

# NETWORK NEWSLETTER

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**Education  
for Social  
Renewal  
Foundation**



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## 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.

## FREEDOM

This and the next two issues explore the three spheres of the threefold social organism in relation to their inspiring ideals. This issue is about the ideal of *freedom*, standing behind the cultural-spiritual sphere (next it will be *equality*, then *fraternity*). In Germany Steiner/Waldorf schools are often called “free schools” – but what does this mean for us in Australia, a hundred years after Steiner education began?

Steiner's intentions for “free schools” are extremely radical – to liberate human beings from any form of subservience; finally, to obviate the need for the state. As he says, the child's free individuality must not be hindered by any alien shaping – it must develop in total freedom. Yet Steiner provides a curriculum for all levels. The understanding of this apparent paradox is the key to Steiner education: *the individuality of the child feels free with this curriculum because it corresponds to its own spiritual nature, at different stages of development.*

The aim of this issue is to relook at the idea of Steiner education as an “education for freedom” and to hopefully inspire new ways for the future.

Editor

## FREEDOM AND THE COLLEGE OF TEACHERS

Perhaps no organ within the Waldorf School is more difficult to achieve than the college of teachers. On the one hand, the college of teachers can provide the most marvellous spiritual insights, bringing life to education.

On the other hand, it can be inefficient, ponderous, even socially inept. Yet, we work in this way so that we may share the fruits of the spiritual world, and so that we may begin to understand what it means to work to-

gether out of freedom. What then is this college of teachers, a body which is unique to Waldorf schools?

We can only begin to answer this by trying to understand what the Waldorf school is all about. Rudolf Steiner characterised Waldorf education as an education which was designed to meet the needs of human beings in the fifth post-Atlantean epoch of Earth evolution. This epoch is characterised as a time when our task as human beings is to develop the consciousness soul, that element in the human constitution which requires each one of us to stand alone and experience oneself as an individual in day-clear consciousness. It is this experience that provided for the possibility for each man and woman to achieve the freedom referred to in Steiner's book *The Philosophy of Freedom*.

However the price for this possibility to experience oneself as an individual is that one must learn to live with the fact that there is a space, even an abyss, between oneself and the world, both the world of nature and the world of one's fellow man. So it is that at a certain point in life, each of us can feel himself to be completely alone. At the same time, this condition also lead each of us to strive to reconnect ourselves, and to overcome this gap that separates us from the world and the others around us . . . in light of this we can see that our task for the present is to make use of this isolation and to develop capacities which will lead us from isolation into a new kind of community. This community will only be timely, however, if it is one based on true freedom. . .

. . . our responsibilities as teachers include the guidance of children along their individual paths of incarnation. In normal development, they begin their lives in a state of natural unity around age nine. However, from this point, and in light of the demands of this cultural epoch, we must begin to give them the tools so that they will have the possibility to establish anew a conscious connection with the world and the people around them. Yet, this connection can only come about when, over the course of their

## FREEDOM THROUGH IMITATION!!

You know that in the period between birth and the age of seven . . . human beings are imitative, that is, they do what they observe in their surroundings . . . For young children, it is extremely important that the people around them do only what they should imitate. People will need to remind themselves that if children are to grow up to meet the needs of the social organism, they must be free.

People become free only if they were intensively imitative as children. We need to intensively develop the strength, the natural strength, of children in preparation for that time when they begin to become socially interactive. In spite of all political complaining about freedom, and in spite of all the other talk, people will become free only if we ingrain the strength of imitation in them during childhood. Only what we thus implant during childhood can serve as a basis for social freedom.

Rudolf Steiner, from *Education as Force for Social Change, Lecture 1*.

lives, they find the way as a result of individual conscious effort . . .

To cultivate this capacity in the children so that as adults they can develop their own spiritual perception in freedom, something is required of the teachers. They must first learn themselves to work with these factors in their interaction with the children, the colleagues, the parents and the entire school community. All this depends on achieving a degree of self-knowledge. Within a Waldorf school, an institution which is based upon an active working with the spiritual world, a very important condition must exist as a

prerequisite to such work done on the behalf of the children; we must create a vessel which can become a protected place in which these matters, matters which go far beyond the concept of “social” as we know it, can be rightly considered and worked upon. The College in particular should be such a vessel. It must be the place in which we can nurture, protect and support the young people who have come to the Waldorf school in their quest to become true human beings.

