

# NETWORK NEWSLETTER

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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.
- ◆ 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*

### THE COLLEGE OF TEACHERS

This issue is concerned with the College of Teachers, meaning the responsible, decision-making College which is the heart of the cultural-spiritual aspect of the school. These articles are intended to show that the decision-making College requires a special kind of dedication and care to enable it to be healthy, lasting and effective. See also the piece *Freedom and the College of Teachers* in Newsletter No. 4.

Editor

### THE HEART OF THE WALDORF SCHOOL

**T**he heart of the Waldorf School, if I speak of its organisation, is the teachers' staff meeting . . . Here, before the assembled staff, every teacher throughout the school will discuss the experiences he has in his class in all detail. Thus these constant staff meetings tend to make the school into an organism in the same way as the human body is an organism by virtue of its heart. Now what matters in these staff meetings is not so much the principles but the readiness of all teachers to live together in goodwill, and the abstention from any form of rivalry. And it matters supremely that a suggestion made to another teacher only proves helpful when one has the right love for every single child. And by this I do not mean the kind of love which is often spoken about, but the love which belongs to an artistic teacher."

Rudolf Steiner, *The Spiritual Ground of Education*, from lecture 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 1922.

## THE COLLEGE OF TEACHERS – COMING TO US FROM THE FUTURE

Until about a decade ago a decision-making College of Teachers was a key feature of all Steiner schools in Australia. It simply went without saying, something as fundamental as the morning verse or the midwinter festival. Now it might be heard that the decision-making College is outmoded – quite unnecessary for a modern, efficiently run Steiner school. There might be a weekly teacher meeting but that doesn't mean it has to make decisions about anything.

Even when the decision-making College was normal, it was not generally understood as an expression of the threefold ordering of a school. Whereas in fact the College is the central organ of the cultural-spiritual sphere of the tri-membered school organisation, dedicated to the ideal of freedom. To see it that way makes a very great difference; it awakens a sense of respect and care for the College and for its healthy functioning. As a consciously and carefully created organ of a school which is functioning as a threefold wholeness, the College of Teachers is still coming to us from the future.

Here I will outline some of future possibilities and some of the things we have learned from the history of the College in Australia, since the first Steiner school – Glenaeon – opened its doors in 1957. The founder of Glenaeon, Sylvia Brose, wrote: “. . . The College of Teachers is a

group of teachers willing and ready to accept the full responsibility of the school” and that followed directly from Steiner's indications.<sup>1</sup> It is natural that when a school begins the entire teaching staff will be involved in all aspects of the school's development.

But schools grow and diversify – yet the model of the College as “a group of teachers bearing full responsibility for the school” tended to remain unchanged in Australian schools. This led to difficulties and in some cases to major crises – financial and social. It led to the downfall of the *decision-making* College as a natural and necessary part of what it means to be a Steiner school in this country.

When a school begins, it is like a seed; when it grows it differentiates and what it *can* differentiate into is a consciously-created threefold wholeness. When Steiner died the school he founded in Stuttgart was still young, still in the “seed” stage. Like other aspects of this education we have the responsibility of fulfilling what Steiner could only point to but not himself realise in his lifetime.

In terms of the threefold school organisation, the College has specific functions. Not longer are its members responsible for the working of the whole school – now they are fully responsible only for the cultural-spiritual sphere of which the College is the principal organ. This means the College makes all decisions about the curriculum, festivals, new teacher search and induction. This responsibility also includes aspects like playground equipment and building

design, colour choice – because such matters all relate to how children can be guided towards becoming truly free, individual human beings.

When a school is differentiated in this threefold way a vital and ongoing task is determining which aspects of school life belong primarily to one or other of the three spheres – the cultural-spiritual, the economic and the legal-rights. Here there is no formula; of course much can be learned from the experience of Steiner schools elsewhere, but the research and discussion about what belongs to which sphere is an ongoing striving – of the College but also of meetings of Board (representing the economic sphere) and the legal-rights administration. It needs to be an element of meetings in all dimensions of the school, and can be a dedicated focus of some professional development days.

In terms of the functioning of College meetings, they of course must be run highly efficiently and effectively – and there is no reason why they should not be able to. The idea has got around that we need a principal or very small management group to have the final say on all or most matters of consequence, or otherwise we fall into decision-making chaos. But everything depends on how meetings are run. After all, groups of people the world over (company boards, the Cabinet of Australia, parliamentary committees and so on) are making important collaborative decisions every day.

