

What Conditions Are There for Taking Responsibility in an Independent Life of Culture? Heinz Zimmerman

The Waldorf School can serve as a concrete example of how to form an organ of the cultural life. We are usually quick to assert that a school must be free of State influence and that the freedom of teachers is a basic requirement if education is to lead to freedom. Individual teachers gladly claim freedom for themselves. But much more seldom is consideration given to the second part of the problem: what are the conditions for being able to act responsibly in an independent life of culture?

Freedom from the State is only the obligation to use this freedom responsibly in the service of education. What are the conditions of self-administration? How can we work together responsibly for the school organism? How does a school community that is based on cultivating a relationship to the divine world work in a conscious modern way? Anyone who knows the real situation in the Waldorf Schools knows that these are among the burning questions - the survival of the schools will depend upon resolving them.

Self-administration, however, is also a pioneering task, a path of research, in which knowledge and practice must mingle. Once we discover this research-character of self-administration, it becomes easier to deal with imperfections. We then no longer curse problems of collaboration and administration (with all their crises and disasters) as bothersome side effects, but greet them as a stimulating challenge.

We must come up with the humility to realize that with regard to the development of freedom, and thus also to the development of new forms of collaboration, we are standing at the beginning. This is true of the whole of Waldorf education, indeed of all of Anthroposophy. Our 600 schools, public recognition and 75 years experience must not be allowed to disguise the fact that we stand at the beginning, with centuries of development still to go.

Regarding problems of collaboration, it is clear that traditional guidelines and forces are used up. Only what people do out of their own immediate initiative and knowledge is fruitful and has a future. This of course does not prevent us from learning from the past. In what follows we shall do this by taking a brief look at the way life was lived in medieval monasteries.

As opposed to anthroposophical communities, monasteries had a fully developed ideal form, albeit belonging to a previous stage of consciousness. Nevertheless, both have in common their orientation towards a supersensible world. Medieval monasteries began with Benedict of Nursia in the sixth century, developing into a form of community which contributed to culture in an exemplary way. Medieval monasteries became cultural centers under the influence of a Benedictine rule based on "ora et labor" (pray and work). Besides theological and philosophical learning, besides the written and the spoken arts, also practical achievements streamed into society from the cloisters: fruit farming, medicine, chemistry, schools, hospices and nursing are a few examples. The fact that there were also many signs of decadence, one-sidedness and crisis lies in the nature of things and should not prevent us from seeing the fruitfulness of this form of community. An ideal common to all of them can be recognized in addition to major differences in religious observance, location, stage of development, etc.

We shall keep this model character in mind in experimenting with the ideas which follow. On the one hand, monastery communities were undoubtedly exemplary as a way of living and working. On the other hand, this form is a thing of the past and cannot simply be transferred to contemporary life. Which

elements are timeless, which are tied to a specific time? How must we transform the latter so that they correspond to our current consciousness?

In order to answer these questions we shall try to describe the conditions of medieval monasteries, then discover what is archetypal in them, finally asking how such conditions can be realized in a modern way today, for example in a Waldorf school. Thus we shall now place ourselves for a moment in the attitude of a devout person of the Middle Ages.

The Monastery as an Ideal Community of the Middle Ages

Whoever entered a monastery of the Middle Ages knew that he was joining himself to a community whose way of life and organization was intended to carry out the will of God on earth in every way. The meaning and goal for each member as well as for the group as a whole was to find a way to Christ, to become His servant. It meant leaving one's father and mother in the biblical sense, thus overcoming blood ties in order to serve in a spiritual grouping. This necessitated a time of preparation - the novitiate: he had to test whether such a life decision would be right for him, and monastery representatives tested his suitability.

The novitiates were given into the charge of experienced nuns and monks. Their entrance became binding when they took the vows, which were valid for the rest of their lives and not to be broken. This meant that the person entering acknowledged the conditions of monastery life and vowed to make them his own. Although the rules varied in different orders, practically every monastery included three main vows: obedience, chastity and poverty.

With the vow of obedience, one acknowledged the monastery hierarchy, one promised obedience to those above one in rank. Behind this stood the conviction that the highest instance (the abbess or abbot) in turn carried out the will of God, so that a hierarchy of obedience rose from the simple nun up to God. One was convinced that everything spiritual has a hierarchical order, thus the earthly hierarchy mirrored the divine one. Personal will had to be overcome in favor of divine will, because personal will separates Man from God. This first and most important vow regarding the human spirit recognized the principle of authority and supported the given hierarchy.