Extracted from James Pewtherer, “The College of Teachers” in *The Art of Administration: Viewpoints on Professional Management in Waldorf Schools*, (D. Mitchell ed.), ASNWA, 2011.

## **FREEDOM, TEACHING AND THE PARENT COMMUNITY**

**F**reedom is an integral part of our evolution as humans and the underlying aim of Waldorf education is to support the child’s development towards freedom. To this framework we can add a question to explore with parents and guardians, ‘How and where is the ideal of freedom best supported by us as adults in our school community and environment?’

By sensing the interrelations between the threefold human and Steiner’s threefold social order we can explore our pathways as adults in supporting an education that works towards freedom. In the same way that our human body has an interpenetrating threefold system which consists of the head and nervous system, the rhythmic system of heart and lungs, and the metabolic and limb system, and manifests in thinking, feeling and willing, so our human society as a whole comprises of a threefold system.

In Steiner’s proposal for a threefold social order, he placed freedom in the Cultural

Sphere, the sphere that is related to the head and nervous system in a human. Thinking has a specific place in the Waldorf Curriculum; the capacity to think is carefully developed through stages which nurture goodness, beauty and truth. As the adults in the lives of these developing individuals we are so influential for the children. We are their models and we hold the space where each child can find a pathway to freedom. The interaction of teachers with parents, guardians and adult friends and relatives brings so much richness to each school.

In 2016 Gerd Kellerman (previously a Steiner teacher and teacher trainer from Germany and a retired member of the International Forum of Waldorf/Steiner Schools, Hague Circle) visited our school and we created a special opportunity for our school parents and guardians to discuss parent collaboration with him. Although the idea of freedom was not the direct focus of his discussion, through questioning and increasing our consciousness of the underlying structure of the Waldorf curriculum we could see ways to connect ourselves with a spirit of freedom.

Following is a brief summary of some of the stages of Gerd’s interactions.

The question that we spent most of the time on with Gerd related to his own experiences of parent involvement in schools where he has worked. The parents then shared their experiences so far with our school. There ensued quite a bit of discussion around the different experiences of those families in attendance and their individual understanding of how we do things and why.

Gerd then summed up what he had heard and shared his thoughts on successful parent involvement.

What he had heard was that our families were asking for two aspects of collaboration.

1. To know more about the school day and the reasons why we do things.
2. To be more involved in festivals

He then said that a third aspect of collaboration was missing - this being the physical body of the school.

He elaborated the three points as follows:

#### Aspect 1. *Thinking*

- a. Parents want to know about their child's school day. This is for parent teacher class talks, (to incorporate this into a prospective parent talk also would allow us to encourage the newer parents to come and bring someone). We could include why we do this and how we do this in these meetings.
- b. Parents as educators: adults sharing together their experiences with children. This might be a few parents with a teacher.
- c. Study of Anthroposophy. This is separate to a class meeting.

#### Aspect 2. *Feeling*

Festivals: can be organised by teachers and/or parents. He described three winter festivals he had seen in Australia – how they all had a feeling of light and children being beautifully held by the community but how each were so different.

Gerd said what is important to remember with festivals is that they are a part of feeling life. We feel nice when we go to them and the community feels good; however this may be a feeling that lasts for a short time and then goes away.

Aspect 3. *Willing* - The physical body of the school.

Working on the physical body of the school is when we create the greatest social effect. When there is partnership between

parents/guardians and teachers, teachers can also become students to parents with specific skills. When there is a project that is worked on together we see the most positive collaboration. When we are working together we are always learning.

The school must always be a construction site!

While the school community is one whole Cultural Sphere, the activities we join together with our parents divide gracefully into the three tendencies, 'thinking, feeling and willing'.

Since Gerd's visit, we have had other visitors who have added to our insights and the ongoing development of a harmonious threefold structure to our school community, one which supports our children's journey towards freedom.

One of our most recent guests was Michaël Merle in June of this year. Michaël is a Waldorf teacher and teacher trainer from South Africa and also a member of the International Forum of Waldorf/Steiner Schools. He shared many insights with our parent community along with some guidelines on anthroposophy. One of his approaches to supporting parents in their appreciation of the Waldorf curriculum is to ask them to consider three circles of parent expectation. What do parents hope for from the education they are choosing for their children? Is the most important aspect of education 'content', 'experience' or 'development'? 'Development' is most important and that is what a Waldorf school is. Understanding how the curriculum develops each individual's capacity to be free is key to a supportive relationship between the adults in a child's life.