## **PURPOSE OF THE COLLEGE OF TEACHERS**

“By its very nature, spiritual life is now asking to be a fully independent limb of the social organism. Education, from which all spiritual and cultural life emerges and develops, must be administered by the educators, without any interference from political or economic quarters. Every teacher should be allowed time not only to teach but also to be involved in school administration. He would then be able to organise the running of his school with the same care that he gives to his actual teaching. No one who is not fully involved in actual teaching should dictate what a teacher ought to do – not parliament, not even someone who was once a teacher but is not longer. The actual experience of teaching should flow directly into its administration. Of course it goes without saying that such a system relates upon the highest degree of professional competence and objectivity.”

Rudolf Steiner, *Towards Social Renewal*,  
Rudolf Steiner Press, 1999, p. 4.

Being vitally involved and taking decision-making responsibility for the cultural and spiritual life of a school develops capacities and qualities such as tolerance, compromise and love. Further, and very importantly, being part of a decision-making College allows teachers to constantly deepen their understanding of the curriculum in all its dimensions. Otherwise the inevitable result is complaints from parents that some, or even the majority of the staff, know little of real substance about Steiner education. This extraordinarily valuable method of professional development is not possible if “the boss” or “the bosses” are making the key decisions for us.

A lot depends on the choice of chairperson or facilitator. It is common that in any group of people that there are some who “know more” (or think they do), are more forceful personalities, and that there are some who tend not to speak up. This needs to be carefully managed. Part of the work of a skilled chairperson is to keep every member of the College adequately informed about things to be discussed in advance of meetings, and to carry out conflict-resolution work when necessary.

Sylvia Brose, in the text quoted above, goes on to say that “It is not essential that every teacher should be a College member. New teachers have to be left free . . .” That remains valid in the threefold articulated school. What she doesn’t mention is the perfectly reasonable idea that teachers should undergo some kind of training if they are to become part of the College, as happens in schools overseas such as

Uhlandshöhe, in Stuttgart, the first Waldorf school. Teachers who decide to become members of the College need to know the responsibilities, including the preparation necessary to take important decisions. They need to deeply understand the social meaning of the College in a Steiner school, something as important as the curriculum.

Even if the responsibility of the College is only for the curriculum (in the broadest sense) and spiritual life of the school, there is a limit to what a group of teachers can take on. It has been traditional for the College to mandate specialist groups to consider specific aspects of the school life. The members of these mandate groups should be elected by the College and it should be clearly decided if the mandate group is decision-making or only information-getting. If it is decision-making then those decisions must be honoured – otherwise chaos can ensue. Also the term of office of the mandate must be decided. All these things need to be carefully put in place to avoid the mistakes of the past.

The three spheres of the schools need to meet and communicate. They are not separate in a side-by-side sense but are organically connected, just as the nervous, rhythmic and metabolic systems have discrete “centres” (the brain, the heart/lungs and the liver) yet are interwoven throughout the body. So the question arises as to how such meetings should take place and who should represent the College. Again, with careful planning, there is no reason why this cannot take place in a perfectly harmonious fashion. If a certain person, for a

defined period of time, is elected to represent the College for meeting with the other two spheres, then that person needs to act on a “first among equals” basis – *primus inter pares*. As a precaution so that this person represents strictly the College’s views (and not his or her own slant or agenda) then meeting notes should be taken religiously. Again, to avoid mistakes of the past.

The decision-making College, the way Steiner conceived it, is something far more than the teachers rushing over after school on Thursday to throw in their opinions about a variety of topics. The whole way a College meeting is run can prevent it being like this. Many factors can help it to be a special special space in which love, respect and deep understanding can blossom. In our “post-truth” times such a space needs to be created with a special diligence.

After all, opinion is the lowest level of truth according to Plato – and that’s the way Steiner saw it too. It is why he pointed to a pathway of knowing to all teachers – from ordinary “material” knowing to Imagination, Inspiration and Intuition. It sounds lofty, but it is really a matter of a consistent striving. And that is the reason Sylvia Brose, in the same text, goes on to say: “When a College is formed [in a Steiner school] it is a deed on Earth to form a vessel for the work of higher spiritual beings . . .”

1. Sylvia Brose, *Fruits of a Life’s Work* (ed. L. St. Clair), Private publication, 2007, p.145.

by Nigel Hoffmann. Nigel taught in Rudolf Steiner high schools for eighteen years, in Australia and Switzerland.

## Group Moral Artistry THE ART OF GOETHEAN CONVERSATION

### PART 1

**C**onversing, as Goethe conceived it, is the art of arts. The very place in his works where the subject finds mention lets us glimpse its singular rank in his esteem. This is in a key scene of his fairy tale, *The Green Snake and the Beautiful Lily*. There, the four kings enthroned in the subterranean mystery temple are roused to the dawning of a new Age of Man when the serpent, made luminous by the gold she had swallowed, penetrates with her light into their dark sanctuary, and the following dialogue takes place: “Whence came you hither?” asked the golden king. “Out of the clefts where gold dwells,” replied the serpent. “What is more glorious than gold?” “Light!” “What is more quickening than Light?” “Conversation!”

