

NETWORK NEWSLETTER

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CONTENTS

- Page 1 – Editorial
- Page 1 – Educating the Feeling of Equal Rights.
- Page 3 – Pondering Equality in a Waldorf/Steiner School
- Page 4 – The “rights conversation” in Steiner schools.
- Page 6 – The rights organ.

Please send us...

- ◆ short pieces expressing your insights into education and social renewal in the light of the threefold social order.
- ◆ descriptions of your initiative's experience.
- ◆ questions which you would like others to answer or comment on.
- ◆ information about events in relation to the threefold social order, including study groups, seminars and conferences.

“Upon the threefold educational basis must be erected what is to flourish for humanity's future”.

Rudolf Steiner, Education as a Force for Social Change

WELCOME TO THE FIFTH ISSUE

The previous issue was on the theme of liberty, the ideal inspiring the cultural-spiritual sphere of the threefold social picture; this issue has equality as its main focus, the ideal connected to the political-rights sphere. As in previous issues the aim is to present general points of view alongside questions and discussions related to the actual tasks of working in a Steiner school. The next issue will be on fraternity.

Editor

EDUCATING THE FEELING OF EQUAL RIGHTS

You are aware that between the 7th and 14th/ 15th year – after which it becomes sexually mature – there lives in the child an ability, that could be described as the power to act on authority. There is nothing better for the child, than to undertake something out of veneration for the person who says: that's good, that needs to be done. Nothing is more detrimental for the child than acquiring the habit of forming its own judgment at too early an age, before having reached sexual maturity.

In the future, the sense of authority between the 7th and 14th year should be developed much more intensively than in the past. Education in these years will increasingly need to be consciously focused on developing a pure feeling for

authority in the child; because what the child acquires in these years, will form the basis for experiencing the equality in the social organism that every person deserves. Equal rights will only arise in this way, because people will never mature as adults towards a feeling for equal rights, when they do not develop a sense for authority during childhood. In the past, a much less strong feeling for authority might have been enough; in the future, it will not be sufficient.

Rudolf Steiner, *Education as a Force for Social Change*, Lecture 1 (Dornach, August 9, 1919).

PONDERING EQUALITY IN A WALDORF/STEINER SCHOOL EQUALITY AND THE THREEFOLD SOCIAL ORDER

The French Revolution in the late eighteenth century gave rise to cries for a reformation of social relations. The words 'fraternité, égalité, and liberté', or brotherhood, equality and freedom, entered human consciousness for the first time.

A whole century has since been spent trying to argue that the three are incompatible and cannot be centralised. For example, it was claimed, if the impulse of equality was to be realised, there would be no room for freedom. It was Rudolf Steiner who in 1920 reasoned that in order to form one body social the three must work alongside each other, side by side, with equal value and each with their own focus. Only if we apply the three principles of brotherhood, equality and freedom in a real workable form, can we comprehend what the life of the body social is. He called this *The Threefold Social Order*.¹

EQUALITY IN A WALDORF/STEINER SCHOOL

Culture, politics, economics are the three core activities of society. The health of any society

THE AIM OF THE FIRST STEINER/WALDORF SCHOOL

Today I would like to speak to you about the Waldorf school, founded by our friend Mr Molt. You well know, from the announcements distributed about this school, that our intention is to take a first step along the path we would want the cultural life of the threefold social organism to take. In establishing the Waldorf school Mr Molt has, to a large extent, felt motivated to do something to further the development of inner spirituality. He hopes to do something that will point the way for the present and future social tasks of the threefold social organism. Obviously, the Waldorf school can be successful only if it is completely inspired by the spirit that aspires toward the threefold nature of the social organism. It is easy to comprehend that such a first step cannot immediately be perfect.

Rudolf Steiner, "The Intent of the Waldorf school" in *The Spirit of the Waldorf School*. Lectures surrounding the founding of the first Waldorf school, Stuttgart, 1919. Anthroposophical Press, NY, 1995, p.9.

depends on a harmonious interaction among these three activities and that applies also to Waldorf/Steiner schools. According to Rudolf Steiner, it is impossible to centralise the three core activities unless the three are autonomous to the degree that they can each find their essential character.²

Equality is the quality fundamental to the political

sphere. Freedom is associated with the cultural realm and associative cooperation (brotherhood/sisterhood) with economics or business.