The second vow, chastity, was often restricted in a one-sided way to sexuality. Celibacy was certainly part of it, but it was a general vow of purity in the soul. In order to receive Christ into one's soul, one first had to make it worthy of the lofty task. Of course there was also the idea that family life with all its duties would be distracting, and that ties of blood should be replaced by a spiritual community.

Poverty, the third vow, relating to the human being as the carrier of a physical body, was meant to prevent an all too strong connection with earthly values. It is closely connected with many words of Christ, put into practice by the apostles, who had only whatever people gave them. The two great begging orders founded in the 12th century, the Franciscans and the Dominicans, put this poverty of the apostles into the foreground, whilst other orders only stressed the renunciation of personal possessions: everything belongs to everyone, - and there were very wealthy monasteries.

By taking the vows one acknowledged rules which were binding for everyone - also for the abbess and abbot. The rules were frequently extensive, determining everything right down to practical details (e.g. which punishments were given for which offense), and they were held fast in writing.

With the vows one thus decided to live one's life according to the relevant rules. The walls of the monastery separated this life from the outer world. Anyone who wanted to enter or leave the monastery had to pass the gatekeeper. The word "cloister" (Lat. *claustrum*) means "secluded". In contrast to the life

of a hermit, however, this did not imply total withdrawal from the world. The monasteries as we said above had a strong impact on their surroundings - but such interaction was ordered clearly, and it escaped the will of individual nuns or monks. All work was done for the whole and was assigned accordingly.

Finally, one of the most important elements of monastery life was the sacrament. Part of each day, the mutual sacrament was their spiritual union, their holy nourishment and the lifeblood of the community; which can thus be called a communion community. What the individual nun did in her cell towards the mystical path and becoming one with Christ was heard and found fulfillment in the four steps of the mass; the liturgy of the Word, the offertory and the transformation in communion to a real spiritual union with Christ.

In short, the monastery community of the Middle Ages rested on a strict hierarchy based on authority from above, supported by binding monastery rules. Only someone who had gone through a time of preparation and had taken the vows could be accepted. Mutual celebration of communion gave spiritual support.

The Spiritual Community of the 20th Century

As people of the 20th Century, when we hear words such as hierarchy, authority, binding rules of the order, walls, vows and cultic acts, we feel above all how terribly outdated this is, how it contradicts our sense of freedom. It is true that we are familiar with the inclination to return to earlier times. How nice it would be if we didn't always have to think for ourselves; if someone would tell us what we should do. How nice it would be if we could live in a safe God-given society, well taken care of by a definite community which cared for us when we were ill or old - without the daily battle for existence, without worries about our material needs; simultaneously being able to serve a higher goal, leading a God-given life.

Thus many phenomena - also in anthroposophical groups - are anachronistic leftovers of the untransformed Middle Ages: belief in authority, dependency on the judgment and will of others, longing for peace and order, belief in revelations, hostility towards economics and technology, etc.

A monastery of the Middle Ages, transposed into the present, would be an impossibility, a nostalgic dream of the past. Nevertheless we must not overlook 'that it was a form that brought forth grandiose achievements. Therefore we shall now try to peel the timeless aspects away from the rest, in order to then draw the connection to contemporary problems of collaboration. Because it is the least understood, I will begin with the question of how to deal with the principle of hierarchy in the right way.

The Principle of Hierarchy

Only one who is able to look up to a higher level of development will be able to achieve it. This attitude, transformed into feeling, is the basic religious mood. Thus the cultivation of devotion is also at the beginning of Rudolf Steiner's path of knowledge: "We will not find the inner strength to evolve to a higher level if we do not inwardly develop this profound feeling that there is something higher than ourselvesOnly a person who has passed through the gate of humility can ascend to the heights of the spirit."¹

If we believe that there is higher development at all, then we arrive necessarily at the idea of hierarchy - though not a firm static hierarchy but a dynamic one in constant change.

A child has a natural inclination to orient itself towards something it has not yet become. The small child looks up to the adult, later within the soul it looks up in inner recognition of authority; the teenager

orients himself according to ideals and self-chosen examples which he tries to follow; the adult can see an ideal in Christ, who placed a future goal of development before humanity at the turning point of time: Christ as the being who embodied all the developmental potential of the human being, thus referred to by Rudolf Steiner as the “Representative of Man.”

However, it is just especially Christ who totally transforms the picture of hierarchy. He gives a picture of future collaboration in the washing of the feet one who is more highly developed serves those below him. The principle of power, which is usually incorrectly combined with hierarchy, is transformed by the deed of Christ into the principle of love and devotion in service to others. Whoever rejects the reality of hierarchy in spiritual development must of necessity deny higher development.

