

# 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.

**“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 THIRD ISSUE

Rudolf Steiner often insisted that the Waldorf schools must be completely independent of the influences of both state and industry, although he knew this couldn't happen overnight. But this striving for independence and freedom is every bit as important as the curriculum. Of course there are big obstacles on this path but understanding the social impulse behind this schooling movement can provide the necessary courage and inspiration. The work of the College of Teachers, the class teacher period – all the elements of school life become part of this striving for freedom.

Editor

### HOW THE WALDORF SCHOOLS AROSE FROM THE THREEFOLD SOCIAL ORDER

The question of whether education should be concerned primarily with developing the individual person or emphasise service to society is as old as Western education itself. Some educators like Socrates placed greater emphasis on the pursuit of truth and the development of individual character, while others like Quintilian stressed the importance of virtue and public service, thereby establishing the terms of a debate that has persisted throughout the history of education. The response in the progressive education movement of the late nineteenth and the first third of the twentieth century gave rise to the views of the “individualists” and the “social educators.” For example, A.S. Neill's ideas focused more on the needs of the individual while John Dewey's favoured a more socially oriented education.

Rudolf Steiner's social theory, specifically the Threefold Social Order, [was] a unique attempt to provide a solution that would combine freedom and responsibility, and reconcile the claims of individuality and social obligation . . .

The central social aim of institutions which have their basis in Steiner's philosophy (which he called Anthroposophy from *anthropos*=human and *sophia*=wisdom) of which Waldorf schools are one, is to foster a society in which the community makes it possible for the individual to become even more of an individual who on his or her own part constantly strives to serve the community. In classrooms, a sense of respect for the individual is engendered, human relationships fostered and co-operation on a large scale achieved.<sup>1</sup> These are lessons of the greatest value for a happier social future and they have their basis in a philosophy of ethical individualism and social responsibility based on freedom. To answer the question of how this view came to be part of the Waldorf school movement we will have to become familiar with Steiner's social theory because, as the pioneer Swedish Waldorf educator, Frans Calgren rightly asserts:

Whoever wishes to understand Rudolf Steiner education in its full implications will have to come to terms with the ideas of the Threefold Social Order, because one of the fundamental goals of his art of education is the endeavour to awaken and to cultivate these social capabilities already in childhood and youth.\*

. . . In the aftermath of the First World War Steiner tried, unsuccessfully, to influence the reconstruction of German social life towards adopting his Threefold ideas. However, the impulse of the Threefold Social Order did not disappear as if it had been just another unworkable utopian fantasy . . . Steiner believed, and vigorously asserted, that through education the foundations can be laid for a new form of society. This is a clear recommendation that Waldorf schools which he inspired should strive to structure themselves in a threefold way because it was out of this impulse for social renewal that they had their beginning.

To ascertain the effectiveness and extent to which 'threefold' ideas are being applied in practice in Waldorf schools around the world today requires further research. Indications are that this

## STANDING THE WORLD ON ITS FEET

Many people believe the idea of the threefold social organism would stand the world on its head. Perish the thought! The world is already standing on its head and the threefold social organism would only put it back on its feet. That is what is important.

It is important to find your way to an understanding of such concepts; otherwise, we will go in the direction of a mechanisation of the spirit, an anaesthetising or vegetation of the soul, and an animalisation or instinctive form of the body.

Rudolf Steiner, from *Education as Force for Social Change*, Lecture 3.

most distinctive characteristic of Steiner's social theory has tenaciously been applied in the educational and organisational forms of most Waldorf schools since 1919, indicating that the vision of a social future created by socially responsible individuals lies at the heart of the social aims of the Waldorf school movement.

\*Frans Calgren, *Education Towards Freedom*, Lanthorn Press, East Grinstead, England, 1976, p. 15.

From: Alduino Mazzone *Rudolf Steiner's Social Theory: How the Waldorf schools arose from the Threefold Social Order*.

This paper was presented at the Australian and New Zealand History Of Education Society (ANZHES) Conference, at the University of Newcastle (7-10 Dec 1997). Click [here](#).

## A LIVING EDUCATION FOR SOCIAL RENEWAL

**S**amford Valley Steiner School's vision is 'Advancing social and cultural renewal through sound anthroposophical application.' This vision, which has evolved over the 30 year history of the school, was developed by the members of the School Board and the College of Teachers working together. It reflects the impulse for the school which arose in the late 1970s through activities of local Anthroposophical study groups. This beginning inspiration laid the groundwork for a school where leadership and governance groups strive to work deeply out of anthroposophy.

