body, and the care of those facilities expresses how a school identifies with its body. A dirty or unkempt school shows that the ego of the school is not taking care of its body. A school in disrepair shows that the ego of the school is not tending to its health. Ideally, a Waldorf school lives in a physical body that allows it to express itself fully, but many schools do not have the financial resources to build or purchase their own buildings. When a school has to rent or renovate its buildings, it needs to make extra efforts to penetrate those buildings with its individuality, to make that inherited body its own.

A school's program expresses its etheric body, its life forces. All Waldorf schools share a common philosophical foundation, basic curriculum and methodology, but each school needs to adapt and individualize

its program in terms of the needs of its community. Periodically the College needs to assess whether its program is meeting those needs and to consider what changes may be necessary. In Waldorf schools that have financial or staffing limitations, the program needs to be limited to fit within the school's circumstances. This requires the ego of the school to compromise, prioritize, and make hard choices.

Just like the process by which our true self is forged on the anvil of hardship, the limitations and necessities a school must face awaken its resourcefulness and creativity, helping it to express itself more fully.

A school's community—students, parents, and staff—expresses its astral body. When entering a Waldorf school, we can immediately sense something about its character and personality. We perceive aspects of this personality through our relationships and interactions with the people, activities, and events at the school. How people in a school work together largely determines whether the school will prosper. If a school is to thrive, the College has to toil unceasingly to foster healthy relationships among the faculty and staff and between the school and the parent community. This is easier said than done, but it is a vital task.

Nowadays many parents are worried about their children's welfare and anxious about their future. This often expresses itself as doubt in the faculty—in their

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background and training, skill, or professionalism. In the face of such doubts, a College needs to remember that it is more important who the teacher is than what the teacher knows. This does not mean that just anyone can teach anything, but the important qualities of a teacher do not arise from a teacher's past—from her background and training; rather, they come from her future—her striving to work on herself so that she can accomplish what she came to earth to do. Life presents us with the challenges we need. Although we don't always feel equal to these challenges, we often find that we have what it takes to meet them.

Experience has its benefits, but what is most important in teaching is our urge to learn, our enthusiasm. Although experience gives us the sense that we know what we're doing, that is not the most important aspect of teaching: *Not* knowing is a powerful force in our process of becoming. Teaching is more like improvising than like performing a rehearsed piece. The new, not the old; the unexpected, not the predictable; the response to the moment, not the reflexive reaction—these are what strengthen the soul connections with our students. It is heartening to remember what Rudolf Steiner said to Herbert Hahn about Hahn's lack of experience when, as a young man, he was given the responsibility to advocate for and represent the Threefold Social Movement: "Yes, but you may also be sure that the spiritual world accepts enthusiasm as a substitute for maturity."⁵

The Ego of a Waldorf School

The College of Teachers expresses the school's ego. Just as our individual egos penetrate our astral bodies, the ego of the school needs to penetrate the school's astral body by establishing and maintaining harmonious relationships with the students, parents, staff, trustees, and the broader community.

The College needs to maintain a healthy relationship with the Faculty and staff who are not on the College. It needs to be aware that those who are not on the College may view it with distrust or suspicion, or they may feel disenfranchised and unsupportive because the College is an exclusive group that makes so many important decisions. When these kinds of feelings arise, it is hard for the College to do its work.

During each of our meetings, we have the opportunity to experience ourselves as working within the Cosmic Order to midwife the birth of spirit into matter.

A College needs to work proactively to prevent or mitigate such feelings. It needs to send the message that College membership is a matter of service, not status or power, and that everyone who is interested should explore joining and participating in the College's work. The College has to bridge whatever gaps arise as a function of having its own meetings and tasks. In practical terms, this means that the College should post its weekly agenda so that everyone can keep track of what the College is working on. College updates and decisions need to be shared at the faculty meeting so that everyone stays

informed. When the College reports, time should be allocated for explaining or for answering questions about its decisions so that those who were not part of the decision-making process can better understand the issues and outcomes. Although such measures may not fully dispel the sense of exclusivity or "otherness," such striving will not go unnoticed.