But just when we connect the principle of hierarchy with the idea of development, we discover a further thought which is of elemental importance in the life of communities. A spiritual being such as Man can only develop himself to something higher if this higher element is part of him as potential. Not separation, but penetration rules in the spirit. Thus something of the highest spirituality lies in every person, regardless of what level he or she has attained. The unifying divine spirit streams through the whole diversity of capacities and talents. Thus, the obvious opposites, individualization and community building, unite in a higher unity. In their deepest ground the two ideals of equality and individual diversity are one.

During the Middle Ages the static aspect of hierarchy was emphasized more than the dynamic aspect. One's post and duties were determined from the start. It was institutionalized hierarchy with a high degree of identity between person and position. The spirit could not enter at will, but only according to the predetermined order of precedence. Quite a different angle arises if we consider that spiritual renewal today only streams from individuals, from individual initiative and capacity for work. A community working for a common goal must be interested in enabling individually different capacities to unfold as freely as possible according to the task at hand. By no means must the principle of equality - “everyone should do everything” - be allowed to prevail. People easily understand today that only a trained surgeon can carry out an operation. No one would think of suggesting that everyone should occasionally try it. Yet at Waldorf Schools it is almost taken for granted that everyone should take a turn at leading the teacher's meeting, independently of whether he or she possesses the necessary capacities, indeed often without acknowledging that one must make oneself capable at all.

It would be entirely different if people would hold regular reviews of how the meeting or decision went, or if one or more participants were entrusted with doing this. Then a learning process could occur. To develop, we all need self-knowledge. Equally, a group needs to determine its position as a basis for further potential development.

Thus a significant condition for a free cultural life is to be able to recognize the capacities needed for particular tasks. It means perceiving the differences among colleagues. It is extraordinarily helpful to ask from time to time: what capacities live in our community? Do I really know my colleagues? Or can it be that great capacities are going to waste? Interest in our colleagues proves to be an indispensable prerequisite for a self-run community. Only if I interest myself in the other person do I get to know his or her capacities. It is a common experience that latent capacities unfold when they are enticed out by the interest of others. One can often experience that colleagues surpass themselves when their competence is recognized and their achievement is wanted and expected.

The opposite also often happens. Whoever doesn't believe someone to be capable of something or who generates no interest in their work, lames and weakens that person's productivity. Therefore it is extraordinarily helpful if each one occasionally asks whether he or she has clear pictures of the impulses,

capacities and achievements of the other colleagues, indeed whether he or she knows how they work at all.

When one does this for the first time, one realizes - similarly to a teacher in the classroom with her children - that the clarity of such pictures varies. Of some people we know exactly what and how they affect the whole, others move on the edge of our consciousness or have disappeared from it entirely. Just as a teacher can set himself the task of centering his attention especially on children who are pale, inconspicuous or apathetic, so we can also do it regarding our colleagues. One makes it one's inner duty to create a conscious relationship with every colleague. Even if only a few actually do this, it affects decisive change in the group's collaboration.

The result is namely that in individual situations we then recognize who could be asked for which tasks, and in daily life decisive support is given to someone who feels perceived in his impulses and abilities, even if it is only by one person. The more strongly this attitude lives, the more the hierarchy evolves into a hierarchy of capacities, which arises through mutual recognition and which is constantly changing in time and in relation to the particular task

There are two dangers to watch out for. One is that the feeling of hierarchy is not restricted to the particular task and its required capacities, and the status of one's colleagues is made into a matter of principle. One then arrives at the old belief in authority, which tells one in advance that a comment will be unimportant, questionable or wise even before it is formulated. Collaboration is then restricted to recognizing (or fighting against) rank, with correspondingly clever, tactical actions.

An early form of this out-lived kind of hierarchy is the creation of "kingdoms", which arise when individual positions and tasks become so institutionalized and connected with certain people, that no one else is permitted entry. This is the well-known local power which often equipped with a special key - is jealously and distrustfully guarded and defended. Even though separation into separate areas is certainly necessary (e.g. cashier, caretaker of precious collections, physics and or gardening), we notice the fine difference when the task is no longer done in the service of the whole, but degenerates into an unwarrantable personal domain. It is aided by the fact that it caters to the ease of the others - "I don't have to bother, someone else is doing it" - and thus it slips from everyone's consciousness and is no longer part of the whole. When the "lord of the kingdom" dies or leaves, no one is conversant with the task. An ideal modern hierarchy of capacities, in contrast, always presupposes that if it is permeated by the consciousness of the colleagues, that everyone at the institution knows what and how things are being done.