Unless one understands what Goethe meant one can feel disappointed at the serpent's answer, which scarcely seems the revelation one expected. For is conversation as we know it in the Twentieth Century really more glorious than gold, more quickening than light? Hardly! We attach the term to every casual exchange, to the most idle, inconsequential chit-chat. Surely, we feel, the term must have come down in the world since Goethe's day, suffering severest diminution in its slide.

That this is indeed the case becomes apparent when we recall the salons of earlier centuries where great minds came together for significant talk. These occasions were of a wholly different order from our social happenings. They were disciplined, where ours are chaotic, built around a common purpose, mutually enriching rather than depleting. It is impossible to picture the participants in a salon all talking at once, babbling away on as many subjects as there were pairs of conversationalists present. No! The star of a theme hung over the assemblage as over a pool studded with crystals, and the responsively scintillating crystal intellects took turns voicing the reflections awakened in them.

But Goethean conversations differ at least as much again from those of the salon as did the salon from today's cocktail party. Their purpose is to call forth a fullness of spiritual life, not to stage displays of intellectual fireworks. They have nothing in common with the salon's formal play of light-points sparkling in cold starlit glitter. Instead, they strive to enter the sun-warm realm of living thoughts where a thinker uses all himself as a tool of knowledge, where – in the manner of his thinking – he takes part as a creative spirit in the ongoing creative process of the cosmos.

But this is to say that a true Goethean conversation takes place across the threshold, in the etheric world, where thoughts are intuitions (cf. Rudolf Steiner's *Philosophy of Freedom*), -- that it breaks through into the realm of First Causes. Lesser types of interchange never do this; they remain mere

mentalising, speculation, argument, a recounting of experience, an offering of opinion, a reporting. At their best they are nothing more than disciplined discussion, at their worst a mindless associative rambling.

While most of these lesser forms of exchange can be made to serve useful purposes, the fact that they remain on this side of the threshold condemns them to spiritual barrenness; they leave earth and those who take part in them unfulfilled. They cannot overcome the isolation with which every man born since Adam feels afflicted.

But true conversations have that power. As the participants strive to enter the world of living thought together, each attunes his intuitive perception to the theme. And he does so in the special atmosphere engendered by approaching the threshold of the spiritual world: a mood of supernaturally attentive listening, of the most receptive openness to the life of thought into which he and his companions are now entering. In such an attitude the consciousness of all who share it shapes itself into a single chalice to contain that life. And partaking of that divine nutriment they partake also of communion, of fellowship; they live the Grail experience of modern man.

## **PART II**

We have found Goethe depicting conversation as the art of arts. If it is indeed such, and we aspire to it, what does its practice require of us? Surely no amount of inspired groping will suffice;

techniques of a very special order must be cultivated.

Perhaps the first pre-requisite is to be aware that the spiritual world beyond the threshold wishes every bit as keenly to be known to us as we wish to know it. It does not have to be taken by assault; it comes gladly to meet us, much as a wise and loving teacher responds to the warmth of a student's interest. And no one genuinely eager to approach such a teacher with the proper reverence fails to elicit his responses. The spiritual world is no less eager to meet our interest. We recall Christ's assurance of this: "Seek, and ye shall find. Knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

The seeker's attitude thus proves a magically evoking wand that, like the rod of Moses, unlocks a flow of spiritual life. One must know this to be a fact, both in one's own and others' cases. Then the group's consciousness becomes indeed a common vessel in which to receive such illumination as the world beyond the threshold may, on each given occasion, find it suitable to offer.

But one cannot step with a single stride from ordinary thought and chatter into Goethean conversation. The latter requires the most loving preparation. Thoughts must first be conceived like children, and then brooded out in the spirits of the thinkers. To this end the theme of a meeting is set in advance. Each member of the group lives with it as a developing concern in his meditation. As the day of foregathering draws near he begins to anticipate coming together as

a festival of light which, if he and his fellows have done their work well, will lead to their illumination by the spiritual world.

What, specifically, is meant by work here? Certainly not the production of any finished concepts, the amassing of quotes from authoritative sources, the getting up of a resume of reading done. Thinking and study engaged in prior to a meeting rather serve the purpose of rousing the soul to maximum activity so that it may come into the presence of the spirit all perception. Work of this sort is a warming up, a brightening of consciousness to render the soul a dwelling place hospitable to insight. One must be willing to sacrifice previous thinking, as one does in the second stage of meditation, in order to clear the scene for fresh illumination.