The College also needs to have a well-defined and healthy relationship to the administrative branch of the school. In many schools, the administrative branch is quite distinct, but this was not always the case. During the early decades of Waldorf education in North America, many of the more experienced teachers had administrative responsibilities. This arose partially out of funding constraints but also out of the interpretation of Rudolf Steiner's remarks regarding self-administration.

In recent decades, as schools have become larger, the internal and external pressures have increased, and administrative functions have grown more complex and time-consuming. Even if they are qualified, teachers rarely have enough time to deal with administrative tasks in the timely manner required. As a result, school administration—enrollment, marketing and development, personnel, finances, and facilities management—has become more professionalized, and schools have sought to hire administrators with experience or who have taken a specialized training for working in anthroposophical institutions.

Although it is becoming rarer nowadays for teachers to take on any major administrative duties, one thing has not changed: the need for all decisions in a Waldorf school to be made with respect to the education of the children. Because teachers work most intimately with the students, because they experience the results of all decisions most directly, they are best equipped to keep the education central to any deliberations. And this, I

⁵ Herbert Hahn. "How The Waldorf School Arose from the Threefold Social Movement" in *A Man Before Others: Rudolf Steiner Remembered* (Forest Row, UK: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1993), p. 69.

think, is the College's role with respect to the administration: to ensure that an educational perspective permeates all the non-educational aspects of the school.

In order to achieve this goal, I think that College members should be involved—to the appropriate degree—in all areas of administrative work in a school. This involvement may take the form of actual performance of or assistance with administrative functions; or the College's involvement may be mostly representational. Representation in administration works in two directions: *toward* the College and *from* the College. A College member needs to be involved in administrative functions to the degree that she should be able properly to represent whatever is happening in administration to the rest of the College. The College member also needs to be able to represent the College's perspective to the person or people responsible for the administrative function. This ensures that administrative functions will remain in the College's consciousness and that the College's perspectives will be taken into account in the performance of administrative tasks.

This representational relationship puts a special responsibility on the College and its members. The College needs to take the time to consider and to develop a perspective on the non-pedagogical areas of the school so that the College's view can be represented by the College member who is involved in that area. Whenever that representative is engaged in administrative work, she needs to remember that she is speaking not for herself but for the College. The College needs to make sure that it is not second-guessing those working in administration; rather, it is providing perspectives that administrators may not have. This relationship also makes demands of administrators. They need to take the College perspective into account and determine whether and how it can find expression. If administrators truly work with the College rather than just keeping the College informed, the joint perspectives will fructify and strengthen the administrative work in the school.

Finally, the College needs to nurture a strong relationship with the Board of Trustees or Directors. It is important that both the Board and the College understand and respect their respective roles in the school. While the College has primary responsibility for the school's educational functions—its program and staffing—the Board has legal and fiduciary responsibility for the school. This means that the Board is accountable to the state in which the school is incorporated. This is a weighty responsibility, and it needs to be recognized

and respected, for Board members are legally responsible for upholding the school's bylaws and for making sure that the school operates according to all relevant laws and regulations.

The College works with the Board in two major ways: by having representatives on the Board and by participating in Board committees. A Board benefits from having College representatives who can serve as a conduit between the two groups. It is important that there be more than one representative because it allows both the Board and the College to work more objectively. I think that more than two representatives is unnecessary, however, and may tip the balance in a Board. The Board needs to be a counterbalance to the College in a school, and it cannot do so if it has too many College representatives.

The perspectives of the Board and College should create a dynamic balance between the spiritual and the earthly. The College strives to bring a spiritual perspective to earthly matters, but it could easily ignore the realities that it faces. The Board works to bring an earthly perspective to the spiritual aspects of the school—especially the program and staffing—but it could easily approach these from an overly materialistic viewpoint. Both groups need to recognize their inherent one-sidedness and value each other's ability to balance that one-sidedness so that the school can stay poised between the realms of matter and spirit.

By keeping the school's focus on the becoming human being, the College remains true to its intention.

I think that every committee of the Board should include a College member who can make sure that the committee's work is represented in the College and that the College's perspective is represented in the committee. The College member can help the committee keep in mind the importance of the education of the children and can help the College work in ways that are most supportive of the committee.