There are practical ways of encouraging this ideal and of reducing the danger described above. From time to time, for example at the end of the school year, one arranges a meeting with enough time, in which everyone with a responsible post makes a report, answers questions and receives possible suggestions. Then the community considers how it should continue.

Positions which are only meaningful if they are held for several years (such as class teacher, representative to the school association, etc.) should receive this kind of confirmation regularly as well, in order to give the person responsible the necessary backing, to prevent the formation of fiefdoms mentioned above, and to join the task to everyone's consciousness. When such reviews and confirmations happen regularly one need not fear them as declarations of mistrust. It suggests itself generally, when a new position is taken on, that the length of time and the moment of the review be determined in advance (in a written protocol if possible).

Justifiable hierarchy has a further aspect. The best way to get to know it is to honestly ask oneself what positions and tasks fall to one in the self-administration of the institution. It is embarrassing when

someone does not notice for years that his contributions and suggestions elicit nothing more than boredom and silent rejection; or that he is constantly wounding other people without noticing it. One of the most noble good turns one can do in such cases is to point such things out to one's friend. (But not in the plenum in front of everyone!) Of course these are extremes, but every honest appraisal shows that there are different levels of influence within a group, and that not every contribution to the discussion carries the same weight. I do not mean the negative hierarchy above but simply the fact that one person at a school has more to say than another. Although it is difficult for some, this must be acknowledged. Of course it can change with time, but there will always be people who carry more weight than others. Closing our eyes to this fact weakens the community and usually leads to the rule of the average standard, in which people jealously insist that no person say more than another. However, we must differentiate strictly between someone's influence regarding a task, as opposed to the dignity of Man in general, which is of course valid for everyone to the same degree.

In addition, the spirit enters where it will, and we must decide in each individual case where this is; today perhaps just through the one who talks so much that people hardly listen anymore. Also, the configuration of the responsible group is essential. Particular destiny constellations within a body of teachers strengthen or weaken the possibilities for each colleague, or cause changes in emphasis.

Complementing the hierarchy of capacities, there is another hierarchy, which we need to picture as being just as flexible and functional: the hierarchy of responsibility. It is possible for a parent, perhaps a colleague herself, to be far superior to the teacher of her child. Nevertheless she must fully respect the teacher's responsibility; she may never directly interfere with the way the class is taught, but may only influence it indirectly through conversations, and only insofar as the teacher wants to take up her ideas. This is true for every responsibility that has been entrusted to an individual or a group. Even if one could do it better, one must restrain oneself strictly, above all regarding criticism, as long as one has not been given the responsibility. Ignoring this law has caused much trouble, pain and dispute in Waldorf Schools, and beyond that it is an irresponsible waste of time.

This form of fluctuating hierarchy arises exemplarily in every decision-making process, if the participants have developed a consciousness for it. Giving importance to contributions according to the hierarchies of capacity and responsibility means that even when a decision is made by open or secret vote, a leveling principle of equality will by no means turn the scales. A closer look shows that there is constant evaluation of the competence of oneself and the others, meaning that decisions very often result from this evaluation and emphasis, which relates to people and not to the situation.

Thus the importance of the class teacher will be the decisive factor when it is a matter of deciding what to do about one of his students. Only in extreme cases would one want to force a decision that contradicted the conviction of the class teacher. In such a case, however, the collaboration with this teacher will doubtless be the next item on the agenda. Fundamentally one will give the most weight in the decision-making process to the person who will be most affected by its implementation or who has done the most work on the problem. This is not to recommend a passive belief in experts. Yet one must call to mind the troublesome decision-making meetings which are drawn out endlessly because too many people who understand little about the subject under discussion, who are not affected by the outcome, or who may not have even been part of the process from the beginning, talked the most. One of the most important abilities in truly being able to participate in a decision-making process is being able to distinguish between when one has something to say; and when one should better remain silent or hold back, acknowledging the competence of others.

A further principle of hierarchy of connected with this. The decision-making process itself entails a hierarchy: gathering materials, exchanging views, forming an opinion, arriving at a decision. In an early phase one would wish for many contributions so that as broad a picture as possible can arise. In this phase

it is desirable that even people who will not make the final decision nevertheless contribute their judgments, opinions and points of view. Such comments help the decision-makers in forming an opinion. Anyone who knows what it is about can contribute to the discussion; making the actual decision requires continuity in the process, competence, and the unconditional readiness to carry its consequences. This is the entrepreneur's readiness to take risks. An employee attitude, shuffling off responsibility onto the "the college" etc., has no place in a modern decision-making committee.