The principle here is the same as that advanced by Rudolf Steiner when he advised teachers to prepare their lessons painstakingly and then be ready to sacrifice the prepared plan at the dictate of circumstances which may point to an entirely fresh approach to their material. If one is well prepared, he said, one will find the inspiration needed. Indeed, the principle is common to all esoteric striving. Invite the spirit by becoming spiritually active, and then hold yourself open to its visitation.

Those who come to the meeting place thus prepared will not bring the street in with them in the form of all sorts of distracting chatter. One does not, after all, approach the threshold in an ordinary mood; and where an approach is prepared, the scene in which the encounter

takes place becomes a mystery temple setting. What is spoken there should harmonise with a temple atmosphere. Conventional courtesies to the person in the next chair, comments on the weather, the transacting of a bit of business, are all completely out of tune and keeping.

To abstain from chatter means learning to live without any sense of discomfort in poised quiet. But then, a very special regard for and tolerance of silence is a sine qua non of esoteric life, under which heading conversations too belong. This means an about-face from accustomed ways. In ordinary social intercourse words must flow, or there is no proof of relating; silences signal breakdowns in communication. But as one grows in awareness of the threshold, words for words' sake come to seem disturbers of the peace. Unnecessary utterance intrudes upon and destroys the concentrated inner quiet that serves as a matrix for the unfolding life of intuition. Conversations, then, rest as much on being able to preserve silence as on speaking. And when it comes to the latter, one can find no better guide to the ideal than is offered in another piece of Goethean insight. The poet saw necessity as art's criterion ("Here is necessity; here is art."). And one can sharpen one's sense of the necessary to the point where a conversation develops like a living organism, every part essential and in balance, each contributor taking pains to lift and hold himself above the level of unshaped outpourings. To achieve true conversations one must, in short, build with the material of intuition. And to reach this height everything of a personal, sentient

nature must be sacrificed. Only then can a conversation find its way to necessity.

When it does so, it becomes a conversation with the spiritual world as well as with one's fellow earthlings.

### **PART III**

Though groups vary greatly, a good deal of practice is usually needed to grow into a capacity for Goethean converse. Most individuals today are so habituated to discussion that they can hardly conceive higher levels of exchange. We are conditioned to earth; the etheric realm has become a stranger to us.

Excerpt from the article of the same name by Marjorie Spock (1904-2008) who was an American environmentalist, author, Waldorf teacher and eurythmist. The complete article can be found at: <https://leadtogether.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/The-Art-of-Goethean-Conversation.pdf>

## **THE ARTISTIC MEETING: CREATING SPACE FOR SPIRIT**

### **Space for Spirit**

**W**e know what it feels like to have participated in a successful meeting. We are enlivened at the meeting's end. We also know that what occurred could not have been achieved by any individual member of the group. These are indicators of spirit presence. It is possible to learn how to create such meetings—meetings that lift us out of our ordinary awareness and allow us the possibility of working more consciously with the spiritual world. We can



create more space for spirit in our meeting life in the following ways.

**I. Imbue the meeting place with a sense of conscious care.** It is often the case that certain individuals have a natural feeling for the need to prepare the room where a meeting will occur. When we prepare a space with care we are working with the elementals, spiritual beings which, according to Rudolf Steiner, are detachments from the higher hierarchies, sacrificing themselves for the creation of the material world. They have a great deal to do with the physical setting, and also with our individual physical well-being, our thinking, feeling, and willing, and our communication.

In my own experience, how the room is prepared can have as significant an effect on a meeting as it does on what happens in our classrooms when we make sure that they are clean, orderly, and beautiful. Imagine how the arrangement of the furniture could enhance the quality of the group's interaction. Consider the effect of having as a centerpiece a seasonal bouquet gathered by a member of the group, rather than one that was purchased at the florist shop. It is especially helpful if all members of a faculty take a turn at preparing the setting, so that more members of the group carry the importance of this aspect of the meeting.

**II. Create a threshold mood.** Meetings that begin with a moment of silence and a mood of reverence allow participants to be aware of stepping across a kind of threshold, out of our everyday consciousness into a heightened

sense of presence. An explicit acknowledgement of our spiritual helpers, the spirit of the school, and those persons who have been connected to our institution and are now in the spiritual world, can also shift the group's awareness. A conscious effort to begin on time helps create the sense of going through a doorway together. A verse can also represent a threshold and when brought in the right mood, offer a kind of protective sheath for whatever may happen in the meeting.

**iii. Re-establish the sense of the group.** This activity has two parts. The first is the recognition of individuals and the second is an affirmation of the purpose of the group. A key to the first part is the interest that we take in one another. Listening to colleagues share something out of their lives or an aspect of their work with students can wake us up to one another in a potent way. The sharing can be brief and, in the case of a large faculty, may involve only a portion of the group each week. Sharing can also be connected to the season; for example at Michaelmas, the focus could be, "What in your life is requiring a fresh burst of courage and will?"