Ideally, neither the Board nor the College needs to be the primary executor of tasks within a school, but they both need to provide the vision, the direction, and the oversight to get tasks done. In my experience, this works best if individuals and committees receive and execute mandates from the Board or the College, leaving the larger groups to focus on the big picture.

A person who joins the College of Teachers takes on a special role: College Ambassador. As an ambassador, the person is responsible to represent the College in all of his or her relationships with other individuals and groups in the school and beyond. This representation involves speaking for the College and listening for

the College. If College members are able to bring what they hear and experience back to the College, then the College will remain well-informed. If College members speak clearly on behalf of the College, then the College stands less chance of being misperceived and misunderstood. In a larger sense, College members are also ambassadors to and from the spiritual world. They have the opportunity to perceive and give voice to spiritual impulses so that the College can be more effective in bringing spiritual impulses into earthly form.

Working with Mandates in the College of Teachers

The College of Teachers is mostly a deliberative body. It strives to address matters from a spiritual as well as a material perspective, and its value is primarily in its wisdom rather than its capacity to act. There are certainly times when the College as a whole must act, but usually the will of the College will be executed by College members who have been given mandates. The word “mandate” comes from the Latin verb *mandare* which comes from *manus* (hand) and *dare* (to give). A mandate literally means that a matter is put into someone’s hands. This has a deeper meaning than at first glance. When something is put into someone’s hands, the impulses of the head and heart are carried over into the will. According to Rudolf Steiner, our hands are the part of us that makes us most human, because our hands are free to create, to work, to help others. Therefore, when something is “handed over,” it is with the implication that the person to whom it is handed should humanize the task and do her best to make it serve the ends for which it was intended.

I think that mandates should have the gesture expressed by Michelangelo in his painting on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel of God creating Adam. In that fresco, God, surrounded by the heavenly host, reaches out His hand toward Adam’s hand. Their two hands do not touch but are in intimate relationship to one another. Just like this painting, which shows a spiritual impulse passing from God to man, we should receive the impulse of a mandate as gently and divinely as Adam received the breath of life from his Creator. When we receive this impulse, we are then empowered to exercise our godly selves by doing good deeds.

Rudolf Steiner began *The College Founding* by referring to the relationship that teachers need to have with “the spiritual powers in whose service and in whose name each one of us must work.” These terms—“in whose service” and “in whose name”—each of us must work to characterize the essence of a mandate. A mandate is the bestowal of trust to someone who fully recognizes and honors the relationship that this trust affirms. One needs to be worthy of receiving a mandate, and

one needs to perform the mandate with a sense of service. Each school will determine how best to work with mandates, but there are four principles that I believe hold true in all situations. These principles are freedom, responsibility, trust, and reflection.

A mandate should be given in a spirit of *freedom* to the person or group best suited to execute it. Ideally, a person should not volunteer for a mandate; rather, having indicated a willingness to serve, the person should be recognized by his or her peers as the one to whom the mandate should be given. When we execute a mandate, we face a paradox: We must act as individuals but we are embodying and expressing the impulse of a group. This is why nurturing the group’s identity and consciousness are so important to the College. Each member of the College needs to speak and listen with a collective voice and ear so that he or she can truly represent the group.

With freedom comes *responsibility*. The person who receives the mandate is responsible for carrying out the mandate to the best of her ability. She is responsible for executing the will of the group to the best of her understanding. She is responsible for keeping the group informed about the mandate to the degree that the group has requested. The group also has responsibility: It needs to make the terms of the mandate clear so that the mandated individual knows exactly what is expected of her, and it needs to give the individual the necessary background for executing the mandate. If the mandate holder is to execute the will of the group, she needs to know where the group stands on the matters at hand.

A mandate is an expression of *trust*. The mandate holder has been chosen because he has been deemed suitable to execute the will of the group. By giving a mandate, the group affirms its trust in the individual’s judgment and capacities. If the group has done its work, the mandate holder will have a full picture of where the group stands on the issue. Once the mandate holder sets about performing the task, the group needs to trust him to do it without any more involvement unless the mandate holder asks for input or help. Involvement or interference by the group undermines the trust that has been expressed in the mandate holder, and it undermines the trust that the mandate holder has in the group. Though it is difficult not to meddle, the group needs to recognize that it cannot and should not be involved in the execution of its many mandates, for involvement would prevent it from performing more important duties.