At a recent Parent/Teacher Circle Meeting we created this diagram based on Michaël



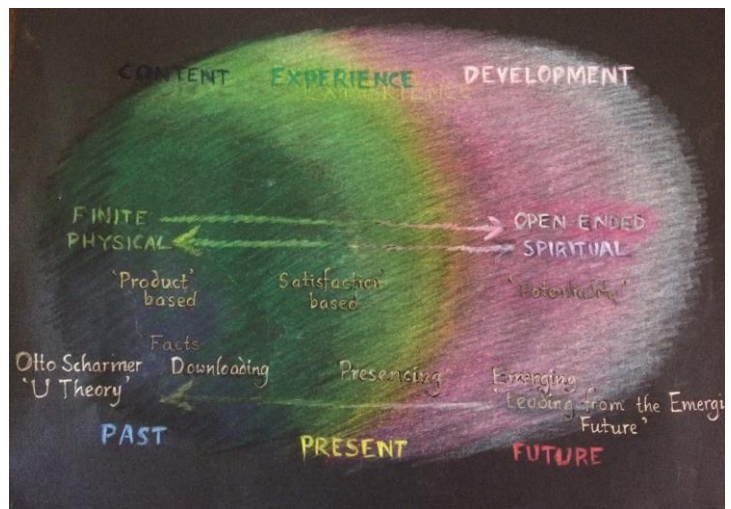
Merle's ideas for discussion. We used Steiner's symbolic colours of black, green and peach-blossom. 'green represents the lifeless image of life', the 'peach-blossom colour represents the living image of the soul.' (*Colour*, R. Steiner. Schmidt Number: S-4485). Extrapolating the aspects 'content', 'experience' or 'development' creates another dynamic to our threefold understanding of

Threefold human	Thinking	Feeling	Willing
Ideals	Truth	Beauty	Goodness
Gerd Kellerman advice for a threefold School Parent Community	Class talks, Parent sharing and Anthroposophical study	Festivals	Working Bees, 'When we are working together we are always learning.'
Axes of threefolding	Freedom	Equality	Fraternity
Threefold Social order	Freedom in CULTURAL LIFE - art, science, religion, education, the media.	Equality before the LAW in human rights and political life.	Associative cooperation in ECONOMIC LIFE.
Eurythmy exercise	I	You	We
Sergei O. Prokofieff, quoting Steiner in <i>The Whitsun Impulse and Christ's Activity in Social Life</i>	'Awakening consciousness'	'One should simply begin with a pure interest in the other person'	'Forming a new community out of brotherly love'
College Imagination	Strength	Courage	Light of wisdom

'thinking, feeling and willing'. Our educational task is to move 'thinking' out of the past (the realm of dead theories) and support 'will' for our future potential.

Michaël also brought us a consideration of the way we manage social 'negatives' in the lives of our children. We can try to brush these negatives away, but this always leaves a hole. The negative can only be counteracted by a positive. We must 'invite the good in'. A free space is placed in the centre to which we should all contribute positives. The free space is supported by the strength of our individual understanding, the courage we have to truly respect others and the light of wisdom we create through our communal cooperation.

We reviewed all these perspectives in our Term 3 Parent/Teacher Circle Meeting and focused on the theme of 'inviting the good in to our school'. We asked ourselves, 'What can we do as parents and teachers to invite the good in?' In an interpretation of the threefold nature of Steiner's College Imagination we considered together our strength as individuals 'I', our courage in our interactions with others 'You' and most



importantly the light of wisdom created when we work together 'We'.

This forms a beautiful interpenetration of thinking, feeling and willing, where now our shared work as a community can lead us to the light of wisdom.

Both the positivity of the wider school community and its potential for freedom, in its highest sense, is strengthened by the shared deepening of ways to manifest Rudolf Steiner's understanding of the threefold social order and evolve our efforts to bring about renewed freedom in the Cultural Sphere.

Tracey Ashton and Sophia Montefiore  
(Newcastle Waldorf School, NSW).

## The Threefold Social Order and Educational Freedom

**A**t every level, schools mould human beings into the form the state requires for doing what the state deems necessary.

Arrangements in the schools reflect the government's requirements. There is much talk, certainly, of striving to achieve an all-around development of the person, and so on; but the modern person unconsciously feels so completely a part of the whole order of the state that he does not even notice, when talking about the all-around development of the human being, that what is meant is moulding the human being into a useful servant of the state . . .

