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**Work of the Research Fellows**

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*Elan Leibner*

**T**his issue of the *Research Bulletin* focuses on a single theme. The challenge of providing collaborative, spiritual leadership is one of the hallmarks of independent Waldorf schools in North America. We have gathered reflections that provide context, advice, and experience-based know-how for those who seek either to improve their school's practice or to understand the rationale for this unusual leadership model. The contributions are broadly divided into three types: theory, biography, and a combination of ideas and practices.

Roberto Trostli provides the historical and philosophical groundwork. In this second installment of his thorough research into the founding of the first Waldorf school, he establishes two additional fundamental dimensions of a College of Teachers. In the first part (printed in the previous issue of the *Research Bulletin*) he described the essential tasks of a College. In the current installment he adds a discussion of both the membership and the rationale for having a College of Teachers at all. He concludes with a moving meditation on the spiritual forces at the heart of the Waldorf endeavor.

From the other end of the spectrum, Liz Beaven describes the biography of one College of Teachers. In her lively telling, the exhilaration, exhaustion, and gradual transformation of the College on which she has served for many years constitute an instructive story of institutional maturation. What works for one stage of development becomes a hindrance if not metamorphosed into something new as the institution changes and grows a thought that must sound familiar to any serious student of child development.

Between fundamental groundwork and historical biography, three shorter articles

describe practices that aim to bridge the gap between intention and practice. Holly Koteen-Soulé offers practical and inspiring advice on how to arrange and conduct meetings so the spiritual intentions of both the earthly and the spiritual beings concerned may be fulfilled. Basing her advice on many years of practice, she shows that tending to both the physical and spiritual aspects of the meeting, as well as to the human soul dimensions, can create an instrument through which the conversation between heaven and earth can sound.

In separate articles, Martyn Rawson and I write about trying to incorporate contemplative practices into the daily life of schools. Rawson considers the theoretical dimensions of intuition as a research tool, and then describes an action-research project in a school in Germany wherein teachers attempted to resolve long-standing difficulties utilizing contemplative methods. My own article, which like Trostli's and Koteen-Soulé's is part of an upcoming publication of the Pedagogical Section Council, advocates incorporating contemplative practices into College of Teachers meetings. It describes the rationale, benefits, dangers, and safeguards needed for this type of work, and offers practical formats for Colleges to try.

Taken as a totality, these five articles form "The College Issue" of the *Research Bulletin*. Long-time readers know that it is not common for this journal to focus on one theme, yet we feel that this particular topic lives so strongly in the minds of both practitioners and students of Waldorf education that it merits a consolidation of this kind. We hope that gathering the material in this way will allow this issue of the journal to serve as fruitful study material for those wishing to enliven their practice or research.

On a separate track, our reader extraordinaire, Dorit Winter, reviews David Brooks' book, *The Social Animal*. Brooks is an unusual contemporary thinker, and his book advocates some of the very qualities that a good Waldorf teacher would strive to cultivate in a growing child. Winter engages with Brooks' ideas and terminology in light of her many years as a Waldorf educator. She finds much to appreciate in his contemplation of what really matters in life.

A brief report from the Online Waldorf Library is also included. Readers are warmly encouraged to utilize this rich resource.

As always, keep your reflections and suggestions coming. We will publish some letters from readers in upcoming issues. One unexpected vote of support came from Dr. Don Petry, president of the National Council of Private School Accreditation, who told Patrice Maynard of AWSNA that the kind of research presented in the *Bulletin*, together with the depth of opinion behind it, is an outstanding example of independent school literature. In this season of political wrangling, we thank Dr. Petry for his endorsement.

## Letter to the Editor

*Ernst Schubert*

### What do we have to do in order to spiritualize being on the way to become a Waldorf teacher?

To the Editor:

As David Mitchell described in the last issue of the *Research Bulletin*, 16 (2), the anthroposophical basis of our work as Waldorf teachers consists primarily of spiritual work. There are four different emphases that this work can take.

The first and most important one is self-education. The many indications that Rudolf Steiner gave to us are signposts along a path we may follow out of our own initiative. This path will never end, but its pursuit develops new forces in us that are prerequisite for the next steps.

Besides self-education we can study the human being in his relationship with the cosmos. Steiner's *Study of Man* lectures are a path of learning to know our human nature ever more deeply. Following this path the human being appears more and more as a wonderful temple, as a picture of the hierarchies and the divine Trinity. Developing our consciousness of human nature helps us increasingly to understand the nature of the individual child. It helps us to find individual answers to the questions that the riddle of each single child poses. Love and a healing impulse may have their sources in this spiritualized knowledge.

The third direction is to spiritualize the subjects we teach. There is nothing in the world that is not part of the divine order of the cosmos, be it math, grammar, gardening, or anything else. Actually, the subjects are the tools by which we stimulate the child's development. Waldorf education is not being

kind and friendly with each child; it is teaching breathing and sleeping in the sense Steiner intends these terms in *Study of Man*, using the different subjects as the mediums of action. How do we develop a living thinking that shapes the human brain in a different way than just memorizing knowledge? How do we enable the child's constitution to understand sense-free thoughts? When we succeed, the child will later be able to use his etheric brain to behold the world in a living and loving way.

Each subject has a different influence on the child's constitution and this leads to the fourth direction—namely, cooperation with colleagues and parents. Are we unselfish enough to acknowledge the accomplishment of somebody else even if we don't like him or her? Can we hold someone in high regard even if he or she seems to be our enemy? What is his or her task beside my relationship with him/her? Questions like these develop our interest in what is working around us—not only in our school. We are part of a specific time and place but also of mankind. What is needed in the world? Can I participate in bringing about something new for the future?

There are more directions for our work as Waldorf teachers. Only some are cited here.

Sincerely,

Ernst Schubert  
Pedagogical College  
Mannheim, Germany

To whatsoever upright mind, to whatsoever beating heart I speak, to you it is committed to educate men. By simple living, by an illimitable soul, you inspire, you correct, you instruct, you raise, you embellish all. By your own act you teach to behold how to do the practicable. According to the depth from which you draw your life, such is the depth not only of your strenuous effort, but of your manners and presence. The beautiful nature of the world has here blended your happiness with your power. Work straight on in absolute duty, and you lend an arm and an encouragement to all the youth of the universe. Consent yourself to be an organ of your highest thought, and lo! suddenly you put all men in your debt, and are the fountain of an energy that goes pulsing on with waves of benefit to the borders of society, to the circumference of things.

– Ralph Waldo Emerson

*David Mitchell and Douglas Gerwin*

**B**ecause of intense interest across North America concerning the inner working of a Waldorf school, we have dedicated this issue of the *Research Bulletin* to topics related to this theme. We hope these articles will both inspire and encourage teachers in the deepening of their work.

With the next issue we will return to more global concerns and articles on preschool, kindergarten, elementary school, and high school students, as well as observations on the life of Waldorf graduates. Readers who have researched and written about experiences or observations specific to these areas are invited to submit their manuscript to the Research Institute for consideration by the editorial board of this journal.

### Continued Collaboration

The Research Institute continues dialogue and exchanges with friends in Europe. Specifically we work with the Pedagogical College in Mannheim, the Pädagogische Forschungsstelle in Stuttgart, Alanus College near Bonn in Germany, and the Pedagogical Research Center in Kassel, Germany. We seed each other with ideas, share research data, and seek ways to scientifically support the Waldorf curriculum.

### Refurbished Website

This spring the Research Institute's website ([www.waldorfresearchinstitute.org](http://www.waldorfresearchinstitute.org)) has been enhanced with many new articles. Soon the site will be housed on a new server, making it possible to download articles more swiftly. Comments or suggestions about this site should be routed to the Institute's Co-Directors.

### Sexuality in the Waldorf Curriculum

The Research Institute's project on teaching sexuality in the Waldorf school (grades 4–12), headed by Douglas Gerwin, looks like it will be ready later this year under the Research Institute's logo and sold by AWSNA Publications. This book includes leading articles by key researchers in Europe and North America, as well as descriptions of appropriate opportunities within each class. This collection of essays should be of value to teachers in both public and Waldorf schools.

### Topics in Mathematics for the 12th Grade

The Research Center in Kassel has produced its fourth *Topics in Mathematics* book, which is being translated by the Research Institute for sale later this spring in English-speaking countries under our logo. This latest book, which focuses on the twelfth grade, can be ordered from AWSNA Publications ([publications@awsna.org](mailto:publications@awsna.org)) or through Books Online at the AWSNA website ([www.whywaldorfworks.org](http://www.whywaldorfworks.org)).

### Technology

Educators who are following the debate sparked by the recent article in *The New York Times* on the use of computers in the Waldorf school are having to confront crucial decisions concerning the use of technology among different age groups. Which technology is appropriate at the different age levels? How is technology applied at each age?

Recently David Mitchell was interviewed about these questions for a forthcoming edition of the Waldorf education publication *Erziehungskunst*. The Europeans want to know how North American Waldorf teachers are

dealing with this topic and how the popular media are reporting it. We are being called upon to state with greater clarity why in the kindergarten and elementary grades computers are restricted or banned outright, yet how fully they are incorporated into the high school program.

The Research Institute has applied to two foundations for funds to initiate a study on how Waldorf schools approach technology. Specific attention will be directed at the use of the computer. Where in the lesson plan do we find computer studies? What are the intentions of these courses and how are they evaluated?

Finally we intend to assemble a guidebook focused on this topic, including a systematic set of examples and lesson plans on teaching computer science.

### eBooks

Thanks to a new grant from the Waldorf Curriculum Fund, the Research Institute will be able to continue producing eBooks for our OWL website. This feature, coupled with a new search engine, will make it easier to find

important books now out of print. Individuals who search specific topics—for instance “child development” will soon be presented with many options from these online books.

While this service is not meant to replace the availability of hardcover books, readers will be able to preview books to find the most suitable match for their needs.

### Annual Appeal

Finally, the Research Institute is in constant search of funds, both from foundations and from individuals who see our research efforts as critical to the development of Waldorf education. If you know of a foundation that might be interested in assisting this work, please contact the Co-Directors or any trustee of the Research Institute.