Mandates require *reflection*. The mandate should stipulate when the group will review the tasks that have

been mandated. Depending on the task, these reflections could happen part-way through its execution and at its completion. Reviews need to be handled in such a way that the group recognizes what went well and expresses what could go better in similar circumstances in the future. A good review focuses on the deeds and not the doer. It should be objective enough that everyone can learn what needs to be learned. If reviews deteriorate into critiques of the mandate holders, people will be much less willing to take up mandates for the group in the future.

Working with mandates requires a degree of maturity in an institution. It is a form that demands much from the group giving the mandate and from the individual receiving it. A new College will need to develop a mandating process slowly and carefully; an older College may need periodically to review and renew its processes to make sure that they are truly serving the school.

Destiny and Karmic Relationships

As the ego of the school, the College of Teachers is responsible for working with the destiny of the school and for the karma that it creates. What is the difference between destiny and karma? I think of *destiny* as the life we weave with the threads that stretch back to our past lives—the karma we created as it expresses itself in the present. I think of *karma* as the life we will weave with the threads that reach into our future—the destiny we will bring to our next lifetime.

Our destiny gives us the possibility of fulfilling the karma and realizing the intentions that we formed after our previous life. Our karma determines what we will need to confront in our next life as a result of what we have done during our current life journey. Destiny is not immutable, because in the course of our lives we encounter new people, circumstances, and events. What arises out of our destined and new encounters forms the basis for our karma for lifetimes to come. Recognizing that our lives are a mixture of effects of the past and causes of the future gives us a valuable perspective on the present.

As colleagues we are linked by our past karma—our destiny—and through our current relationships and work together, we create future karma. This perspective needs to inform how a College hires, evaluates, and makes decisions about retaining or dismissing employees. Because such functions are fraught with karmic consequences, it is imperative that a College be

If a school is to thrive, the College has to toil unceasingly to foster healthy relationships among the faculty and staff and between the school and the parent community.

scrupulously professional in executing these functions. While the procedural or functional aspects of personnel processes and decisions are relatively straightforward, what about the spiritual aspects? I will confine myself to a few general principles, for these are matters that each school needs to work out for itself. When hiring, evaluating, or making decisions about a colleague, the College needs to determine whether the person truly belongs at the school. This was expressed by Rudolf Steiner in the meeting of July 30, 1920, when he said, “The Faculty should consist of those who originally were part of the school and those who came later but who we wish had participated in the course last year.”

The kind of discernment that allows a College to make such determinations requires that its members work from their egos and their higher selves, not their sympathies and antipathies. One way to take a higher view is to consider the colleague in terms of the criteria for College membership. While College membership may not be everyone’s destiny, the criteria for membership identify the qualities necessary to work effectively in a Waldorf school. The College can therefore consider whether the person has or is developing the competence and qualities to be confirmed in her work. Has she committed, or is she likely to commit, to the school for the foreseeable future? Does the person have the integrity and capacity to uphold the College’s processes? And, most importantly, what is the person’s relationship to anthroposophy? Has she given any indication—or has she already found—that this is her life’s path? While many other questions may need to be answered, posing such fundamental questions will help a College to make decisions that have karmic implications.

Colleagues are not the only ones who are linked by past karma and common destiny: Students and parents and members of the school community are also likely to have karmic relationships with us and with each other. Such relationships can bring great blessings but can also be the source of difficulties. Because accepting a family into the school has karmic implications, the College of Teachers needs to be especially conscious of who joins and who leaves—or is forced to leave—the school.

Children and parents who present challenges are often the ones who have the strongest connections to the school. While they may have come to the school to fulfill their destiny, it may not be possible to do so. This can be extremely difficult for a family to accept: They

have come to their destined place, yet the opportunity to fulfill their destiny is being thwarted. In these situations, parents often feel betrayed because the very people with whom they have come to work out their destiny refuse to do so. In these cases, we should remember that destiny does not compel us; it provides us with opportunities. As free human beings we can decide whether to seize these opportunities or to leave them for another time or another lifetime.