But what do we do, if in the end we do not agree, and we lack an abbot who has the final word? Experience has shown that the ideal of unanimity often causes a minority - indeed even a single person - to block or even terrorize the majority. In many cases it is possible to reach an understanding: "I still don't agree, but I see that a decision has to be made; thus I will support it in spite of my inner opposition" Such understanding is sometimes not attainable, especially with far-reaching decisions. What then? Here the only help is to sacrifice the ideal of unanimity. It is for example unlikely or at least very rare to achieve unanimity when it is a matter of separating ourselves from a colleague of many years. Opposition also usually persists regarding decisions on building projects. It is worthwhile, instead of yielding to endless discussion on the pros and cons of democracy, to make agreements (in writing) about which decisions may only be unanimous (such as choosing a new colleague), which decisions require a simple majority, which require a qualified majority, and which decisions are not the business of the group at all, but belong with the individual. It is self-understood that unanimity is nevertheless striven for wherever possible.

This last question brings us to the matter of the old monastery rules What would correspond to them today? What corresponds to the vow, the deliberate entry into full responsibility and representation, recognition of the monastery rules or currently valid agreements?

The Rules of the Order

Monastery rules of the Middle Ages had two functions. On the one hand, they ordered community life right down to the details. On the other hand they were binding for everyone regardless of status. While the celebrating of communion served the spiritual renewal of both the individual and the group, the rules ordered their daily lives according to the monastery's ideal and thus created an internal system of rights. They were eminently form-giving.

How does this task of creating an obligatory internal rights system appear within Anthroposophical initiatives? Unfortunately we find that this important function is often neglected. "We know what our goals are, so what need is there of formal or written agreements? Wouldn't they be a sign of mutual distrust? Indeed, would they not indicate that active collaboration between us has broken down? Surely such rules would be a response to a state of affairs that is already unhealthy:' One can often hear such remarks and of course they are fully justified when agreements take on the character of rigid laws. However, many examples show that the lack of such agreements leads to arbitrariness, or chaos, or both. When parents are expected to simply trust the class teacher or even the whole faculty, for example, this bears witness to a plain lack of understanding and self-overestimation. Whenever avenues are not expressly arranged for the discussion of problems or complaints, then the person affected may well be forced to bottle up his anger, perhaps withdrawing in bitterness.

Of course mutual trust is the declared goal in education; but who can be so naive as not to realize that this ideal is not always achievable? What happens then? It easily happens that situations of pressure arise, often in conjunction with unconsciously or half-consciously exerted power - which in turn lead to fear. Where neither the original trust of the pioneer phase nor clear provision for possible conflicts are in effect, there fear sets in - the colleagues fear each other, the colleagues fear the parents, the parents fear the college or individual teachers, or the teachers fear the board. A comprehensive network of fear

frequently poisons the intermingling relationships. Many demonstrations of power and threatening actions are only the other side of this fear. Of course there are deeper reasons for these fears than mere missing provisions. Our whole society today fosters a climate of fear, which we only too gladly try to cover up with a bourgeois patina. The deeper reason surely lies in our lost connection with a spiritual world in ourselves and in others, which is the primal ground of trust. That is why a community can do nothing more effective against the climate of fear than to work productively together spiritually. We shall look at such work in more detail in connection with the question of holy communion. However, clear agreements can prevent the latent fear, present in every contemporary, from determining our mutual interaction in the community.

Just as the rules of the Middle Ages subjected all details to the main goal, so also must agreements within a school do this, and this includes that they are binding for everyone regardless of their standing. But how must we transform the solemn monastery rules to suit modern developing consciousness, how do we forge them into an instrument of a modern community?

To begin with, a modern community will strive to make all provisions and agreements the fruits of a process of understanding and experience participated in by all involved. Since the composition of a school community changes constantly, this will hold true in general and not for each individual case. Nevertheless, in principle each new member must have the possibility of changing existing agreements. To do this he has to be able to convince the others of his new insights in a fresh discussion.

Besides short-term agreements there are also agreements whose validity assumes a minimum length of time. If three years were spent working on school fees or salaries, then this can hardly be thrown out again half a year later unless very serious flaws necessitate it. Examples of agreements that require a minimum duration are the schedule, school beginnings, holiday schedule and upper school plan.