As a Waldorf/Steiner school, Wild Cherry is no stranger to the threefold social order for its body social. Like many other schools, we constantly learn and have years ahead trying to understand the principles of 'threefolding', as Rudolf Steiner called it.³

Carrying the impulses of freedom, equality and brotherhood/sisterhood, there are three distinct areas of responsibility in our school: pedagogical carrying group (college of teachers), the board of governors, and the development committee.

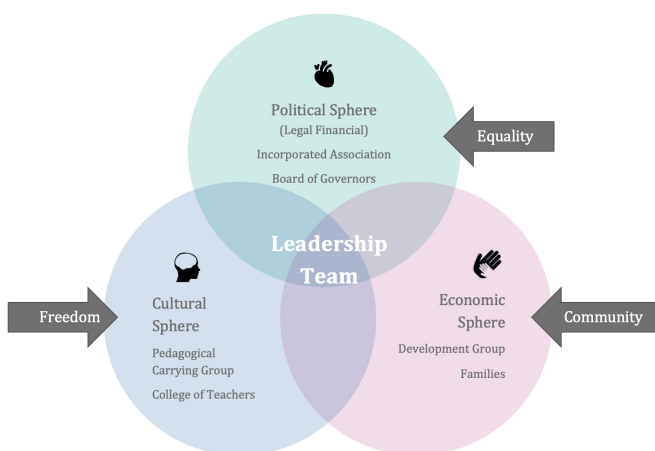


Illustration 1, Organisational Structure of Wild Cherry School⁴

The College of Teachers administers all pedagogical aspects; the Board of Governors good governance and legal and financial business; and the Development Group administers community and resource development activities.

In the political sphere, Rudolf Steiner said to work with 'purely human relations between one person and another' to ensure common rights.⁵ In other words, this would be realised through the promotion of human rights and equality in political life.

It is important when talking about one of the spheres to understand that each is always in relationship to the other two spheres, they overlap. For example, freedom, as mentioned before, is often associated with the political realm, it is realised through a strong commitment to equality in law, and so do brotherhood/sisterhood or community influence our need for equal rights.

How does this look like in our school?

In this, the political sphere, we create a concerted vision for our school and our values, governance charter, policies and procedures, all for the purpose of equality between one person and another. There is respect for each other, child safety, diversity, recognition of our first people, a reconciliation action plan, democratic governance policy amongst a myriad of others and more to come, for example we have started talking about an enterprise bargaining agreement that we would like to have sometime in the future. Together all these realise our needs for human rights; they are the heart, the rhythmic, circulatory system of our school.

None of us came to Wild Cherry School with a clear vision of how we will set up a threefold

social structure and how it will work. Rather, we find it is emerging cooperatively and even to some degree subconsciously with time constantly evolving as a living framework. Each of us bringing a willingness and openness to work together serving for a common purpose and a deep respect for each other, our individual values and social vision for the benefit of the community, the children and their education.

¹ Rudolf Steiner, *The Threefold Social Order*, 1972

² Joseph Weizenbaum in Rudolf Steiner, *The Renewal of the Social Organism*, 1985

³ Rudolf Steiner, *Social Threefolding: Rebalancing culture, politics & economics – An Introductory Reader*, 2019

⁴ Visioning Workshop, 15 September 2018.

⁵ Rudolf Steiner, *The Threefold Social Order*, 1972

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THE “RIGHTS CONVERSATION” IN STEINER SCHOOLS

The realm of the cultural-spiritual life is relatively easy to describe. Nevertheless, it is important to define this area quite precisely so that we can see where the functional principle of freedom can be meaningfully applied in our mutual dealings with each other. When we look at this in a differentiated way, we can see, for example, that the teachers’ meeting or College meeting cannot be placed wholly in one area of work, but has a range of tasks. The teachers’ or College meeting has on the one hand the work of studying the nature of the human being, child development and individual child studies. This clearly belongs to the realm of the cultural-

spiritual sphere since it has to do with deepening our knowledge. The same goes for teacher development, in-service work and when the teacher is at home preparing his or her lessons. Here we have to do with gaining knowledge or developing individual abilities. When the College of teachers discusses fundamental issues of policy or the aims of the school, then we are again in the free cultural-spiritual realm.