Individual readers of the *Research Bulletin* recently received an annual appeal letter and gifting envelope from Alice Groh, a trustee of the Research Institute. We are grateful to those who have already responded and hope that others of you will be able to support our work with a tax-deductible donation.



# On Earth as It Is in Heaven

The Tasks of the College of Teachers in Light of the Founding Impulse of Waldorf Education

*Roberto Trostli*

*[Editor's note: This is the second part of Roberto Trostli's article, following the first installment which was published in the Research Bulletin, Volume XVI Number 2. Both parts will be included in a new collection of essays on the College of Teachers being prepared by the Pedagogical Section Council.]*

## II. Who Serves on the College of Teachers?

The College is composed of members of the school staff who are committed to working collegially on behalf of the school. In order to serve on a College, a person will typically have been confirmed in his or her work in the school, intends to work at the school into the foreseeable future, is willing to commit him or herself to upholding the College's processes, and works with anthroposophy as his or her spiritual path.

In most schools, the College is composed primarily of teachers. This makes sense because they are most directly involved in the education of students and can keep the education as the central focus of all of the school's functions. Over the years it has been suggested that College membership should be restricted to teachers because they develop special qualities through their work with the children and because the spiritual world expresses itself so directly through children, which helps the teacher perceive what may be needed for the future. I do not think that College membership should be restricted to teachers. While working with the children certainly demands that we grow and develop ourselves, every vocation offers opportunities for growth and self-development. Someone who does not work with children develops other qualities and perspectives, and the College can benefit from

these. Even the first Waldorf school included members who were not teachers because they had a special reason for participating.

The College of the first Waldorf school included those people whom Rudolf Steiner invited to participate in the preparatory course who went on to work at the school. As additional teachers were hired, questions arose about whether all the teachers should participate in the College. At the end of the first school year, in the meeting with the teachers on July 30th, 1920, Rudolf Steiner said:

It is certainly not so that we will include every specialty teacher in the faculty [*Lehrerkollegium*]. The intent is that the inner faculty [*engeres Kollegium*] includes the class teachers and the older specialty teachers, and that we also have an extended faculty [*erweiterte Kollegium*].

... Only the main teachers, those who are practicing, not on leave, should be on the faculty. In principle, the faculty should consist of those who originally were part of the school and those who came later but who we wish had participated in the course last year. We have always discussed who is to be here as a real teacher. If someone is to sit with us, he or she must be practicing and must be a true teacher.

When Berta Molt said that she didn't belong there, Rudolf Steiner replied:

You are the school mother. That was always the intent. Mrs. Steiner is here as the head of the eurhythm department and Mr. Molt as the patron of the school; that was always the intent from the very beginning.<sup>1</sup>

In order to understand more fully who should serve on the College, let us examine what Rudolf Steiner presented in the preparatory course.

### Qualities and Criteria for College Members

What are the qualities that College members should have and develop? In *The Opening Address* Rudolf Steiner spoke about the qualities that teachers would need in order to do their work. They correspond closely to the qualities that he spoke about at the end of the course. At *The College Founding* Rudolf Steiner presented seven other qualities that have to do with the spiritual work of the teachers. Here again the image of the balance arises. In the two trays are the qualities that are needed by teachers to do their earthly tasks, in the middle the qualities needed by teachers to perform their spiritual tasks together.

The qualities outlined here are needed by anyone who intends to work in the earthly and in the spiritual realms as individuals and as a

group. The qualities from the beginning and at the end of the course (the outer columns) are addressed to us as individuals, while those presented at *The College Founding* (the middle column) address us as a group. Members of the College must take up their individual work, but they also have a collective task because only where two or more are gathered is it possible to work directly with the higher spiritual powers.

The Council of the Pedagogical Section of the School of Spiritual Science in North America established the following criteria for participation as a member of a College of Teachers. The person should

1. be confirmed in his or her work in the school
2. intend to work at the school into the foreseeable future
3. commit him- or herself to upholding the College's processes
4. be working with anthroposophy as his or her spiritual path

<i>Opening Address</i>	<i>College Founding</i>	<i>Final Words</i>
1. Know your ideals	View our work as a moral spiritual task	"Imbue thyself with the power of imagination"
2. Have the flexibility to conform to what lies far from your ideals	Reflect on the connection between your activity and the spiritual worlds	"Have courage for the truth"
3. Be completely responsible	Work with the spiritual powers	"Sharpen thy feeling for responsibility of soul"
4. Be conscious of the great tasks	See the importance of our work	Be a person of initiative
5. Have a living interest in the world	View the founding of this school as a ceremony held within the Cosmic Order	Have an interest in everything in the world
6. Obtain enthusiasm for our school and our tasks	See each other as human beings brought together by karma	Never compromise with what is untrue
7. Develop flexibility of spirit and devotion to our tasks	More that will be said at the end of the course (work with the Teacher's Meditation)	Never grow stale or sour; cultivate freshness of soul

Let us review these criteria for College membership in terms of what Rudolf Steiner put forth in *The College Founding* and in the faculty meeting of July 30, 1920, that was quoted previously.

**1. The person has been confirmed in his or her work in the school.** This criterion corresponds to Rudolf Steiner's injunction that the person view his or her work as a moral and spiritual task and be a "true" teacher.

**2. The person intends to work at the school into the foreseeable future.** This corresponds to Rudolf Steiner's description of the original teachers as individuals brought together by karma who were working together in the Cosmic Order as well as those who were part of the school in the beginning or who were wished to have participated.

**3. The person commits him- or herself to upholding the processes of the College.** This criterion corresponds to Rudolf Steiner's description of a teacher as someone who will work with colleagues in the "teacher's republic" and in the esoteric collegial work described in *The College Imagination*.<sup>1</sup>

**4. The person is working with anthroposophy as his or her spiritual path.** This criterion corresponds to Rudolf Steiner's description in *The College Founding* in which he characterizes how we connect with the spiritual powers and how we work with *The College Imagination* and the *Teacher's Meditation(s)*.

The work of the College is very demanding on the earthly and spiritual levels. These criteria ensure that a person who serves on a

College will have the foundation necessary to attempt to participate in the College. Although none of us is fully qualified, our intention and our striving will bind us to our colleagues and attract the spiritual beings who wish to help us with our work.

### Anthroposophy as the College Member's Spiritual Path

The following questions are often posed with regard to service on a College: Does a member of the College need to be an anthroposophist? Does he or she need to be a member of the Anthroposophical Society or of the Pedagogical Section or the First Class of the School of Spiritual Science?<sup>2</sup> I think that these questions deserve consideration, but the most appropriate perspective will be gleaned by a group of colleagues who consider these questions in the context of their own school. The process of arriving at a common position on such questions brings colleagues together in a way that serves the school.

I do not think that membership in the Anthroposophical Society or the School of Spiritual Science should be required for College membership. Membership in these groups must be based on the principle of freedom, and if a person were to be required to join in order to be eligible for College membership, it would compromise that principle. Joining the School of Spiritual Science expresses a person's willingness to represent and defend anthroposophy; it should not qualify a person for College membership. The Anthroposophical Society and the School of Spiritual Science

1. In some Colleges, this criterion includes the commitment to upholding confidentiality. The word *confidence* stems from the Latin root *fidere*, which means "to trust." It is also connected to the word *fidelity*, which derives from the Latin root for "faith." When we commit to confidentiality, we commit ourselves to trusting and remaining faithful to each other and, I believe, to the spiritual beings with whom we are trying to work.

2. The School of Spiritual Science is the part of the Anthroposophical Society that works with the meditative content which Rudolf Steiner shared in the iClass Lessons. Anyone can join the Anthroposophical Society who recognizes the validity of anthroposophy and of the Goetheanum as the center for anthroposophical activities, but in order to join the School of Spiritual Science one must also be willing to represent and defend anthroposophy. The Pedagogical Section is one of the vocational sections of the School of Spiritual Science.

benefit when a person joins and supports them, but that participation should arise out of a gesture of giving rather than taking. The requirements for College membership that have been described are stringent enough; there is not need to add to them.

While College membership should not depend on whether a person is a “card-carrying anthroposophist,” I am convinced that whoever intends to serve on a College must be working with anthroposophy as his or her spiritual path and way of life. Unless anthroposophy firmly underlies a College member’s worldview, he or she will not be effective in helping the Waldorf school serve as “living proof of the effectiveness of the anthroposophical orientation toward life.” This applies particularly to teaching because Waldorf education is a practical utilization of anthroposophy and it is the teacher’s goal to “transform what we can gain through anthroposophy into truly practical instruction.” Rudolf Steiner stressed the importance of anthroposophy in his final message to the teachers in 1925, when he said that the Waldorf school is “a visible sign of the fruitfulness of anthroposophy within the spiritual life of mankind.”<sup>2</sup>

Those who serve on the College strive to bring anthroposophy to life through the College work. This is most evident in one’s work with *The College Imagination*. *The College Imagination* was not intended simply as imaginative content for contemplation; it was intended to be used by the teachers in their work on themselves, with the children, and with one another. Working on the College also requires members to try to create the conditions for what Rudolf Steiner called “the reverse ritual,” which will be described later. The reverse ritual is built on a foundation of shared idealism. It is fostered through a study and practice of anthroposophy, creating a “common language” that supports community building and a connection to spiritual beings.

I believe that a person working in a Waldorf school must be entirely free to pursue

his or her own spiritual path without any kind of judgment or sanction, but there is a big difference between working in a Waldorf school and serving on the College. Working as a member of the College demands fidelity to anthroposophy and to shared meditative work that springs from anthroposophy. Without these, the College will find it very difficult to serve as a bridge between the spiritual world and the earthly world of human beings.

Every school has to develop the processes by which individuals can identify themselves or be recognized as striving to meet these criteria. It is important, however, that College membership not be viewed as a matter of status but as a matter of service, of being willing to make the sacrifices that are required to work together. We cannot confirm ourselves in our work; we have to be confirmed by our colleagues. We cannot commit ourselves to working by ourselves with the destiny of our school; karma demands that we work with others. College work is group work, and it can occur only when a person is recognized in relationship to the group and when the group demonstrates its regard for the person.