This part of the meeting can deepen our understanding of our colleagues and build the level of trust that we need to work together on spiritual matters. Movement or artistic activity can also serve to strengthen the group's capacity to work together on issues that require sensitivity to one another. At this stage of the meeting the "I" of each individual is

acknowledged as he or she steps into the work with the group, or the “We.”

The second part of establishing the sense of the group is an affirmation of the group’s purpose or task. A verse or reading can be helpful, but must be relevant and alive for the group. For some groups, it may be important to choose a new opening for each year or to work with festival themes in order to strengthen the sense of community and purpose at this stage of the meeting. For other groups, choosing to work consciously with the same verse for many years may actually bring them to an ever-deepening understanding of its meaning and effect. While study is often used to bring a group to a common focus, this is successful only if everyone is actively engaged.

**IV. Practice conscious listening and speaking.** We know that listening perceptively to another person requires letting go of our sympathies and antipathies and our own preconceived ideas; in fact, we must momentarily let go of our own I to experience the “I” of the other as they speak. Marjorie Spock wrote most poetically about the effects of perceptive listening.

Brief spaces of silence can also allow thoughts and insights to ripen and fall into the conversation. Can we provide for the seed thoughts of our colleagues, out of our own souls, what the sun and rain provide for the sprouting plant? It is a rare group that does not need to recommit regularly to practicing this kind of listening and speaking.

**V. Work with imaginative pictures over time.**

Imagination is a language that can bear fruit in the spiritual world. Translating the group’s questions and issues into stories and pictures can enhance the group’s meditative work during the meeting or individual work during the course of the week. Look for an archetype, myth or fairy tale that can reveal new aspects of the matter under consideration. Taking time over two or three meetings to explore major questions invites the possibility of richer insights to come forth. Colleagues will want to hold back from building support for one or another course of action and to be open to new information as it emerges during this phase. Having worked successfully with imaginative pictures in the child study process can help colleagues trust their use in other situations as well.

**VI. Share responsibility.** Individuals who are able to carry the consciousness for a group have certain capacities that are usually recognised by the other members of the group. Not everyone has these in the same measure, but it is important to recognize talents among colleagues and give one another opportunities and support to develop latent capacities. Different individuals can lead various parts of a meeting. A group of two or three people can plan the agenda. Incorporate means of regular feedback and review for those taking responsibility in the yearly schedule.

It is clear that a group is healthiest when individuals are continuing to grow and develop. Even the most competent facilitator needs to step back or work with a new colleague in order

to gain fresh perspective. Rotating leadership and having several individuals carrying one or another aspect of the meeting facilitation makes it more likely that all members will feel involved. All members are responsible to bring to the group the results of their individual meditative life. Spiritual leadership requires learning how to create the conditions for meaningful conversations and then helping the group follow up on what arises out of those conversations.

**VII. Let the meeting breathe.** In our work in the classroom we need to prepare carefully and also be ready to respond to what comes from our students. A meeting that has a compelling wholeness and feeling of flow is probably the result of a well-crafted agenda along with some adjustments made during the meeting to an emerging sense of clarity and direction. Having prior agreements about how to deal with new information or agenda changes is helpful. A rhythmic relation to time in a meeting creates more of an opening for spiritual insights than either an overstuffed agenda or a formless one.

There are a number of simple possibilities for making a meeting more rhythmic. For example, honor the times on the agenda, but not so rigidly that people feel cut off or topics are truncated. Vary the conversation from full-group sharing to small-group work and individual reports. Create a balance between pedagogical and other topics, looking back and looking ahead, exploring new questions and making decisions. When the group is not moving physically, make sure there is plenty of inner movement.

Remember to invite the spirit of Play and the spirit of Humour into the meeting.

**VIII. Expect to be surprised.** There is nothing more uninviting than a completely predictable meeting. On the other hand, a meeting in which the group is pulled this way and that by personal agendas is equally frustrating. We must stay awake to the influences of Ahriman (too much form) and Lucifer (too much impulse) as they work in individuals and in our groups.

In order to stay the course in the creative spiritual stream, we need to ask real questions; practice positivity and open-mindedness; be comfortable with not knowing; and expect answers and solutions to come from unexpected places.

**IX. Review.** During meeting review, we give ourselves feedback on what went well and what could have been better, so that we can improve our work together. Review serves another important purpose as well. Just as our nightly review is a conversation starter for the work with our own angel during sleep, our meeting review serves as a seed for the continuing conversation with the spiritual world between meetings.