There are two points of view which often work together in school life. On the one hand, we strive to make decisions in accord with educational goals. Yet we must often realize that these goals stand in opposition to the interests and rights of the people affected. For hygienic reasons, for example, the midday break should be very long, according to a recommendation by Rudolf Steiner. He also recommends teaching the more intellectually demanding courses, such as mathematics, early in the morning, and the more reflective ones, such as art-observation towards evening. Both recommendations, which are easy to understand, stand in contrast to the way in which we live today, with short midday breaks and often long distances to travel for the children. But it also stands in contrast to the wishes of the teachers, who want a schedule which is advantageous to them, that is, as compact as possible. Other educational goals have to be adapted to financial restrictions (increasing extra tutoring, reducing class size, reducing the numbers of tasks, etc.).

Monastery rules shaped the habits of the community. They were long-term and binding for each individual. The decisions and agreements of a modern working community with spiritual goals also shape our habits and are binding for each individual, but fundamentally each one shares responsibility for them. That is why agreements can change with each new member who comes; they are not given by God, but created by people. The question of how long agreements are valid has therefore only one answer: as long as they are in the consciousness of the people involved. Some communities feel that making such agreements is a sign of lack of freedom. The result is all too often that arbitrary decisions and power-plays sneak in, instead of the supposed lack of freedom. This influences the community's habits just as much, and outsiders experience it as chaos and a lack of responsibility. The other extreme is a jungle of rules and regulations claiming to be law, which banishes all initiative and creativity.

A modern community which reckons with the freedom of the individual must rely on mutual agreements, to elude the arbitrariness of individuals. This would seem to be obvious, yet it happens again and again

that freedom is interpreted to mean that one is free to act in accord with a mutual decision, or not, especially if one did not agree with the decision. In not honoring the decision, however, one kills the community and disqualifies oneself as a mature member. It helps greatly if one of the colleagues is assigned to write a protocol of the group's decisions, which can be referred to if needed. It also helps to read the latest decisions aloud at regular intervals, such as once a quarter, and to make written copies available.

Sometimes agreements are not violated intentionally, but simply forgotten. It is evident from such examples that there is a fluent transition from binding long-term agreements to immediate decisions of the day. Therefore to get a clearer picture of the task we shall restrict ourselves to two areas in which not keeping agreements becomes an existential problem for the community.

One concerns the area in which the dignity of individual members is ignored, when the life of rights imposes on the spiritual life. The other concerns the need to protect educational goals. Thus: consensus about the common ideal goal, and consensus about the protection of the individual. While the rules of an order of the Middle Ages were able to fulfill both tasks, our written agreements today can only really protect the sphere of rights, but not the sphere-of spiritual goals. A written version of an ideal, if it is not cultivated in the community, is merely a piece of paper. Ideals cannot be demanded from without, they have to be brought to reality from within. From outside at best one can ascertain that they have lost their validity. But what can and must be required of every school community are written agreements showing how conflicts are to be dealt with and what rights and obligations each person has.

What happens when someone is dismissed or expelled? Much bad will could be avoided if it were clear to parents from the start what their options are in case of a conflict with the class teacher or the faculty, etc.: perhaps to call a group formed for this purpose, to lodge a complaint with the school chairman, to consult someone of their choice, etc. The very fact in itself that there are clear procedures helps people to feel that they are not at the mercy of the system; it relaxes, creating trust.

When a child is newly-registered or a new colleague is chosen it should be a matter of course to explain these procedures and then to hand over a written copy of them. After a new colleague has been chosen, it should not call forth amazement when the others expect him to attend teachers' meetings regularly, help carry our decisions and gradually shoulder more responsibility for the whole. The school will collapse sooner or later or lose its identity if these tasks are left to only a resolute few.

Agreements, procedures and customs are healthy when they result from collaboration toward a mutual goal.

How can this be cultivated effectively and how can it be protected against alienation, if the need arises? Does independence in the cultural life also bring requirements and prerequisites with it? Much has already been mentioned in this respect. In the following we shall investigate the question of community building in an organism of modern cultural life, such as a school, with reference to the walls of the monastery, the vows, and the transformed meaning of holy communion.