Whenever a College welcomes a new member, the possibility arises for the College to reconnect to *The College Founding* of 1919, to celebrate a festive moment in the Cosmic Order. The welcoming ceremony provides an opportunity for the College to re-affirm its roots, to acknowledge its connections to the College members who have passed the Threshold, and to strengthen its commitment to work with spiritual powers. Such a ceremony is also a time to reconnect to Rudolf Steiner, who pledged to remain connected to the work of The Waldorf School.

### Our Connection to Rudolf Steiner

Everyone who works in Waldorf education is connected to Rudolf Steiner in some way, but those who serve on the College need to deepen their connection to the man and his work so that they can continue to receive his help and

he can continue to participate in continuing development of Waldorf education.

At the end of the preparatory course, Rudolf Steiner spoke to the teachers about his relationship to the teachers and to the school:

When you look back in memory to these discussions, then our thoughts will certainly meet again in all the various impulses that have come to life during this time. For myself, I can assure you that I will also be thinking back to these days, because right now this Waldorf school is indeed weighing heavily on the minds of those taking part in its beginning and organization. This Waldorf school must succeed; much depends on its success. Its success will bring a kind of proof of many things in the spiritual evolution of humankind that we must represent.

In conclusion, if you will allow me to speak personally for a moment, I would like to say: For me this Waldorf school will be a veritable child of concern. Again and again I will have to come back to this Waldorf school with anxious, caring thoughts. But when we keep in mind the deep seriousness of the situation, we can really work well together. Let us especially keep before us the thought, which will truly fill our hearts and minds, that connected with the present-day spiritual movement are also the spiritual powers that guide the cosmos. When we believe in these good spiritual powers, they will inspire our lives and we will truly be able to teach.<sup>3</sup>

For five years Rudolf Steiner worked with the teachers in the school, visiting classes, attending College meetings, speaking at assemblies and festivals, and presenting additional courses on education. When he became ill in 1924, he wrote to the teachers one last time reaffirming his connection to them.

Rudolf Steiner is able to remain connected to Waldorf education through our relationship to him. Like every relationship, it takes work to keep it strong and vibrant. We can strengthen our relationship to Rudolf Steiner by continuing to work with anthroposophy, bringing it to life in us and through us.

In *The Christmas Foundation: Beginning of a New Cosmic Age*, Rudolf Grosse refers to an essay by Ita Wegman which quotes Rudolf Steiner as saying that if after his death “the opposition forces then succeed in separating anthroposophy from me by allowing the broad masses of humanity to hear of the teaching without knowing anything about me, it would become superficial, and this would be just what the Ahrimanic beings want and intend.”<sup>4</sup>

As Rudolf Steiner’s life recedes into the distances of time, it will also become increasingly possible to speak about Waldorf education with diminishing reference to him. If this occurs, Waldorf education will suffer by losing its integrity and becoming just another educational philosophy and method. We can prevent this from happening by continuing to affirm Rudolf Steiner’s role as the founder of Waldorf education. This does not mean that we need to exalt or deify Rudolf Steiner, but we must continue to acknowledge his contribution. When the College cultivates its relationship to Rudolf Steiner, it gives him the opportunity to continue to help us and guide us in our work.

### When Should a School Found the College of Teachers?

Most Waldorf schools in North America found a College only when the school has reached a certain level of maturity. Until that time, various individuals and groups carry the responsibilities that the College will eventually assume.

I have long held that a College should be founded before or when a school opens rather than as a later development. Because the College is essential to the work of a Waldorf school, to wait until a school has reached

a certain degree of maturity misses the opportunity to work with the spiritual powers right from the start. The College is the place in the school where the spiritual impulses that are trying to manifest in the school can do so most directly. It is the place where a balance is sought between the earthly realms and the spiritual realms. I think that a school benefits from developing that place from its inception so that it can become firmly grounded in the school's way of working.

This does not mean that a new or young College is ready to govern, administer, or manage a new school. Even a mature College may choose not to perform all of these tasks. Rather, a College—young or mature—needs to make sure that the major decisions about the school are permeated with the goals and values of the education. In the early years of a school, when its Board of Trustees is engaged in many aspects of operations and management, the College has a special opportunity to develop the spiritual aspects of group work so that when it begins to shoulder more earthly tasks, the group will be strong enough to meet the challenges.

If a school waits to found a College, how do the spiritual beings participate in the work of the teachers? It seems to me that the lack of a College makes this more difficult. Rudolf Steiner characterized the work of these beings in *The College Imagination*. There he described how each of us works with our Angel, who gives us strength. This work does not depend on a College. The work that we do with our Angels is taken up by the Archangels, who work together to create a chalice of courage. I believe that even without a College, the Archangels will perform this work, but it may be harder for the group to experience it and to feel unified by it. *The College Imagination* describes how the Archai allow a drop of light to fill the chalice formed by the movements of the Archangels. This light serves as a beacon for the group, giving it the wisdom to take up its tasks. If there is no College, I can imagine that this light will not be experienced as fully.

Whether a school founds its College early on or later in its biography, its members must take up the challenge of working together productively with one another and with spiritual beings. Only by meeting this challenge can the College fulfill its task to serve as a bridge and a balance between the worlds of matter and spirit.

### The Challenge of Working Together

One of the major goals of Waldorf education is to help students become individuals in the context of a group. The College tries to exemplify this dynamic; its members try to work in a way that allows the capacities of each individual to serve the group, which in turn recognizes and utilizes those capacities. A verse by Rudolf Steiner points to the balance that must be achieved in order for an individual to work as a member of a group.

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.<sup>5</sup>

Working in the College depends on the striving of the members to wake up to one another so that they can recognize each other in the deepest sense. Out of that recognition comes the possibility for delegation and for shared responsibility. When Rudolf Steiner spoke about a republican form of administration, he was identifying a way of working together that allowed each person to be fully responsible for his own work and for the group to share the responsibility for the work as a whole.

Any group trying to work together faces many challenges, some in the earthly realm and some in the spiritual. While the earthly challenges are unique to each school, all schools face similar spiritual challenges because they are the result of the work of two beings who take special interest in human beings. According to Rudolf Steiner, Lucifer

and Ahriman are spiritual beings who play a special role in human affairs. They are especially attracted to a group such as a College in a Waldorf school, since it is working for the further development of human beings and society. It is easy to think of Lucifer and Ahriman as being merely adversarial forces or the embodiment of evil, but both of these beings are necessary for our full development.

Ahriman is deeply connected to physical, material existence. His influence can be found wherever earthly matters are most important. The realms of science and technology, government and economics, industry and the military have developed in accordance with Ahrimanic forms of thinking and working. Ahrimanic thinking is clear and logical; work inspired by Ahriman is realistic and pragmatic; goals can justify means. In groups, Ahriman expresses himself through the principle of power, and groups that are inspired by Ahriman have a strictly hierarchical organization. Ahriman's cosmic intention is to keep human beings from developing their spiritual nature. If Ahriman were to succeed, we would remain purely physical beings tied to the earth and governed by our passions and needs.

When we consider practical matters in the College, Ahriman draws near. He can help us solve problems, but we must make sure that the solution is consistent with our values. He can help us streamline our operations, but we must make sure that our processes and procedures remain human. Ahriman can help us be more realistic, pragmatic, and decisive, which is necessary if the College is to work effectively, but we must be careful to keep his help in perspective and not depend on him too much.

Lucifer is connected to the world of the spirit. His influence can be found wherever ideas and ideals govern with little regard for the practicalities of life. His influence can be found in culture, in religion, in the arts, and in all forms of self-expression. Lucifer inspires creativity in thinking and working. In groups, he works through the principles of individual

autonomy, personal initiative, and freedom from constraints. Lucifer's cosmic intention is to transform human beings into purely spiritual beings who would have no need to be incarnated into physical bodies. If Lucifer were to succeed, human beings would be drawn away from the earth to lead a purely spiritual existence as moral automatons.

When we consider spiritual matters in the College, Lucifer draws near. He can help us develop insights into a problem, but we must make sure we don't lose sight of the need to find a timely solution. He can help us humanize our operations, but we must make sure that our processes and procedures are not derailed by personal consideration. Lucifer can help us be receptive and responsive—which is necessary if the College is to work with sensitivity—but we must be careful to keep his help in perspective and not to depend on him too much.

We need Ahriman and Lucifer in order to perform the earthly and spiritual tasks of our schools, but we must remain awake to these beings' one-sidedness and their intention to deprive us of our essential humanity. As members of the College we need to find our place between Lucifer and Ahriman, where we can strive to be true to ourselves, to each other, and to the highest intentions of the spiritual worlds.

According to Rudolf Steiner, the being who holds Lucifer and Ahriman in a dynamic balance is the Christ. Rudolf Steiner represented the relationship between the Christ and humanity's great adversaries in the great wooden statue that was to stand at the back of the stage of the great hall under the small dome of the first Goetheanum. The statue depicts the Christ, the Representative of Humanity, reaching upward with one hand, holding Lucifer at bay and reaching downward with the other hand, keeping Ahriman in his place. The Christ holds the adversaries at arm's length, allowing them to do their necessary work while he continues to stride forward toward his goal.

The statue of the Representative of Humanity provides a picture of the balance that we must strive to achieve: holding Lucifer and Ahriman in a dynamic balance, a balance in which each of these beings can share his gifts but also be held in check so that his excesses do not harm us. If we become true co-workers of the Christ, He will help us to achieve this balance in ourselves and in our work.

### III. Why is it Important for a Waldorf School to Have a College of Teachers?

A Waldorf school is more than an earthly institution; it also has a spiritual mission. In order for the Waldorf school to fulfill its mission, it needs to recognize the spiritual realities that stand behind it and provide a way for the spiritual beings who are trying to help humanity to participate in earthly matters. A College serves as a conduit to and from the spiritual world. Without this living link to the spiritual world, a Waldorf school will find it difficult to perceive and express the will of spiritual beings.