When severing bonds with children or families who have a deep relationship to the school, we must make sure to show how much we respect and honor their destiny impulses, even if we cannot fulfill them. Turning a blind eye or a deaf ear to someone who is seeking to be seen and heard can be experienced as a karmic repudiation. We have an obligation to see and listen as fully and compassionately as we can, but we must still act in accordance with our most important responsibility, which is to the school.

When it makes life-changing decisions, the College creates karma for the future. This means that after death, each of the members of a College of Teachers will encounter and experience the effects of the decisions and deeds done by the College. Each person will extract different lessons from these experiences, and these lessons will help to shape the person's intentions and resolves for the next lifetime. We therefore need to take our responsibilities as members of the College with the utmost seriousness, for everything we do has repercussions that extend beyond this lifetime.

Whenever we have to make difficult karmic decisions, the College is well served by seeking the help of spiritual beings. Our Angels, the Archangels, the Being of the School, The Good Spirit of the Time, and perhaps even The Lord of Karma himself, are all ready to help us. We can also turn to the members of the school community who have died, for they are eager to stay connected with the school. This connection not only helps us; it is a gift to the souls of the dead, for when we allow them to help us in our work, we may be providing them with the opportunity to fulfill aspects of their destiny that may have remained unfulfilled on earth.

As we know, the path of our lives is difficult, full of pitfalls and stumbling blocks, but we are not alone on this path. This fact is illustrated by a prose poem by Mary Stevenson called "Footprints in the Sand":

One night I dreamed I was walking along the beach with the Lord. Many scenes from my life flashed across the sky. In each scene I noticed footprints in the sand. Sometimes there were two sets of footprints, other times there was one only.

This bothered me because I noticed that during the low periods of my life, when I was suffering from anguish, sorrow or defeat, I could see only one set of footprints, so I said to the Lord, "You promised me, Lord, that if I followed you, you would walk with me always. But I have noticed that during the most trying periods of my life, there has only been one set of footprints in the sand. Why, when I needed you most, have you not been there for me?"

The Lord replied, "The years when you have seen only one set of footprints, my child, is when I carried you."

This story affirms that we are never alone; we are carried by spiritual beings through the hardest parts of our lives. Our spiritual companions are there when we need them the most. This is a true picture, one that affirms how we can count on the spiritual world when we are in need. But this picture is missing something: the many other footsteps left by all of our human companions—those who travel with us, those who raise their hands to bear us, those who open their hearts to console us, who never leave our side. No matter how alone we may feel in the darkest moments of our journey, we are not alone; we never walk alone.

Roberto Trostli has been active in Waldorf education since 1981 as a class teacher, high school teacher, adult educator, author, and lecturer. He received his BA from Columbia University and his MA from the University of Cambridge, England. After working as a violinmaker, Roberto taught for ten years at the Rudolf Steiner School in New York City, the school he also attended as a child. Later, he moved to Hadley, Massachusetts, where he worked for eighteen years, first as a class teacher of grades 1 to 8, and then as the founder and director of the Hartsbrook High School. In 2009, Roberto resumed class teaching at the Richmond Waldorf School, in Virginia. He was co-director of Sunbridge Institute and served on the Board of Directors of the Research Institute for Waldorf Education. Roberto was a member of the Pedagogical Section Council for ten years and helped restructure the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA). His written works include numerous articles and plays; he edited *Teaching Language Arts in the Waldorf School* (2004) and *Creating a Circle of Collaborative Spiritual Leadership* (2014).

Rudolf Steiner

The Opening Address

Given on the eve of the Teachers' Seminar, Stuttgart August 20, 1919

This evening I wish to make some preliminary remarks. To achieve a renewal of modern spiritual life, The Waldorf School must be a true cultural deed. We must reckon with change in everything; the ultimate foundation of the whole social movement is in the spiritual realm and the question of education is one of the burning spiritual questions of modern times. We must take advantage of the possibilities presented by The Waldorf School to reform and revolutionize the educational system. The success of this cultural deed is in your hands. Thus, you have much responsibility in working to create an example. So much depends upon the success of this deed. The Waldorf School will be living proof of the effectiveness of the anthroposophical orientation toward life. It will be a unified school in the sense that it only considers how to teach in the way demanded by the human being, by the totality of the human essence. We must put everything at the service of achieving this goal.