Each year the members of the School Board and College of Teachers gather for a weekend workshop on a topic of significance to both groups and to the leadership of the School: College in their role as the heart of the School and the Board in their governance role. The theme last year was developing a shared understanding of our vision of social and cultural renewal, and in particular how we can bring to light in practical deeds, a way of working with the threefold social order. One College member presented an overview of the threefold social order, and led us in an activity where we discussed and aligned the libertarian goals of liberty, equality and fraternity into Rudolf Steiner's three spheres of social structure. Much debate followed! We looked at the Egyptian sustainable community, SEKEM, as an example of an organisation actively working with the threefold social order. We discussed how we might implement these challenging ideas of social interaction into our community. Did we develop a clear way forward? No, but we now have many questions for us to ponder and chew on over the next few years; e.g. how do we develop a short, medium and long term strategy and implementation plan to understand, implement and grow social three-folding within our school

and community? How do we meet the problems that may arise?

As a small start, the Senior Leadership team, as well as a group of admin staff, are studying Michael Spence's book "*Freeing the human spirit; the threefold social order, money and the Waldorf School.*" The task we have set ourselves is to be actively engaged in working work more consciously towards social renewal. "The Waldorf/Steiner school can be successful only if it is completely inspired by the spirit that aspires towards the threefold nature of the social organism". Rudolf Steiner

Joan Weir

(Joan is the Chair of the College of Teachers at Samford Valley Steiner School and on the Management Group of the Anthroposophical Society in Australia)

### THE SOCIAL FUTURE

**“... the most important impulses of humanity have been tending unconsciously in the direction of the threefold membering for centuries, only they have never gained sufficient force to carry it through... the work must now be taken in hand for which preparation has been made for centuries; the work of bringing order into the social organism”.**

**Rudolf Steiner, *The Social Future.***

## THE THREEFOLD SOCIAL ORDER AND EDUCATIONAL FREEDOM

**T**he public nurturance of spiritual and cultural life in education has in recent years become more and more a matter for the state. That the schools are the state's business is presently a notion so deeply rooted in people's minds that anyone who tries to dislodge it is regarded as an unworldly "ideologue." Yet this is a sphere of life that presents matter for the most serious consideration. People who complain in this way of "unworldliness" have no idea of how far what they uphold is removed from the world. . . . 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. The life of the social order will be what is made of it by a succession of fully developed human beings who take their places in the social order. The rising generation should not be moulded into

what the existing social order chooses to make of it.

A healthy relation exists between school and society only when society is kept constantly supplied with the new and individual potentials of persons whose educations have allowed them to develop unhampered. This can be realised only if the schools and the whole educational system are placed on a footing of self-administration within the social organism. The government and the economy must receive people educated by the independent spiritual-cultural life; they must not, however, have the power to prescribe according to their own wants how these human beings are to be educated. 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 organize themselves in accordance with the results of work in the spiritual-cultural sphere.

In order that this may not take place, 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. It will be evident to anyone who can bring himself to an unbiased examination of cultural life that the peculiar vitality and energy of soul required for organizing and directing educational institutions will be called forth only in someone actively engaged in teaching or in some sort of cultural creativity. . .

. . . The life of the spirit prospers only when able to unfold as a unity. The same exercise of the soul's powers that leads to a humanly satisfying and sustaining world view must also supply the productive power that makes one a good co-worker in economic life. Men and women with a practical sense for outer life will emerge only from an educational system that is able to develop in a healthy way our innate longings for a loftier world view. A social order that only manages goods and controls processes of production must in the end go completely awry if it is not kept supplied with persons whose souls are healthily developed.

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. Institutions that tried to rule educational life from the point of view of the economic system alone would constitute an attempt at suppression. This would lead the free spirit to revolt constantly out of the depths of its own natural foundations. Incessant shocks to the whole social edifice would be the inevitable consequence of any system that tried to organize education in the same way it controlled the processes of production.

For anyone who perceives these things clearly, one of the most urgent demands of the times shall be the founding of a human community that will strive with utmost energy to realize the freedom and self-determination of the educational system. Other necessary demands of the times cannot find satisfaction as long as what is proper for this sphere remains unrecognized. It really requires only an unbiased observation of our spiritual life in its present form — in its distraction and disunity, its lack of strength to sustain the human soul — in order to recognize that just this is proper.

Rudolf Steiner, from the essay, “The Threefold Social Order and Educational Freedom”, in *The Renewal of the Social Organism*. Click [here](#).