Rudolf Steiner described the work of the Waldorf teachers with the spiritual hierarchies most directly in *The College Founding*, but in various other lectures he also dealt with this topic. It is useful to examine some of these indications because they shed light on our work as a College.

#### Building Community

In 1905, Rudolf Steiner gave a lecture entitled “Brotherhood and the Fight for Survival” (Berlin, November 23, 1905). In this lecture he spoke about the need for community building, and he described how spiritual beings act through communities of people who are working together towards an ideal.

Union—community—means that a higher being presses itself through the unified members. It is a universal principle of life; five people, who are together, who think and feel

harmoniously together in common, are more than one plus one plus one plus one plus one. ... A new higher being is among these five—even among two or three; “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there I am among them.” It is not the one or the other or the third, but something entirely new that comes into appearance through the unification, but it only comes about if the individual lives in the other one—if the single one obtains his powers not only from himself but also out of the others. It can happen only if each of us lives selflessly in the others.

Thus human communities are mystery places where higher spiritual beings descend to act through the individual human beings just as the soul expresses itself in the members of the body. ... One cannot see the spirits who live in communities but they are there. They are there because of the sisterly, brotherly love of the personalities working in these communities. As the body has a soul, so a guild or community also has a soul, and I repeat, it is not spoken allegorically but must be taken as a full reality.

Those who work together in mutual help are magicians because they pull in higher beings. One does not call upon the machinations of spiritism if one works together in a community in sisterly, brotherly love. Higher beings manifest themselves there. If we give up ourselves to mutual help, through this giving up to the community a powerful strengthening of our organs takes place. If we then speak or act as a member of such a community, there speaks or acts in us not the singular soul only but the spirit of the community. This is the secret of progress for the future of mankind: to work out of communities. ...<sup>6</sup>

It is interesting to note that long before the founding of the first Waldorf school, Rudolf Steiner was already speaking to the need to found communities out of the spirit, out of the highest ideals of the soul. “We must learn to lead community life,” he said. “We shall not believe that the one or the other is able to accomplish anything by him or herself.”<sup>7</sup>

In 1923, four years after the Waldorf School was founded, Rudolf Steiner returned to the theme of community building in a group of lectures published as *Awakening to Community*. In Lectures 6 and 9 he describes how communities can attract and engage spiritual beings, a process that is integral to the work of the College.

### The Reverse Ritual

If the College is to be a true spiritual community bound by spiritual idealism, its members need to work in a way that attracts spiritual beings to participate in its tasks. In *Awakening to Community*, Rudolf Steiner describes how this can be done.

Community life is based on different types of common experience. The broadest foundation for community is language, which creates a connection among all who share a mother tongue. The second foundation for community is provided by our shared childhood experience and our memories of them. They create a sense of connection among those who have shared their early lives. The third foundation for community is common participation in rituals. According to Rudolf Steiner, a “cultus” or true ritual is an earthly reflection of something we have experienced in the spiritual world before birth. When we participate in a ritual together, we feel a connection with those who are participating with us because we have common cosmic memories of the experiences from our time before birth. A true ritual, Rudolf Steiner states,

**The major decisions about the school [must be] permeated with the goals and values of the education.**

“derives its binding power from the fact that it conveys spiritual forces from the spiritual world to earth and presents supernatural realities to the contemplation of human beings living on the earth.”<sup>8</sup> An individual usually decides whether to participate in a ritual, but rituals can easily become tradition, which causes us to engage in them less consciously.

The fourth foundation for community is what Rudolf Steiner terms the “reverse cultus” or “reverse ritual.” This foundation is not given to us; it must be established consciously at every moment. The reverse ritual can occur only when we truly awaken to the soul and spiritual nature of our fellow man. According to Rudolf Steiner, when we begin to awaken to one another in this way, we are able to enter the supersensible realm together.

This awakening to each other’s soul-spiritual nature can occur by sharing a common life of ideals. This attracts the interest of spiritual beings. When we seek to realize our anthroposophical ideals, a spiritual being is attracted to our work. “Just as the genius of a language lives in that language and spreads its wings over those who speak it, so do those who experience anthroposophical ideas together in the right, idealistic frame of mind live in the shelter of the wings of a higher being.”<sup>9</sup> This process of spiritualizing earthly substance together is the reverse ritual.

While a ritual brings the supersensible down into the physical world through words and actions, the reverse ritual raises earthly deeds into the supersensible realm. Rudolf Steiner described it pictorially as follows:

The community of the cultus seeks to draw the Angels of heaven down to the place where the cultus is being celebrated, so that they may be present in the congregation, whereas the anthroposophical community seeks to lift

human souls into supersensible realms so that they may enter the company of Angels.

If anthroposophy is to serve man as a real means of entering the spiritual world, . . . we must do more than just talk about spiritual beings; we must look for the opportunities nearest at hand to enter their company.<sup>10</sup>

When we participate in the reverse ritual, spiritual beings are attracted to our spiritualized thoughts, feelings, and deeds and are able to participate in the earthly matters that we are raising into the realm of the spirit. Just as true rituals bring the life of the spirit into the realm of earth, the reverse ritual brings the life of the earth into the realm of spirit.

The reverse ritual is possible only if the members of the College are working on themselves and working together in a way that fosters an awakening to each other's soul-spiritual nature. This means that College members need to learn to see one another in a new light and to relate to one another in new ways. In order to awaken to our colleagues' soul-spiritual nature we must develop heightened interest in, compassion for, and commitment to one another. This requires dedication and persistence because we are so used to relationships based on our everyday selves. If we begin to awaken to each other, we will find new levels of connection that will allow us to work together not only on earth but in spiritual realms as well.

The reverse ritual is at the crux of College work. When a meeting achieves the reverse ritual, spiritual beings receive an offering of spiritualized earthly substance that is akin to the blessing that we receive when we partake of a sacrament. When the reverse ritual occurs, the will of the spiritual world may be perceived by the listening heart. What is finally voiced aloud by one or another member of the group goes far beyond the sum of the individual opinions or perspectives that have been expressed. In those moments, one

feels humbled by the recognition that one is participating in something rare and holy: the transmutation of earthly thoughts, words, and deeds into spiritual substance.

### The College Imagination

In order for the reverse ritual to be fruitful for our work as a College, we also have to cultivate the ability to perceive what the spiritual beings are trying to communicate so that we can hearken to the will of the spiritual worlds. This demands that we develop ourselves as meditants so that we, like Elijah, can awaken to the still small voice of the spirit. It demands that we engage in meetings that are structured to allow us to perceive that voice of the spirit. And it demands that we develop the qualities of soul that will allow us to speak to and listen to each other in such a way that doesn't stifle the expression of the spirit.

In *The College Imagination* and the *Final Words*, Rudolf Steiner gave the members of the preparatory course the means by which to imagine, understand, and practice working together with the spiritual powers who help us in our work.

Thus, we wish to begin our preparation by first reflecting upon how we connect with the spiritual powers in whose service and in whose name each one of us must work. I ask you to understand these introductory words as a kind of prayer to those powers who stand behind us with Imagination, Inspiration, and Intuition as we take up this task.<sup>11</sup>

Rudolf Steiner asked that his words not be transcribed at that point, but three of the participants later wrote down their recollections of what he had said. [These were included in the Appendix of the previous installment of this article, in *Research Bulletin* 16 (2) – Ed.] The accounts differ in terms of the level of detail they record, but they share the following essential elements:

Our Angel helps us with our individual work, in our strivings to realize our goals for this incarnation. In the *Imagination* Rudolf Steiner describes the Angel as standing behind us and laying hands on our head. Our Angel faces the same direction as we do—perhaps in recognition that it will stand by us as we meet our destiny—and it gives us the strength we need to do our tasks.

The Archangels help us in our work with one another. Rudolf Steiner describes the Archangels circling above our heads, carrying from one to the other what arises out of our spiritual encounter with our Angel. Their movements create a chalice made of courage.

The Archai help us in our work to realize the goals of the Spirit of the Time. Rudolf Steiner describes their movements less exactly, saying only that they come from primal distances or the heights. The Archai allow a drop of light to fill the chalice created by the Archangels.

The correspondences among the parts of *The College Imagination* are summarized in the following table:

Rudolf Steiner shared this *Imagination* so that the participants of the course could recognize the essential elements of how to work with these spiritual beings. We work with our Angel on our own tasks; we work with the Archangels on our common tasks; we work with the Archai on the tasks of our age.

Working with meditative content must be an act of freedom, but when members of a group such as the College commit to working with the same content in an ongoing way, it strengthens the meditative work of each individual and the power of the meditation itself. In my opinion, becoming a member of a College requires a commitment to engage in a group meditative practice in service to one's colleagues and to the school. When all the members of a College make that commitment, the whole that is created is far greater than the sum of the parts.

Rudolf Steiner intended that teachers work with the *Imagination* as part of their daily meditative practice. During *The College Founding* he said, “At the end of our course I will say what I would like to say following today's festive commencement of our preparation. Then much will have been clarified, and we will be able to stand before our task much more concretely than we can today.”<sup>12</sup> At the end of the last lectures, Rudolf Steiner spoke about the qualities that the teachers must develop, and when he concluded the course, he described how teachers could work together with the beings of the Third Hierarchy, and he asked that the teachers pledge themselves to do this. According to the notes of Caroline von Heydebrand:

BEING	Angel	Archangels	Archai
POSITION	Behind each member	Above our heads	From eternal beginnings
MOVEMENT	Stands	Circle	Come from a distance
GESTURE	Lays hands on head	Form a chalice; carry from one to the other what each has to give	Reveal themselves for a moment
ACTION	Gives strength	Gives courage	Allow a drop of light to fall into the chalice
CAPACITY	Imagination	Inspiration	Intuition

On 9th September at 9 am, Rudolf Steiner assembled the first Waldorf teachers. He asked them always to remember the way of working which he had shown to them, namely to work in full consciousness of the reality of the spiritual world. He said: "In the evenings *before* your meditation ask the Angels, Archangels and Archai that they may help you in your work on the following day. In the mornings, *after* the meditation, you may feel yourself united with the beings of the Third Hierarchy."