However, it is necessary that we make compromises, because we are not yet so far developed that we can accomplish a truly free deed. The state imposes terrible learning goals and terrible standards, the worst imaginable, but people will imagine them to be the best. Today's policies and political activity treat people like pawns. More than ever before, attempts will be made to use people like cogs in a wheel. People will be handled like puppets on a string, and everyone will think that this reflects the greatest progress imaginable. Things like institutions of learning will be created incompetently and with the greatest arrogance. We have a foretaste of this in the design of the Russian Bolshevik schools, which are graves for everything that represents true teaching.

We have a difficult struggle ahead of us, but, nevertheless, we must do this cultural deed. We must bring two contradictory forces into harmony. On the one hand, we must know what our ideals are, and, on the other hand, we must have the flexibility to conform to what lies far from our ideals. It will be difficult for each of you to find how to bring these two forces into harmony. This will be possible to achieve only when each of you enters into this work with your full strength. Everyone must use his or her full strength from the very beginning.

Therefore, we will organize the school not bureaucratically, but collegially, and will administer it in a republican way. In a true teachers' republic we will not have the comfort of receiving directions from the Board of Education. Rather, we must bring to our work what gives each of us the possibility and the full responsibility for what we have to do. Each one of us must be completely responsible. We can create a replacement for the supervision of the School Board as we form this preparatory course and, through the work, receive what unifies the school. We can achieve that sense of unity through this course if we work with all diligence. The course will be held as a continuing discussion of general pedagogical questions, as a discussion of the special methods concerning the most important areas of instruction, and as a seminar to practice teaching. We will practice teaching and critique it through discourse.

We will take up the more theoretical aspects in the morning and the seminar in the afternoon on each day. We will begin at 9:00am with general pedagogy, then undertake instruction concerning special methods at 11:30, and in the afternoon do seminar exercises from 3:00 until 6:00.

We must be completely conscious that we have to accomplish a great cultural deed in every sense of the word. Here, in The Waldorf School, we do not wish to create a parochial school. The Waldorf School will not propagate a particular point of view by filling the children with anthroposophical dogma. We do not wish to teach anthroposophical dogma; anthroposophy is not the content of the instruction. What we want is a practical utilization of anthroposophy. We want to transform what we can gain through anthroposophy into truly practical instruction.

The anthroposophical content of instruction is much less important than the practical utilization of what we can create out of anthroposophy, generally in pedagogy and particularly in the special methods; in other words, how we can bring anthroposophy into teaching practice.

Representatives of the confessions will give religious instruction. We will use anthroposophy only in the method of instruction. Therefore, we will divide the children among the religion teachers according to their confession. This is another part of the compromise. Through justifiable compromises we can accelerate our cultural deed.

We must be conscious of the great tasks before us. We dare not be simply educators; we must be people of culture in the highest sense of the word. We must have a living interest in everything happening today; otherwise we will be bad teachers for this school. We dare not have enthusiasm only for our special tasks. We can be good teachers only when we have a living interest in everything happening in the world. Through that interest in the world, we must obtain the enthusiasm that we need for the school and for our tasks. Flexibility of spirit and devotion to our tasks are necessary. Only from that can we draw out what can be achieved today when we devote our interest to the great needs and tasks of the times, both of which are unimaginably large.

The College Founding

Given at the beginning of the Preparatory Course, Stuttgart August 21, 1919

We can accomplish our work only if we do not see it as simply a matter of intellect or feeling, but, in the highest sense, as a moral spiritual task. Therefore, you will understand why, as we begin this work today, we first reflect on the connection we wish to create from the very beginning between our activity and the spiritual worlds. With such a task, we must be conscious that we do not work only in the physical plane of living human beings. In the last centuries, this way of viewing work has increasingly gained such acceptance that it is virtually the only way people see it. This understanding of tasks has made teaching what it is now and what the work before us should improve. Thus, we wish to begin our preparation by first reflecting upon how we connect with the spiritual powers in whose service and in whose name each one of us must work. I ask you to understand these introductory words as a kind of prayer to those powers who stand behind us with Imagination, Inspiration, and Intuition as we take up this task.