Running late in a meeting is sometimes the reason that groups neglect review, but review can often capture essential aspects of a meeting in a brief and economical way. In this regard, poetry is more useful than prose. Brief characterisations, even one-word or one-image offerings, can illuminate hidden gems. Hearing individual voices during the review can be a

supportive bookend to the work, like the personal sharing at the beginning of a meeting.

Review is not a rehashing of any part of the meeting. It should bring to light aspects of content, processes, and interactions that can benefit from greater awareness on the part of individuals and the group. A perceptive facilitator will vary the means of review and offer questions to elicit information that might not otherwise be brought to light. “Where did we experience gratitude in the meeting?” “Were there any moments of unresolved tension?” “What did we do that might be of interest to our spiritual helpers?” Review in the form of an earnest question is the best kind of invitation to spirit beings.

**X. Prepare and follow up.** If we recognize our meetings as a kind of ritual, then the preparation and the follow-up are as important as the meeting itself. Preparation requires more than a quick glance at a copy of the agenda. When individuals come to a meeting having thought about the issues and their colleagues the night before, the spiritual ground has already been tilled.

How we carry the questions as well as the tasks from one meeting to the next can make a difference in whether the seeds sowed will sprout healthily in the coming weeks. How each individual carries the group in between meetings will also make a difference. Working rhythmically with time has both a physical and a spiritual aspect. When we consciously release ideas that have arisen in the group into the

spiritual world, it is possible that they will return in a more complete or archetypal form.

These are some of the realities that we may wish to take into consideration as we build a vessel for the spiritual aspect of our work, just as we pay attention to earthly realities in constructing a physical home for our schools.

### **Artistic Meetings**

Our artistic sensibilities and an artistic approach to our work in a meeting can enhance the possibility of lifting ourselves into the company of angels, if only briefly. Meetings can be artistic in a number of ways.

A meeting can be artistic because we consciously include an artistic activity in the agenda and allow what flows out of that activity to enhance the rest of our work together. It can also be artistic in the way we use imaginative pictures to enrich our conversations or moments of silence to invite creative inspirations. When the meeting itself is seen as an artistic process, the facilitator and the group will be more likely to strive for a palpable sense of aliveness and wholeness. Finally, if we take our work in the social art seriously, whatever we are able to achieve in the special situation of our meetings has the potential to strengthen our relationships overall and may even have a healing effect on other relationships in the community.

*by Holly Koteen-Soule who was an early childhood teacher for 25 years in the USA. The complete article can be found at: <https://leadtogether.org/artistic-meeting-creating-space-spirit/>*

## THE TIME IS NOW!

**A**s a leading thought for this short essay, I should like to quote Rudolf Steiner:

It will never be possible to arouse in human beings the understanding necessary for matters like Intuition, Inspiration and Intuition, if you abandon the schools to the state.<sup>1</sup>

His hopes dashed for the necessary realisation of a social order in central Europe as a true reflection of the threefold human being, Rudolf Steiner responded with the whole of his being to Emil Molt's request for a school which would meet the educational and social needs of a society broken by the ravages of the First World War. In other words, with monumental energy and resolve, Steiner looked to the future.

His first challenge was to establish a school and a form of education which was free of state control and was thus an organism belonging to his envisaged free and autonomous spiritual life. With some minor compromises, this was achieved with the blessing of the German authorities, when the Waldorf School opened its doors with such burgeoning success in the autumn of 1919. However, Steiner was always clear that, for a healthy social life, *all* educational institutions should be free from statutory control.

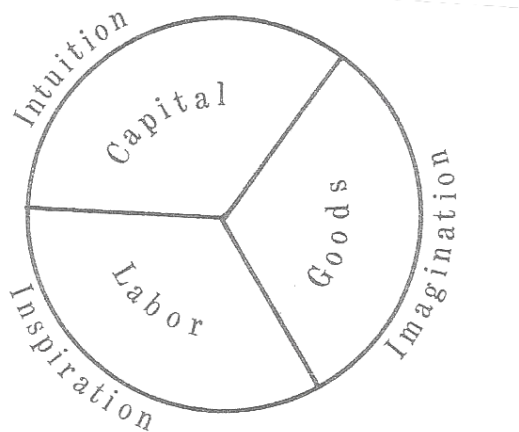
In his preparatory work with those who were to be the first teachers in the Waldorf School, Rudolf Steiner next created a new social form in which the school was to be run, not hierarchically with a head teacher, but by a

College of Teachers, working together as a group of equals out of Spiritual Science. This new form enabled them, with the inspiration and wise guidance of Rudolf Steiner, to bring a living pedagogy, born of a profound understanding of the threefold human being in the developing child, to the sacred task of the education of the children entrusted to them. Their work with the children in the classroom was further infused and supported by a richly artistic curriculum, finely attuned to the ages and needs of the developing child. Rudolf Steiner also intended Class Teachers in the Waldorf School to teach two hour Main Lessons each morning and then, invigorated by their vibrant work with the children in the classroom, these teachers would apply themselves to the necessary administrative tasks required for the effective and efficient running of a large and growing school.