Then Dr. Steiner walked around the table, shaking hands with each teacher and looking deeply and with moving, utmost earnestness into the eyes of each.

According to the notes of Walter J. Stein:

9 AM meeting. Dr. Steiner asks us, clasping the hand of each teacher in turn, to promise to work together in the way he has shown us: In the evening, before the meditation, ask the Angeloi, Archangeloi and Archai to help in our work on the next day. In the morning, after the meditation, know ourselves united with them.<sup>13</sup>

Although we were not present at this ceremony, it lives on as a cosmic moment in which we can participate through our intentions and our efforts. Each us can receive what Rudolf Steiner offered if we take up his work with earnestness, and each of us can pledge to work in the way that he has shown. If we do so, we connect ourselves with Rudolf Steiner and with the Being of The Waldorf School.

### The Being of the Waldorf School

In Waldorf circles people sometimes refer to the "being" of their school. What is meant by that? Whom are they speaking about? Is this

simply a turn of phrase or does it point to a spiritual reality?

### What kind of spiritual being is "the being" of the school?

According to Rudolf Steiner each human being has an Angel who has the spiritual task of helping that human being fulfill his or her pre-birth intentions. Archangels are on the next higher level. They concern themselves

with groups of people who have basic background in common: a tribe, a race, people from a geographical region, people who share a language. These beings are sometimes known as the "folk-soul" of a people. The Archai are one level above the Archangels. As Spirits of the Time, they are responsible for the developments that occur within an age. The major Archangels also may serve as the Spirit of the Time for an epoch, and during this period of regency, they act as if they were in the ranks of the Archai.

What kind of spiritual being is "the being of the school?" In my opinion, there are two possibilities: If we view "the school" as a specific Waldorf school, I think the "being of the school" is one type of spiritual being. If we view "The Waldorf School" as an archetype, then I think the "Being of the School" is another type of spiritual being.

As Rudolf Steiner described in "Brotherhood and the Fight for Survival" and in *Awakening to Community*, wherever a group of people come together in the service of an ideal, a spiritual being is drawn to them. It seems to me that this being comes from the ranks of the Archangels, because the Archangels are responsible for and express themselves through a group of people.

The Archangels have the astral body as their lowest member, which allows them to manifest themselves in many places at once. Because the being of a school expresses itself through many members of the school community, this may explain why people in a school have the feeling that they speak a common language, share common values, and belong together.

The astral body can be thought of as a body of air. The air is common to us all, uniting us as we inhale each other's air. Because the air carries our voices, it unites us through our common language. When a school community sings or speaks together, united in its breathing, we can imagine the being of the school breathing through and with them.

The astral body also provides the foundation for our soul life, expressing itself through the personality. This "school personality" may be the earthly expression of the nature of its archangelic being. We can experience something of this being when we share our school's vision and values, participate in its customs and traditions, experience our community through the common ground of the school's biography.

By working to perceive the character of the school, by finding the common language—both spoken and unspoken—that unites the school, by seeking ways to recognize and utilize each other's gifts for the common good, the members of the College can get to know the being of their school and invite it to participate in their work.

"The Waldorf School" transcends all the individual Waldorf schools. It is an archetype that expresses itself throughout all the places and times where Waldorf education is being realized. When we review *The Opening Address* and *The College Founding*, we sense that Rudolf Steiner was inaugurating "The Waldorf School," not just a Waldorf school in Stuttgart. We sense that the festive moment in the Cosmic Order celebrated the beginning of something greater than the establishment of a particular school. When we read and work with Rudolf Steiner's words and ideas from the preparatory course, we sense that what he presented to those original teachers was being presented to Waldorf teachers in all places and times to come. If "The Waldorf School" is an archetype that expresses itself through the individual Waldorf schools, then the "Being of The Waldorf School" is on a higher level than the

Archangels who are connected to the individual schools.

I think that the Being of The Waldorf School is The Good Spirit of the Time whom Rudolf Steiner thanked in *The College Founding* and referred to in *The College Imagination* as that spirit who bestows upon us the drop of light. Although he did not mention the Good Spirit by name, I think that Rudolf Steiner was referring to the Archangel Michael, who is serving in the ranks of the Archai during this age. Just as Archangels can manifest in different places at once, the Archai can manifest in different times at once. As the Spirit of the Time, Michael is able to manifest in all of the different Waldorf schools wherever and whenever they exist.

The Archangel Michael has a special connection to all who are involved in Waldorf education, because we were already members in the School of Michael before our birth. In 1922, in the last lecture of *The Younger Generation*, Rudolf Steiner spoke about Michael in connection with education.

Michael needs, as it were, a chariot by means of which to enter our civilization. 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 civilization. By educating in the right way we are preparing Michael's chariot for entrance into our civilization.<sup>14</sup>

A year later, during the last lecture of *Deeper Insights into Waldorf Education*, presented to the teachers of the Waldorf school, Rudolf Steiner again stressed the importance of uniting oneself with Michael. Afterwards he presented the second Teacher Meditation, which gives teachers the means by which to connect more deeply with the spiritual wellsprings of their work.<sup>15</sup>

The College in a Waldorf school has the sacred duty to get to know and to work with the Archangel Michael. Through him the College can receive the drop of light that enlightens their work. Through him they can unite themselves with his mission to create a more human future. Through him they can experience more fully the Spirit of the Waldorf School.

### The Spirit of the Waldorf School

The Being of the Waldorf School expresses and is the countenance of The Spirit of the Waldorf School. The Spirit of the Waldorf School expresses itself wherever two or more are gathered in their striving to realize the ideals of Waldorf education. Rudolf Steiner spoke explicitly about The Spirit of the Waldorf School in several of his assembly talks and festival addresses to students, teachers, and parents. At the Christmas assembly of the first school, Rudolf Steiner said to the children:

And do you know where your teachers get all the strength and ability they need so that they can teach you to grow up to be good and capable people? They get it from the Christ. ...<sup>16</sup>

At the assembly at the end of the first school year, he said:

There is still something I would like to say today. Alongside everything we have learned here, which the individual teachers have demonstrated so beautifully, there is something else present, something that I would like to call the spirit of the Waldorf School. It is meant to lead us to true piety again. Basically, it is the spirit of Christianity that wafts through all our rooms, that comes from every teacher and goes out to every child, even when it seems that something very far from religion is being taught, such as arithmetic, for example. Here it is always the spirit of Christ that

comes from the teacher and is to enter the hearts of the children—this spirit that is imbued with love, real human love.<sup>17</sup>

During the second school year, at the assembly of November 20, 1920, he said:

What your teachers say to you comes from incredibly hard work on their part, from the strength of their devotion and from their love for you. But what comes from their love must also be able to get to you, and that is why I always say the same thing to you: Love your teachers, because love will carry what comes from your teachers' hearts into your hearts and into your heads. Love is the best way for what teachers have to give to flow into their students. That is why I am going to ask you again today, "Do you love your teachers? Do you still love them?" [The children shout, "Yes!"]

A little later in this assembly, Rudolf Steiner said:

Thus the spirit of Christ is always with you. ... This spirit of Christ is also your teachers' great teacher. Through your teachers, the spirit of Christ works into your hearts.<sup>18</sup>

At the assembly marking the beginning of the sixth school year, Rudolf Steiner again mentioned the teachers' teacher:

Dear students of the highest grade of all—that is, dear teachers! In this new school year, let us begin teaching with courage and enthusiasm to prepare these children for the school of life. Thus may the school be guided by the greatest leader of all, by the Christ Himself. May this be the case in our school.<sup>19</sup>

When Rudolf Steiner visited the Waldorf School, he would ask the students, "Do you love your teachers?" and he would sometimes

ask them several times. By asking this question Rudolf Steiner was helping the students and the teachers to recognize that without the love that streams from teacher to student and from student to teacher, no education is possible. Rudolf Steiner did not explicitly ask the students of the highest grade of all—the teachers—if they loved their teacher, but that question is implicit in all that we do as Waldorf teachers and as human beings living at this time. The Christ is the Spirit of the Waldorf School. If we are truly to serve Waldorf education, we must find our way to the Christ and learn to love Him.<sup>20</sup>

## Conclusion

The College in a Waldorf school has a lofty task: to guide the school by finding a bridge and a balance between the earthly and the spiritual realms. It is composed of people who are committed to working together in recognition of their karma and their common spiritual striving. By working on their self-development and their relationships with one another, members of the College try to create the conditions for the reverse ritual. The College recognizes that it does not work alone. Its members strive to work with the being of their school and to connect to the Angels, Archangels, and Archai who help and guide them. They also seek a connection to Rudolf Steiner, to Michael, and to the Christ so that they can educate students in light of the spiritual and human needs of our time.

I hope that my thoughts in this essay will help those working in any Waldorf school to develop a deeper connection to the founding impulse of The Waldorf School. That impulse, as expressed through The Opening Address, *The*

*College Founding*, and the preparatory course, gives us ever-renewing strength, courage, and wisdom for our daily tasks.

In this essay I have continually referred to the spiritual realm, but I have deliberately refrained from being too explicit because I do not consider myself qualified to do so. The spiritual realm is perceptible to spiritual organs which must be developed individually and can be nurtured collectively. The spiritual realm expresses itself in at least as many ways as the material realm, and it would be a disservice to share my own view as if it were somehow applicable to others.

The spiritual work of the College must be a practical endeavor in the sense that it must be practiced, but every group of people needs to work together to figure out how they wish to do it. None of us is qualified to do spiritual work; we qualify ourselves by our striving, and we should not hold back because we consider ourselves unworthy.

In his poem “Birches,” Robert Frost describes a boy living far from town who climbs birch trees and swings himself back down to earth. When he feels that life is too much like a pathless wood, Frost says:

I'd like to get away from earth awhile  
And then come back to it and begin over.  
May no fate willfully misunderstand me  
And half grant what I wish and snatch  
me away  
Not to return. Earth's the right place for  
love:  
I don't know where it's likely to go better.