It is quite a different matter when teachers discuss organisational questions or matters involving staffing. Here we are in the rights sphere. Here we make arrangements and come to agreements between colleagues on organisational matters or with one colleague with regard to his or her employment, work and possibly the termination of that work. Questions of deployment, salaries or parental contributions and school fees belong to the sphere of rights in which we must ensure that the principle of equality is respected, so that people’s sense of justice and fairness is not hurt. One must be particularly careful in this respect when dealing with pupils in disciplinary matters or when students have to be expelled. This is a particularly sensitive area which teachers have a tendency to make individual pedagogical decisions without sufficiently involving the parents to the extent that many parents do not feel treated as equal partners by the teachers.

If you ask which areas of the school fall within the realm of economics, the usual answer is: obviously, the finances. This common cliché is

in many ways not true. On the one hand, when it comes to parents' financial contributions, many schools allow the principle of freedom in allowing self-evaluation of the level of contribution. Is this a matter for the free-spiritual realm? The fact is that this is not a matter of freedom in the quest for knowledge, nor that it involves free creativity, argues against this view.

On the other hand one often finds that schools set a minimum or average contribution. Does this mean equality? If so, we are in the rights sphere. One can often find the gesture of social balance in schools' contributions systems in, for example, the banding of contributions according to income or the use of a percentage-of-income formula. These contributions are designed, on the one hand, to spread the burden equally and, on the other, to realise the principle of brotherhood. One can also find the principle of brotherliness where bursaries are offered or 'Godparents' pay for someone else's child. One can see how difficult it is to come to a clear understanding of the concepts involved.

The matter becomes clearer when one looks at what actually happens with regard to parents' contributions. An agreement is made about a payment to the school. This is fundamentally a question for the rights sphere. The principle of equality between partners is valid; arrangements must be negotiated in such a way that both sides have the feeling: this is fair – we have found the right balance.

Where do the other two functional principles come into this example? If one follows the process back, one can see that the various functional principles of the threefold social order come together and have to work together if we want to strive for healthy social relationships. This means that in a contractual relationship, equality must be there in the first instance, the equality between contractual partners who freely enter into a relationship in which each respects the free individuality of the other. However, freedom needs to be balanced with the motivation to offer mutual help, towards fraternity, otherwise freedom becomes arbitrariness. Thus all three functional principles work in the sphere of rights.

Michael Harslem

(Excerpt from "Freedom, equality and brotherliness in the school community" in *Working Together in a Waldorf School*, Paideia Books No. 1, Steiner Schools Fellowship Publications, Forest Row, 2001, pp.37-38.)

THE ORIGIN OF RIGHTS

The feeling for what is a right is something that wells up within a person, it has its roots in conscience, and arises when a person comes to a recognition of the innermost nature of the other human being, of the universally-human in every individual, of that which is equal in all people irrespective of all that is different in or separates them. That which in earliest humanity was experienced as coming from above, from God, and brought down through the prophets or high priests as divine commandment, is now experienced as coming from within human beings themselves.

From Michael Spence, *After Capitalism*, Adonis Press, Hillsdale, 2014, p.64.

THE RIGHTS ORGAN

Individuals by themselves cannot order their activities in a threefold way. This is so, because she or he has no sphere of rights. We can form resolutions but no decisions. To decide what is right, a minimum of two persons are needed. On the other side of this coin, it is true that wherever two or more persons act together, a social situation arises.

This can be seen in a Waldorf school. Many people work together toward the objective. Additionally, there are external relationships in the sphere of rights vis-à-vis the parents, the authorities, the suppliers etc. Wherever “me” or “you” comes into the question, rights are involved. What is right involves the question of what it is I deserve in relation to others. The principle that human dignity is untouchable is the basis of our rights. Both written and unwritten rules are derived from this. They are not always correct, indeed, seldom so. Human right, *lex humana*, is susceptible to errors. It should therefore be in constant flow: how we can better do justice to human dignity . . . In a threefold school the decisions are made within the rights organ. This gives priority to the question as to who belongs to this organ. . .

Excerpt from Dieter Brüll, *The Waldorf School and Threefold Structure*, AWSNA, 1997, pp.27-8.