Furthermore, to actively connect the work of the College of Teachers, as the leadership of the Waldorf School to the Spiritual World, Steiner offered them the Teachers' Pauline Meditation ("Not I but the Christ in me") which would empower them to eradicate all egotism and personal ambition from their work. This was complemented by the ultimate gift of the "College Imagination". In their meditative work, each of the teachers were asked to acknowledge the loving care of his/her angel as the being who could help them to cultivate the spiritual faculty of Imagination, which they could then bring to their work in the classroom and when they gathered every Thursday evening to meet with their colleagues. In this meeting of

colleagues, the angels (“softly laying their hands on the human being’s head”) give each one the strength of spiritual Imagination. Above the ring of teachers circle the archangels, giving from one to the other the strength that, through Imaginative thinking, “each has to give to the other”. In this way, the archangels enable colleagues, working together, to cultivate spiritual Inspiration. Out of this weaving and working together, the archangels also form a chalice; and into this “chalice of courage”, there falls, from Michael, working from the sphere of the archai as the Spirit of the Age, a single “drop of light in this place” which is the gift of spiritual Intuition. A truly mighty and potent Imagination! I remember remarking once, lightheartedly, though not flippantly to colleagues, that Michael was (potentially at least) the head teacher of our School!

In a lecture I gave at Rudolf Steiner House in Sydney I referred to a lecture by Steiner, given on the 11th August 1919, which is entitled “Commodity, Labour, Capital”. This is connected with the following diagram:



This “simple” diagram indicates the three spheres of society: spiritual/cultural life, rights life and economic life, separated out as our physical body is separated into three: head/nerve sense; heart/lung; limbs/metabolism. The spiritual/cultural life must live in freedom, equality must live in the rights life and brotherhood (not competition) must live in the economic life. This first diagram also demonstrates Rudolf Steiner’s radical assertion that labour is not a commodity to be bought and sold with goods in the marketplace (“the labour market”); but belongs in the rights sphere. Here, every adult should have the right to be able to find a place in social life for his labour and should be justly and fairly rewarded.

A second aspect of this first diagram which has daunted me ever since I was first able to connect with these lectures some 35 years ago, is the clear indication that: to understand goods/commodities we need the faculty of spiritual Imagination; to understand the life of rights we need the faculty of spiritual Inspiration; and to understand the spiritual/cultural life we need spiritual Intuition. Further, we need to develop the capacity of spiritual Inspiration to understand the concept of labour and the capacity of spiritual Intuition to understand the concept of capital. In other words, we need to have access to initiate knowledge. Is it any wonder then that we find the concepts developed by Rudolf Steiner in threefolding so difficult?

It seems to me that, when we confront the challenge of coming to grips with Rudolf

Steiner's presentation of the Threefold Social Order as an urgent requirement of our Consciousness Soul epoch, we are in a similar position to those first Waldorf school teachers, who were not trained teachers but were called by Rudolf Steiner to confront "the most urgent social problem of our time: the question of education". They must have felt, in so many ways, inadequate for the task, even though Rudolf Steiner was there to guide them. We stand amidst the chaos of our time when "wrong comes up to meet us everywhere", without the great initiate of our age by our side, knowing that now more than ever, the world needs the radical changes offered by the conscious threefolding of society; but feeling that we lack the knowledge and capacity to bring it into being. Where do we start?

Like those first Waldorf School teachers, I believe we need to continue to deepen our study of Spiritual Science and meditative practice with the conscious aim of strengthening our capacity for spiritual Imagination. Like those first Waldorf teachers, we can ask our angel to help us in our work; and we can also turn to the Rosicrucian path of initiation, given by Rudolf Steiner in chapter 5 of Occult Science entitled "Knowledge of Higher Worlds, Concerning Initiation". Here the Rose Cross meditation and, crucially, the thought-picture leading up to it, are given with the specific purpose of strengthening our capacity for Spiritual Imagination. The "social distancing" required at this time, offers us a perfect opportunity to begin this work!

Here is another key quote from Steiner:

For Michael needs, as it were, a chariot by means of which to enter our civilisation. And this chariot reveals itself to the true educator as coming forth from the young growing human being, yes, even from the child. Here the power of the pre-earthly life is still working. Here we find, if we nurture it, what becomes the chariot by means of which Michael will enter our civilisation. By educating in the right way we are preparing Michael's chariot for his entrance into our civilisation.<sup>2</sup>

In the face of all that is coming to meet Steiner/Waldorf teachers in terms of increasing regulation, bureaucracy and digitalisation, is it not crucial that, rather than weakening College work, our meditative and spiritual efforts as individuals and in College, need to be redoubled if we are to continually renew and refresh our work with the children and our colleagues, as required by Michael?