Earth is the right place for love. It is the only place for love. As Rudolf Steiner said, “...Human beings are born to have the possibility of doing what they cannot do in the spiritual world.”<sup>20</sup> In the spiritual world we do not have the freedom that allows us to experience or express love; we need to be human beings to do so. As spiritual beings we come to earth, take on physical bodies, and live in the material realm because it is the

20. Rudolf Steiner uses this term in a much broader way than it is typically intended in Christian church denominations. He speaks of the Christ as, among other things, the spiritual archetype of humanity's capacity for love. Readers should be aware that the author of this article is using the term in this sense

right place for love. It is the place where, as a College, we can work together in love for the good of humanity and of the earth.

### Endnotes

1. Rudolf Steiner, *Faculty Meetings with Rudolf Steiner* (Hudson, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1998), pp. 154–55.
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3. Rudolf Steiner, *Practical Advice to Teachers* (Great Barrington, MA: Anthroposophic Press, 2000), p. 189.
4. Rudolf Grosse, *The Christmas Foundation: Beginning of a New Cosmic Age* (Great Barrington, MA: SteinerBooks, 1984), p. 132.
5. Rudolf Steiner, *The Renewal of the Social Organism* (Hudson, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1985).
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9. *Ibid.*, p. 156.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 157.
11. Rudolf Steiner, *Foundations of Human Experience* (Hudson, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1996), p. 33.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
13. *Towards the Deepening of Waldorf Education: Excerpts from the Work of Rudolf Steiner* (Dornach: Pedagogical Section of the School of Spiritual Science, 1991), p. 59.
14. Rudolf Steiner, *The Younger Generation* (Spring Valley, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1976), p. 174.
15. Rudolf Steiner, *Deeper Insights into Waldorf Education* (Hudson, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1988), pp. 50–51.
16. Rudolf Steiner, *Rudolf Steiner in the Waldorf School* (Hudson, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1996), p. 59.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 62.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 207.
20. Rudolf Steiner, *Foundations of Human Experience*, p. 44.

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# “Spirit Is Never without Matter, Matter Never without Spirit”<sup>1</sup>

A Narrative Examination of a College of Teachers

*Liz Beaven*

**W**hat makes a school a Waldorf school? This apparently straightforward question evokes a range of responses that embraces both physical aspects of our schools and the less tangible forces that frame and shape our work. A College of Teachers is often identified as one core characteristic that makes a school “Waldorf.” Standing at the center of many of our schools, the College forms an essential part of the organizational structure, assuming a wide range of practical and less visible responsibilities and tasks. A College of Teachers is thereby continuously confronted with the challenge of balancing the spiritual and practical life of the school, a challenge that individual schools have met in a variety of ways. An examination of the function and role of a College can shed considerable light on the history and development of a school, its values, and the method by which it meets the challenges of mission, time, and place.

What follows is an attempt to focus attention in some depth on the College of Teachers of a particular school. This study grew out of discussions with colleagues from a number of schools as we all confronted organizational and governance challenges, and my resulting belief that it could be instructive to examine the inception and evolution of one College. Despite the influences of geography, biography, and personality on each school and the necessity for each one to develop its own unique form of organization and governance, Waldorf schools, like other institutions, display lawfulness and commonalities in their development. They pass through predictable phases as they move

**A College of Teachers is continuously confronted with the challenge of balancing the spiritual and practical life of the school.**

from fledgling impulse to mature, established schools. Therefore, although there is no standard model or template for the creation or development of a school’s governance and College, it is likely that most will encounter shared issues and challenges and therefore the lessons of one may help clarify process for another. It is hoped that readers of this study will find both helpful insights and cautionary tales in threads that are instantly recognizable to them, as well as aspects that are truly unique to the biography and destiny of one particular school. In this way, both commonalities and differences will allow schools to reflect on their own evolution and form.

The following description is centered on the College of Teachers at the Sacramento Waldorf School. The school has several features that make it a good candidate for such a study. It is a mature, established K–12 school—in its fifty-third year—and, aside from one night, has had a College of Teachers for forty-two of those years. The school re-founded its College over ten years ago as part of substantial changes in governance arising from a crisis brought on by growth and changing needs. The re-founding resulted in a much greater separation of the practical and spiritual aspects of College work than had previously been the case. The school has continued to refine and explore this separation as further questions have arisen, additional lessons have been learned, and needs have changed.

The story of this College of Teachers commences with a brief history of the school and the founding and development of its College. It describes the conditions and process

that led to the re-founding, experiences since re-founding, a summary of lessons learned and questions to be answered, and a look to the future. Content was drawn from unpublished memoirs, many years of College minutes, governance documents and reports, conversations with current and former College members, and my own involvement for almost twenty-one years with the school. Although I made every attempt to check statements and validate the picture as they emerged, the resulting description is inevitably subjective and incomplete, as it is viewed and reported through the lens of its author. As author, I have a personal attachment to this story: I have been a member of the school's College of Teachers since the late 1990s and was very actively involved in the process of re-founding. I have served as the school's administrator since 2001. My perspective of the College's story changed when I joined it in the late 1990s, and this change is captured in the article through a change of voice, from third person observer and reporter to first person participant.

### Beginnings: Foundations and Growth

The Sacramento Waldorf School was founded in 1959, opening on October 7 of that year as a two-child kindergarten. Early records and individual recollections suggest that there was not a great deal of anthroposophical knowledge among the founding parents and board members; rather, with the exception of one anthroposophist, the founding impulse and primary focus was to establish a viable alternative education for their children. Even for many of the early faculty members, anthroposophy appeared to be a new and rather unfamiliar path (as reported in unpublished memoirs and conversations).

The school initially grew quite rapidly, expanding "from two to forty-two in less than a year."<sup>2</sup> Hermann von Baravalle, a Waldorf teacher from Germany who was involved in the early years of several schools in the U.S., guided the school's pedagogy and teacher training

during its founding and early years but, although its guiding principles were imparted, the word *anthroposophy* was seldom mentioned. Within a short period of time, despite an early, encouraging pattern of growth, dissension emerged as to the orientation and purpose of the school and there were signs of division and distress. The fledgling school lost many students as a result of this tension and looked to be in danger of collapse. The Board, seeking to save the school, turned for advice to Stewart Easton, another leading figure in the early days of Waldorf education. (Easton had previously visited the school and was familiar with it.)

As a result of his interest, the school recruited and invited a group of five young teachers, each of whom had participated in various anthroposophical teacher training programs and were experienced Waldorf pedagogues, to move from the East Coast to Sacramento and take up work at the school. They in turn were seeking a setting in which they could deepen their anthroposophical studies and work more fully and directly from Steiner's indications. They agreed to the move on condition that the faculty would be granted full control over all pedagogical matters and that the Board would pay off a debt incurred by the installation of some prefabricated buildings. Both demands were agreed upon and these young teachers, known in the school's history as the "Kimberton Five," arrived in 1965, essentially to re-found the school. Several teachers who had left returned soon after this point and enrollment began to build once again. The "Kimberton Five" would be extremely influential in the direction and growth of the school and in determining its spiritual and philosophical orientation.

Francis Edmunds, the founder of Emerson College in England, visited the young school each year as part of a grand sweep of the seven mainland American Waldorf schools in existence at that time. Edmunds had taught two of the young teachers and, along with Easton, was a trusted mentor and

advisor. During one of his annual visits, he recommended the formation of a College of Teachers to further develop foundational anthroposophical work and thereby add vitality and depth to the school. Records suggest that this was still an unusual step for the young North American schools at that time, but in 1969 under his guidance and in his presence, the first College of Teachers was formed. Membership of this new group was open to any full-time member of the faculty who felt called to take up a new level of spiritual work as part of a circle of colleagues. The “Kimberton Five” and several others teachers stepped forward and began the tradition of College work on behalf of the school.<sup>3</sup>

The College of Teachers immediately became a core element of the school. From its inception, it was an integral part of the school’s leadership, linked to the Board of Trustees through representative membership.<sup>4</sup> Bylaws from that time indicate that the Chairman of the faculty (soon redefined as the Chairman of the College of Teachers) and two faculty members nominated by the new College would serve as Trustees—comprising almost one-third of the Board’s membership. During those early years the Board was busy supporting the physical needs of the growing school and was much occupied with site questions, building campaigns, and the management of inadequate budgets. True to the commitment made to the “Kimberton Five,” the College maintained oversight of all pedagogical matters and engaged in developing program and curriculum, eventually pursuing the path to the foundation of a high school fifteen years after the school had opened. A search for a permanent home, the establishment of a high school, the constant need for more space, efforts to balance budgets and build enrollment—familiar terrain for those of us who have been involved in the development

### The College of Teachers immediately became a core element of the school.

of Waldorf schools—fueled a great deal of common striving that united Board and College into the 1980s and inspired members to actively address critical questions and work side by side.

During these years of intense, often physical work and growth, the College continued to steer the pedagogical life of the school and to manage many of its practical business aspects. In those early years, support staff was limited; formal administrative support beyond basic clerical support was added in the early 1980s, and a more comprehensive administrative staff grew from that time forward, offering some relief to both College and Board. Despite this step, the scope of the College’s work remained considerable. Several individuals who were members from the 1980s into the early 1990s highlighted similar themes in their recollections. Members experienced the weight of their huge responsibility for the school. College work was, in the words of one member, “fraught with struggles” as they wrestled with challenging decisions about matters of personnel and the future direction of the school. Discussions ran to great length; meetings, held after school on Thursdays, generally lasted several hours. A core of members “steeped in anthroposophy” steered spirited debates of many, often diverse opinions and depth of philosophical thought. Throughout these years, the College felt the imprint of a number of forceful personalities and leaders with strongly held opinions and, at times, heated interactions. Recalling these times, one member stated: “You had the sense that karmic streams had brought us together and karmic struggles were being worked out.” Despite the obvious workload and responsibility, the College remained large and vibrant, and these years evoked warm memories in members who were active during that time. There was a sense of vital work being done, work that had direct impact on

the course of the growing school. College work was perceived to be essential to the life of the school.