The real need of the present is that the schools be totally grounded in a free spiritual and cultural life. What should be taught and cultivated in these schools must be drawn solely from a knowledge of the growing human being and of individual capacities. A genuine anthropology must form the basis of education and instruction. The question should not be: What does a human being need to know and be able to do for the social order that now exists?, but rather: What capacities are latent in this human being, and what lies within that can be developed? Then it will be possible to bring ever new forces into the social order from the rising generations. . .

What a person ought to know and be able to do at any particular stage of life must be decided by human nature itself. Both the state and economic life will have to conform to the demands of

human nature. It is neither for the state nor the economic life to say: We need someone of this sort for a particular post; therefore test the people that we need and pay heed above all that they know and can do what we want. Rather, the spiritual-cultural organ of the social organism should, following the dictates of its own independent administration, bring those who are suitably gifted to a certain level of cultivation, and the state and economic life should organise themselves in accordance with the results of work in the spiritual-cultural sphere . . .

The growing human being should mature with the aid of educators and teachers independent of the state and the economic system, educators who can allow individual faculties to develop freely because their own have been given free rein . . . the movement for the threefold social order strives for the complete disassociation of the educational system from government and industry.

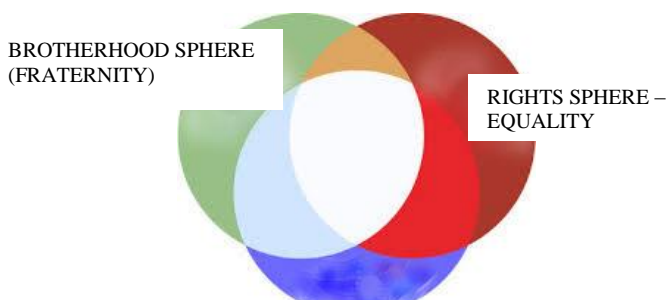
The place and function of educators within society should depend solely upon the authority of those engaged in this activity. The administration of the educational institutions, the organisation of courses of instruction and their goals should be entirely in the hands of persons who themselves are *simultaneously* either teaching or otherwise productively engaged in cultural life. In each case, such persons would divide their time between actual teaching (or some other form of cultural productivity) and the administrative control of the educational system.

If, then, there is to be any renewal of our social life, we must find the strength to

introduce an independent, self-sustaining educational system.

If men are no longer to govern their fellows in the old way, then it must be made possible for the free spirit in every human soul, with all the strength possible for the human individualities of any one age, to make itself the guide of life. This spirit will not allow itself to be suppressed.

Extracted from “The Threefold Social Order and Educational Freedom” in Rudolf Steiner, *The Renewal of the Social Organism*.



**CULTURAL SPHERE – FREEDOM**  
The “republican academy” of teachers with its mandated groups. The kinds of activities include:

- Teaching (freedom to be an artist in the classroom)
- Child study
- Parent education
- Teacher mentoring
- New teacher admission
- Remedial programs
- Back-to-school teacher conferences
- Buildings and grounds
- Educational scope and sequence documents
- Curriculum development
- Admissions decisions

From Lynn Kern, *Adventures in Governance: The Threefold Social Order* (Lecture 1).

YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5-4yEPwjSA&t=267s>

## **RADICAL FREEDOM**

In the Waldorf School, everything is directed towards education in freedom. Man's inmost spiritual element remains essentially undisturbed by the Waldorf School. It is not disturbed, any more than a plant placed in the ground and allowed to develop freely in the light and air has all kinds of stakes applied to it, training it into a set shape.

A child's spiritual individuality is something completely sacred, and those with a genuine experience of human nature know that it will follow, of its own accord, the influences exerted on it by everything round about. The teacher thus has to set aside what can hinder this tenderly protected individuality in its development. The hindrances, which can result from the physical, the mental and even the spiritual sphere, can be discerned by a genuine knowledge of man, if it is developed on the pedagogic and psychological sides.

And when we do evolve such a knowledge, we develop a fine sense for any impediment to the free development of individuality. There is no need for violent interference. Any alien shaping of the personality should be avoided. When we see that there is an impediment we must set aside, we set it aside. The individual will know how to develop through his own power, and his talents may then go far beyond what the teacher possesses.

*Here is true respect for human freedom!*

Rudolf Steiner, *The Tension between East and West*, Lecture 6.