If Teachers and Colleges are able to do this (please forgive me if this is already happening in individual cases) would it also be possible for them to extend their Spiritual Scientific Research/Study to work in the school community with Rudolf Steiner's ideas for a Threefold Social Order, in the light of the Teachers' Pauline Meditation and the College Imagination. (The lecture cycle "Education as a Social Problem" is a good place to start and is also the cycle mainly quoted in "Towards the Deepening of Waldorf Education".)

In this light these questions occur to me: could a network of research groups (independent of Waldorf Schools) become part of such a world movement for social renewal, communicating via the internet and supporting each other

thereby, as well as through regional meetings/conferences, whilst applying the results of research/study locally where possible, and researching threefolding solutions for international situations such as Palestine, Northern Ireland and Nagorno-Karabakh, to mention three of many possibilities? These are broader issues which could grow out of the work of teachers within their own schools.

I believe that in his motto of the Social Ethic we can find a bridge between the essence of Rudolf Steiner's spiritual gifts to the teachers of the first Waldorf School and the way forward in Spiritual Scientific group work/research described here. It will no doubt be well known by readers of this article:

The Healthy Social Life is found  
 When, in the mirror of each human soul  
 The whole Community finds its reflection  
 And when, in the Community,  
 The Virtue of each one is living.

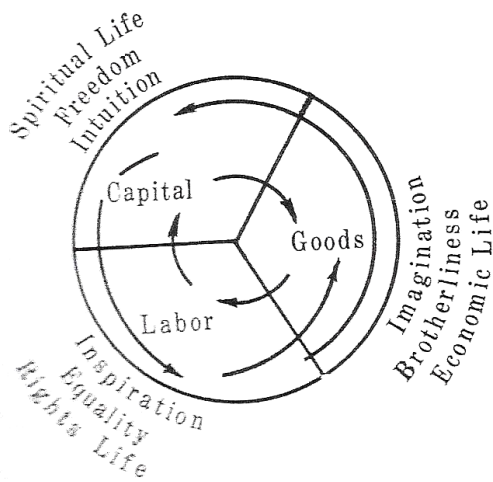
In the Steiner/Waldorf schools in which I have worked, both in London and in Australia, we have consistently worked in other school meetings (such as management meetings, study groups and, most recently school board meetings) in the light of the motto of the Social Ethic. In such work situations, I have tried to connect my consciousness of the teacher's Pauline Meditation with the work in these other aspects of school community life. The bridge here has been in the word "virtue". The Oxford dictionary definition of "virtue" offers "behaviour

showing high moral standards" and "moral goodness". In addition, perhaps we could also add "a loving sense for the truth in ourselves and in one another." In Sergei Prokofieff's profound commentary on "*The Esoteric Path Through the Nineteen Class Lessons*" (of the First Class of the School of Spiritual Science – The Michael School) he refers to another quality of virtue articulated in the recapitulation of Class Lesson 5 as "Awareness of the needs of the earth", which is experienced as an aspect of Christ consciousness. Put simply, my understanding of virtue in the light of the Social Ethic is that in every meeting, we must strive to leave all personal ambitions at the door and bring the very best of ourselves in loving service to the Being of the Waldorf School and to the lofty goals of Steiner/Waldorf Education, as expressed in Rudolf Steiner's "Chariot of Michael". The best of ourselves is that drop in the ocean of Christ which lives in each one of us as: "Not I but the Christ in me".

In conclusion, I will refer briefly to the second of Steiner's diagrams which completes the first. On the one hand, Rudolf Steiner intimates that the whole of his "world economy" lives in this diagram. In my experience, we have, in addition, to let shine imaginatively through this diagram, all that we know of the threefold being of Man, in order to bring real understanding to it. Just as threefold man *lives* as a unified organism through the movement and interpenetration of the separate aspects of his threefold being and *dies as a physical organism* when this interpenetration and movement stops, so the body social dies when the interpenetration and



movement of its three aspects (represented by the arrows in the diagram) grinds to a halt (witness the effects of the initial worldwide response to COVID 19!)



As the Ancient Egyptians and Chaldeans knew, Man is indeed a “Hieroglyph of the Universe”. Just as Threefold Man is a microcosm of the macrocosmic being of the universe, so a Threefold Social Order must be established on earth in the image of threefold man, if social life is to become truly worthy of human life on earth, now and in the future.

1. Rudolf Steiner, *Education as a Social Problem*.
2. Rudolf Steiner, Lecture 13, “The Younger Generation” October 15, 1922.

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