### Crisis—and Opportunity

By the mid 1990s, over twenty-five years into the College's life, the mood had begun to shift and there were increasing signs of stress. Many of the founding leaders had by now left the school. The climate of strong personality was at times overwhelming; clashes led to wounded feelings and, on occasion, individuals walking out of meetings or even threatening to resign. Discord in the College mirrored general unease in the school. Demographics had begun to shift as a result of decisions to raise tuition at the end of the 1980s. Most of the founding families had by now graduated from the school. There was significant dissension regarding the future direction and identity of the school. This showed itself in actual splintering—in separate and competing parent organizations, in factions on the Board, and in the College (for a short period of time a small group met on weekends as an “alternative” College to discuss their opinions on the school's current condition and future course). Within the College, administrative duties and personnel issues were becoming a significant burden, requiring large amounts of time and consistently derailing the group's attempts to deepen its work. One member recalled that they would optimistically commence the year with a plan of study, only to have that plan sidelined some time in October by a looming crisis, often concerning an issue of personnel. As a result, the College seemed increasingly divorced from the faculty at large. The College Chair had become a lightning rod for a range of community concerns, and College members

were experiencing burnout. Increasingly, small groups of College members and non-College members gathered independently to discuss their concerns and to ponder solutions.

As a new millennium approached, it became increasingly apparent that the existing structure was no longer serving the school and that significant changes were needed. The College of Teachers had shrunk to a very small size; the handful of members who remained felt beleaguered, yet stayed on out of a sense of duty to the school and a desire to maintain the etheric space of the College, doing their best to keep alive a flame that had by now dwindled to a small flicker. The “them versus us” dynamic, powerful throughout the mid to late 1990s, had somewhat diminished; yet its replacement was hardly encouraging. To many members of the faculty, the small College simply appeared to be irrelevant to their concerns and work. A particularly bitter personnel issue divided the community, sapped strength, eroded parent trust, stretched relationships with the Board, and generally left people exhausted. Searching for next steps, the school did what many schools do in such circumstances: called for help in the form of an outside consultant to clarify the situation and suggest a new direction.

Torin Finser, at that time head of the Waldorf teacher education program at Antioch University New England, was asked by the school to assess its governance and recommend changes. His first visit in June 2000 was preceded by a considerable amount of preparatory work by members of the College, faculty, and Board. His initial report described an unhappy situation of fractured leadership, “them versus us” dynamics, overlapping and inefficient responsibilities, cumbersome decision-making, and a high level of general

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frustration. Individuals acknowledged doing things “outside the system”; action often arose from personalities rather than policies. Additionally, he found concerns about inadequate teacher evaluation, a lack of consistent professional development, and an unclear and inadequate administrative structure. In this climate, leadership could not flourish; potential leaders were elevated, only to be chopped down. The school lacked a strong sense of a whole, focusing instead on meeting the day-to-day needs of separate sections of the school rather than building a collective future.

One of the gifts a consultant offers is the ability to reflect what an institution may have already intuited or known, but in a form and with an objectivity that allow the message to be heard, understood, and accepted. This was our experience: There was little in this initial assessment that was truly surprising or unknown, yet there was much that had either never been stated or had been spoken outside of meetings or in private conversations. Reassuringly, the report also noted that, despite the many serious concerns, there was much in the life of the school that appeared vibrant, healthy, and successful—especially as regards work with the children and the curriculum. The crisis of leadership and governance had not yet filtered into the primary work of the school, but without intervention, this would probably have been only a matter of time. Through each finding and recommendation sounded the theme that the school’s governance and leadership structure had run its course and was no longer be capable of meeting the needs of the school as it entered the twenty-first century. This conclusion was now inescapable, laid out starkly in black and white. A different type of action was required of us.

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objective party. Torin agreed to continue working with us but emphasized that any process of restructuring should be “highly participatory” and collaborative in the early stages to restore confidence in leadership and process. Several months of work by all faculty members, guided by Torin and in full consultation with the Board, led to a number of decisions, including a renewed commitment to the principle of a College of Teachers as an essential core of the school. In order to support this commitment, we recognized that a revitalized College would need structural and practical support. This support was initially focused in three major areas:

- Issues of personnel were identified as a major obstacle to the College’s primary work and a factor that had led to alienation and division; therefore we would form an Executive Committee mandated to handle these matters.
- These issues often arose because of a lack of timely or effective evaluations and from inadequate professional development or training; we would form a Teacher Development Committee to meet these needs, providing early intervention and thereby reducing the possibility of crisis.
- A stronger and more empowered administrator would be needed to provide essential support to the College and to these two new committees; the role of administrator was redefined, a new job description crafted, and a search begun.

### Re-founding

By June of 2001, we had thoroughly worked through this new structure in the full faculty circle and in smaller groups including Board members, College members, and faculty representatives. Through this process, the proposed structure had gained support and

consensus. Preliminary mandate statements for the committees and for the College itself were crafted and agreed upon. These mandates spelled out the membership of each group, major tasks, and meeting structures. There was general acknowledgement that further refinement would be required once the groups were up and running. I was appointed as new administrator and began work that month with a revised and expanded job description. Even with these changes, we agreed that, if the renewed vision of the College of Teachers were to be realized, a radical step would be required to change the habits, patterns, history, and expectations associated with it. After consultation with the full faculty, with several former teachers and College members, and with current and past members of the Board, the existing College members decided, with some trepidation, that the College of Teachers as it had existed for over thirty years should disband and that a new College should be founded in its place.

Once we had made and agreed to this decision, a small group took on planning for the transition from one College to another. We continued this work over the summer months and addressed many questions, including how to:

- provide a clear, evident separation from old forms to new ones
- best honor and provide continuity in our relationship with the Being of the school
- go about building confidence in the faculty and school community that this was, in fact, a new endeavor, not simply a continuation of business as usual

Given that concern, should the new body even be called a College of Teachers? Was there another, more appropriate name that would clearly signal a fresh start?

A number of decisions resulted from this questioning. We would indeed continue with the title “College of Teachers;” to us, this

signified an alignment with the principle of pedagogical leadership, a reaffirmation of the commitment made back in 1965 that the faculty would be charged with responsibility for pedagogical and spiritual matters, and an endorsement of the years of dedicated collegial work that formed so much of the history of the school. We determined that we would respectfully and formally close the old College and allow a short pause before re-founding. Ultimately this pause would prove to be for only one night: we all sensed that we were at a vulnerable point in the school’s biography and we wanted the Hierarchies to see concrete evidence that we were sincere in our striving and intent and that we wished to rekindle a stronger relationship with the Being of our School.

We informed former College members, the leaders of AWSNA, and members of the Pedagogical Section Council of the school’s decision. We were very conscious of the rich history of the College and of the colleagues who had carried its work on behalf of the school. In late August, a week before the school year was to start, the few remaining active members of the “old” College gathered in the school’s garden just before sunset and proceeded to the bluffs overlooking the American River. There, we each voiced gratitude for the extraordinary contributions of all College members who had preceded us and for the source and foundation of our work, Rudolf Steiner. We voiced our hopes for the new group and for the future of the school. We read a verse and planted rosemary as a symbol of remembrance, then quietly dispersed, but that night it was hard to sleep. There was a sense of keeping vigil and an anxiety and vulnerability as we waited for the next day and the re-establishment of this core body.

The next morning, the entire faculty and staff gathered, along with invited guests including former faculty members, a representative of the Pedagogical Section Council, and representatives of AWSNA.

Together, we entered a space that had been prepared for a simple ceremony and formed one large circle. There was an air of expectancy and subdued excitement; this was a new venture and no one quite knew how it would unfold. After a reading of Rudolf Steiner's words to the faculty of the founding school and recitation of a verse, those faculty and staff who had reflected on the mandate and membership of the new College and felt drawn to serve as members of this new group stepped forward and signaled their intent by lighting a small taper from a central candle. A small circle of light slowly formed, held by the surrounding larger circle of colleagues and guests. It was a thrilling experience to step forward, to witness the membership of the group forming, and to feel the support of the larger circle of colleagues. We concluded with a song of celebration. A new College was born!

### Becoming Established

The first meeting of the re-founded College was held just over a week later on Wednesday evening, September 5, 2001, when members gathered to read the College Imagination and begin our work. We had made a number of practical decisions to support this new group and to shift the habit life around the College. We shifted the meeting time to Wednesday evenings rather than the traditional time of after school on Thursdays. Initially, we made sure to keep Wednesday evenings free of any other meetings or school events. The resulting stillness of the campus lent a mood of focus and quiet concentration. The evening schedule made for a long day (we hold meetings of the full faculty after school on Wednesdays), but members agreed that its benefits outweighed the disadvantages. During the first months, colleagues who had not joined the College provided dinner before meetings as a wonderful gesture of support.

### We debated decision-making and agreed to adopt a consensus model within the College

Initially, we focused on developing a better understanding of our mandate. Without the imperatives of business and administration, what would "responsible for the pedagogical and spiritual health of the school" through pedagogical and spiritual study actually look like? At first our work focused on establishing a structure for meetings and infrastructure for the school, with oversight of the formation of the two key support committees. We debated decision-making and agreed to adopt a consensus model within the College. We explored meeting format, selected a facilitator and agenda-setter, and created a third position, a "navigator," whose task was to witness the work of the College and to warn us when, as we agreed was likely, it was veering back into old territory

of personnel issues and school management. We decided that the new group would not have an individual leader; the position of College Chair was no more. We made this decision because the position had become highly charged and vulnerable to community frustration or upset. It was no longer a position that anyone would step into willingly. In its place, we attempted collaborative leadership by appointing agenda-setter, facilitator, and navigator. The greatest challenge to this model proved to be the practical task of finding a time during the week for the group to meet and plan. Many tasks that previously lived with the College Chair fell to me as administrator; this transition was facilitated by the fact that I was a College member and former class teacher. We appointed College members to key committees to help strengthen relationships and ensure direct communication.

As we found our way in those early months, we focused on artistic explorations of the Opening and Closing Verses and the College Imagination, which were variously expressed through sketching, modeling, movement,

eurythmy, and writing. We attempted to employ the principles of Goethean conversation in our treatment of a range of topics that, over the course of the first year, included exploration of a nursery program, study of the developmental stages of adolescence and the high school curriculum, questions of stewardship of our campus, and—perhaps inevitably for a College that came to form on the eve of the events of 9/11—robust discussions about nationalism, globalism, the place of a flag on campus, and the nature of our times. These discussions led to us selecting Rudolf Steiner’s *Manifestations of Karma* as our first formal study.