Creating Community Within an Organism of the Cultural Life - Walls, Vows, Communion

The very first question as to the health of a school is: how vividly do the teachers consciously include the children in their meetings? - When schools occupy themselves primarily with internal problems, when they conduct endless debates on possible new social patterns, when the responsible adults are concerned mainly with how to structure their own interaction, possibly consulting expensive specialists - then the organism is already very ill. The art of teaching, the educational task, the children themselves are the true measure and inner orientation of a school. How do we bring them to community-building life within our

discussions? Only by paying heed to the spiritually transformed monastery walls. This means that we work on our consciousness of respecting the threshold between outside and inside. This is not at all the wall which a teaching body hides behind, making themselves inaccessible to pupils and parents - a wall which must be torn down - but something quite different. Whoever has chosen to work in education has taken on responsibility: for pupils, parents and the public for whom he has become a representative of education. Whatever he says and does is not simply his free private business - he is understood to be representing education, and within a Waldorf School to be representing the anthroposophical art of education.

Our freedom lies in our choice of the task. Once we have chosen it, however, we must take heed of the consequences. We are now within the circle of Waldorf representatives, no longer outside of it, and for Waldorf education much will depend on whether this fact will be honored enough. Every meeting with parents, every pedagogical measure, every contribution to the teachers' meeting is an expression of this representation and it is either beneficial or detrimental to the school, depending on whether this responsibility is handled consciously or not.

This by no means implies the need for a creed, or worse, a dogma, but rather a basic attitude, a consciousness of what ground one is standing on. Here we meet the transformed vows. Here it is especially important to recognize the change of consciousness in relation to the Middle Ages, because it is especially easy here to confuse the exemplary with the antiquated. Indeed, it is not hard to compare a school negatively with a monastery: the total monopolization of one's private life by school obligations; the isolation from the world; one could relate the vow of obedience to obeying Rudolf Steiner's "doctrine"; being unmarried can be desirable, since a family only distracts one from one's school duties; and poverty already belongs to the standard of a Waldorf School in any case. But all this is the untransformed Middle Ages we are referring to and just this needs to be recognized as a step backward, as not taking the idea of freedom seriously.

Nevertheless there are many more consequences connected with entering a Waldorf School community as a teacher than people usually realize, and the question is, only whether one faces these consequences out of a conscious decision or whether one stumbles into them unaware. That is why it is one of the most important tasks to point out the significance of such a step to each intrinsically equal new colleague. Joining oneself to a new school community in such a way that one tries to order one's whole schedule in order to serve the mutual goal in the best possible way is a major life decision. In particular one has made a decision to be active in education on the basis of Anthroposophy. This implies saying yes to this path of individual activity and self-transformation, it implies loyalty to something "spiritual in the human being," something higher to which one feels obligated and which one makes the measure of one's lifestyle. This is nothing other than the transformed vow, related here to the responsibility that will be taken on. One's career becomes one's calling and it can only really be carried through if it does.

In Rudolf Steiner's first lecture in his *Study of Man* he recommended to the teachers that they hang up their every-day selves like a garment before entering the classroom. Every-day worries and joys, spontaneous sympathies and antipathies must be left outside in order to make space for everything the children bring with them and demand from the teacher. Likewise, my sense of responsibility towards the self-chosen task demands that I enter the teachers' meeting in the consciousness that I am not just a private person who can follow my spontaneous sympathies and antipathies. To truly fulfill my responsibility I may have to find the courage to contradict my best friend, indeed if necessary to ask him to resign - if my educational conscience suggests it. Personal relationships and educational responsibility may never be mixed, otherwise the latter loses its credibility.

This includes discretion as well. What is said in the meeting needs the protection of discretion. Antiquated, negative barriers do not arise through true discretion, but through rumor-causing

half-revelations. The stronger the mutual sense of responsibility, including discretion as a protection (also of individuals), the more sovereign and generous a community can be in opening itself, the more it can do without false walls. This consciousness of a threshold which the task demands has to be acquired each time anew by each individual. What will be able to happen within the circle depends on the extent to which the colleagues have done this. And in contrast to the monastery, such an undertaking can only be wanted from within, it can never be demanded from without - this is the risk of freedom.

What the group can achieve is determined by what its individual members have consciously transformed in themselves. Threshold consciousness and self-education on the basis of self-chosen ideals are the main requirements for working in the cultural life. This can be little, but it can be much, so much that an individual alone would never be able to achieve it, as we can observe in the example of the discussion of a particular child. Without the actively generated consciousness of a threshold, the discussion of a difficult child will follow the spontaneous, associative ideas of those who know the child, whilst the others will be more or less lost in their private thoughts. This is not only a waste of time, it violates the dignity of the child under discussion. It is not much better when, instead of associations, suggestions are made as to how to deal with this case based on experiences with other children (whether one should recommend a home or special school to the parents, etc.). Organizational routine takes over, which disregards the being of the child just as much as spontaneous associations do.

Threshold consciousness divides the every-day world from what goes on in the teachers' meeting. I forbid myself to speak out of my every-day feelings and routine ideas. In doing this, however, I am counting on the living influence of a world to which the child's inner being belongs and which is beyond the threshold of birth and death. Conscious questions of destiny, conscious questions of the night-realm of experience, looking up to a higher world permeated by beings, from which alone help can come all this is a prerequisite for something new to truly arise from the discussion. In such a moment destiny can be formed in freedom, which presupposes the free decision of the participants. Experienced class teachers can tell of many examples in which the child in question was different on the day after an intensive teachers' discussion of him, did or said something which revealed an inner connection with what had been discussed. Thus his teachers had been successful in collaborating with the realm of the night, with the world of higher beings.

When this happens it is of consequence not only for the child but also for the community of teachers. It means nourishment and renewal for each individual teacher, but also for the spirit of the whole community, it corresponds to a subtle form of the experience of communion. One senses this after such a meeting when one feels refreshed and strengthened in one's connection to the others. It is community building out of the experience of a mutual ideal, which has here become reality. One can have a similarly wonderful experience - after a long decision-making process - when the solution emerges like a ripe fruit, apparent to everyone. It is the gentle touch of the schools' spirit, showing itself here as something tangible. Not one colleague or another, not a democratic collective or a power group has decided; rather a vessel was formed for a decision that was ripe.

Such moments of grace can be prepared for and encouraged, if regular work is done on the mutual basis and goals of a group, and if it is done in such a way that the participants can have an experience of what it is they are exerting themselves for. In this way elements of a group's history which tended to cause disintegration can be overcome; instead of politics and the representation of personal interests, community building arises out of the united gaze towards the sun of a mutual future, striven for by each individual who is working towards his or her ideals.

Conclusion

A modern community which obligates itself towards a spiritual goal rests on three pillars and their three corresponding ideals. These are the three requirements which enable us to collaborate fruitfully in the cultural life, and they must be cultivated in balance with each other. The first is trust in the renewing source of an individual spirit. Everything which keeps a contemporary community capable of development, everything which ultimately holds it together, stems from individual initiative and individual insight. The “I” is the prerequisite for the “We,” it is not a predetermined community such as in a monastery, it is a community which arises out of the will of the individual members and which is thus continually changing.

However, new initiative can only fruitfully transform what already exists if it takes its starting point from a thorough knowledge and acceptance of what is already there. One can only become a fully responsible colleague when one really knows and acknowledges the customs and biography of a community. Without this, initiative has the effect of self-realization and it is usually rejected as being provocative. One can look at this fact as a transformation of the novitiate period of the monastery. It can be handled as a set mutual trial period, but it can also occur in such a way that the new colleague himself notices where he needs to continue holding back and where he can already bring himself fully in. Being taken into the leading body of a community denotes the end of this process. The modern vows in any case can be spoken only to the abbot in oneself, to one’s own higher self. It should be self-understood that an experienced colleague be assigned to each new one, to accompany him and keep him up to date on all questions of the running of the school. It should be just as self-understood that one chooses one’s mentor oneself after an initial period or at least reconfirms the original one. All this is an expression of the fact that new initiatives are welcome in principle, but that they can only be fruitful after a certain amount of time.

The second pillar is directly connected with the first. It is a sense for the whole, specifically, an interest in what the others are doing and thinking. Instead of representing my own interests or forming political interest groups, I can create a healing and peace-bringing effect when I perceive and encourage the interests and capacities of the others. This is true brotherliness within the cultural life. Freedom must pulse throughout the whole life of an organism of the cultural life, but I freely choose to develop interest in and understanding for the other: this is brotherliness arising out of freedom.

Where do we find the third pillar, which corresponds to the ideal of equality within the cultural life? What is it that unites the various individuals of a community? It is the spiritual goal, binding for all, the same for all. It, too, must be brought to the mutual work out of free initiative.

In relation to a Waldorf school, then, the three essential questions are:

1. How much individual judgment and initiative lives among us and is welcome?
2. How much interest in what the others are doing lives in our community?
3. How much are we doing to quicken our mutual goals?

Individual judgment and initiative, interest in and understanding for the others, and a cultivation of a mutual spiritual goal are the three pillars on which a modern spiritual community rests.

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¹ I Rudolf Steiner: *How to Know Higher Worlds*. Anthroposophic Press, New York