“There is a longing for a kind of renewal in the administrative life that would parallel the renewal experienced by those members of the faculty who chose to reform the College of Teachers.”

### Evolution and Change

Creating new structures and forms did not automatically result in new behaviors. Institutional habit life is strong and runs deep, and it took some time to refine and communicate the new format and new expectations. Recognizing that the school was still in transition, we continued our work towards a renewal of governance through an administrative audit, conducted in 2002 by John Bloom and the Rudolf Steiner Foundation. The audit report summarized conditions at that time, a year after the re-founding of the College: “There is a longing for a kind of renewal in the administrative life that would parallel the renewal experienced by those members of the faculty who chose to reform the College of Teachers.” It went on to note the success of the re-founding: “There is an important model in this renewal in that an old ‘ineffectual’ form had to pass away to allow a new form to emerge. ... The theme of renewal or rediscovery of purpose in the College of Teachers, and the positive effect it has had upon the pedagogical life of the school, surfaced in several conversations.”<sup>5</sup> Through

the audit we began a process of clarifying and strengthening the administration, under its new leadership, to better support the work of the school.

The College continued to clarify its function and form. Evening meetings proved to be a deterrent to some prospective members, precluding their participation. It did allow those involved in the athletic program to participate (there were no practices or games on Wednesdays), but during the first few years, only one colleague took advantage of this possibility. Over time, the sanctity of Wednesday evenings as College-only nights was eroded by the busy life of a K–12 school with competing calendar needs and constant

demands for space and time. As a result, the quiet mood on campus dissipated and, at times, College attendance was compromised as members juggled competing demands.

Initially, members made one-year commitments to the group. Unlike the old model, in which there would be a conversation and invitation, colleagues were free to consider the conditions of membership and to decide whether to join. Without the filter of an invitation or conversation process, two founding members quickly discovered that the experience was not what they had expected and resigned rather unhappily from the group. Neither of them had prior College experience and both appeared to be overwhelmed or disappointed by the reality of the new mandate. Otherwise, resignations of College members have, in fact, been rare in the ten years since re-founding.

The formation of mandated committees afforded the College the freedom to take up its work of active research and study. However, it took some years to refine and clarify the roles of these committees; in fact,

this remains an ongoing process as the school evolves. In the early years there was a lot of sorting out of what belonged where. The College retained oversight of faculty hiring and student acceptances. It continued to give input into the budget process as it affected program and personnel. Communication proved to be the greatest challenge to all parties as we attempted to find a balance between ensuring the College was sufficiently informed to be able to make decisions while avoiding replicating the work of mandated groups. Personnel matters continued to present the most complex challenges: what to do when the Steering Committee was confronted with concerns about a member of the College and how to inform the College in a timely and appropriate way of a sensitive personnel issue without re-creating the work and triggering the very concerns about privacy and confidentiality that had in part motivated delegation in the first place.

The building and maintaining of trust was also an ongoing challenge; trust between the new Steering Committee and the College, between the College and the faculty, and between the Steering Committee and the faculty at large. Relationships tended to become strained whenever the Steering Committee was addressing performance issues with a colleague, and the always-difficult decision to let a colleague go inevitably caused ripples and upset and raised questions about the process, fairness, and work of the Committee. The old “them versus us” dynamic was easily awakened, provoked by the imperative for confidentiality around personnel issues that quickly gave rise to concerns of secrecy,

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exclusivity, or undue power. These concerns were mitigated to some extent by the nature of Committee membership: three positions were linked to roles (Administrator, High School Coordinator, and Lower School Coordinator) and two positions were revolving (representative of the College of Teachers and pedagogical representative of the faculty at large). As a result, over a number of years

several teachers have shared the weight and responsibility of the Committee’s work, thereby helping to build trust and support and to mitigate old patterns of mistrust and divisiveness.

It took a long time to shift community perceptions and expectations; there were many years of habit around what the College was supposed to do and what it was responsible for. The Board and community continued to direct questions to the College that more properly belonged to the Steering Committee and, at least during the first years, they continued to hanker after a College Chair. As a result, they would feel

frustration and anxiety that things were falling through the cracks—as, from time to time, they inevitably did.

### Current Form

Our College model has shifted and evolved in the ten-plus years since its re-founding, and it will no doubt continue to need refinement in response to the ever-changing life and needs of the school. Its present iteration can be summarized quite briefly. The College of Teachers continues to be regarded as an essential organ of the school, with overarching responsibility for its spiritual and pedagogical health—a phrase that is relatively easy to utter, but complicated to enact. The College

meets every week but takes a break during the summer months; this year we changed our meeting time from Wednesday evening back to the more traditional Thursday afternoon to open up the possibility for new membership. It is currently thirteen members strong; smaller than the lively Colleges of the 1980s and 90s, much larger than the College of the late 1990s, and the largest it has been for several years of its re-founded life. These thirteen members represent less than thirty percent of the potential pool of eligible faculty and staff. All sections of the school—Kindergarten, Lower School, High School—as well as Administration are represented in the current group. Oddly, the current membership of thirteen has eleven women and two men: the exact opposite configuration of our current Board. It has not traditionally been so gender unbalanced.

We hold an annual re-dedication ceremony prior to which the mandate and membership conditions are reviewed within the College and with the wider faculty circle. During the re-dedication ceremony, colleagues are invited to step onto or off the College. For the first few years we held this ceremony in the spring; more recently, we have conducted a review in June and held our re-dedication in late August as part of our back-to-school work. The ceremony is very similar in form to the one that marked the re-founding. This year, we asked members for a two-year commitment to help build greater continuity; previously we had set a minimum of one year. Although we have conditions for membership, the decision to join remains a free, individual deed. College members may encourage colleagues to join but there is no formal invitation issued. It is not considered to be part of a member's teaching or administrative load. Occasionally this process does not work, but most members remain as active College participants for several years. Two current members have been on the College continuously since we re-founded it; both were members of the "old" College (I am one of those individuals). One colleague recently rejoined the

College; she had previously served in the mid 1990s.

Membership is open to any member of the faculty or staff who has worked at the school for at least one year (now revised to two) and feels sufficiently familiar with the school. The considerations for membership have remained largely unchanged since the re-founding. They include:

- What is my relationship to anthroposophy? Anthroposophy provides the guiding star for College work.
- How will a commitment to the College affect my current work in the school?
- Is my family or personal life supportive of this additional commitment?
- Am I building and maintaining healthy relationships with my colleagues? Am I in good standing in my professional life?
- Am I committed to the school for the foreseeable future; am I able to make a commitment for a period of one year (or more) with regular attendance and any necessary preparation?

The College has been fairly successful in holding to its commitment to study and research, and work has deepened over time. We strive to connect the themes of our study to phenomena of the school. For example, last year our study was focused on the Eightfold Path, with texts drawn from Rudolf Steiner, Georg Kühlewind, and the Buddha. We attempted to apply our insights to different aspects of the life of the school and to bring the fruits of our study to full faculty meetings. This year we have returned to basics: taking up study of Steiner's *How to Know Higher Worlds*, striving to build dialogue around our individual inner work, and refining our capacities for observation and sensing of the school. We have become more disciplined about identifying work that is not ours and sending it where it belongs, especially in any crisis or emergency situation. As administrator, and the only

person in the school required to serve on the College, I attempt to provide considerable support through agenda and calendar setting, provision of data, and the implementation of policies and decisions.

To begin, we scheduled meetings to last two hours; more recently we have shortened them to ninety minutes. A typical agenda begins with the College Imagination and Opening Verse, followed by a period of approximately thirty minutes for discussion and reflection on our current “spiritual” study (such as the Eightfold Path or *How to Know Higher Worlds*). We then usually turn our attention for approximately thirty or forty minutes to our current pedagogical study (currently an examination of what is essential in a Waldorf school), leaving a brief time at the end for reports and announcements. We attempt to link our “spiritual” and “pedagogical” studies. Meetings conclude with the Closing Verse. Occasionally we require additional time, but this is rare.

The Teacher Development Committee originally had responsibility for both faculty development and evaluation. We recognized that these tasks could potentially stand in conflict, so evaluation was moved to the Steering Committee (originally named the Executive Committee, but renamed after several years to avoid confusion with the Board Executive Committee). Membership of the Teacher Development Committee includes a representative from the Kindergarten, the Lower School, the High School, and the College of Teachers. Initially, the full faculty nominated these representatives, but we soon realized that ownership and appointment by each separate section strengthened communication and support for the work. The Teacher Development Committee currently oversees mentoring, the creation of individual

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professional development plans and goals, and the planning and execution of in-service days. Several years ago, recognizing that faculty expectations and needs were changing and that different types of agreements were called for, we instituted minimum requirements for

professional development hours. The Teacher Development Committee monitors completion of those hours, providing suggestions and support as needed.

The Steering Committee oversees faculty hiring and evaluation. It addresses school needs, performance issues, and a wide range of

other concerns. Its mandate specifies that it handles crises and “issues that are not taken care of by any other group”—a category that can be a catch-all for a wide range of topics. The work of the Steering Committee can be weighty and challenging at times, but we have found advantages to having a small, more specialized group addressing these aspects of our work. This frees up the larger circle, and skills can be honed and essential knowledge built. Confidentiality is less challenging with the smaller group. Because of these factors, when the group is working harmoniously it can be tempting to fix membership into place and extend the terms of the College and faculty representatives rather than providing for the rotation of membership. The model requires trust and communication—not always easy to achieve or maintain, but meriting ongoing awareness and effort. A strong administration is needed to support this model; the administrator role as currently defined almost certainly requires someone with a teaching background and considerable knowledge of Waldorf pedagogy.

We have continued to differentiate and delegate. Our high school has over 150 students, and several years ago we recognized the fundamentally different, more complex

nature of a high school's organization and the need for greater autonomy and nimbleness in its operation. This led to the formation of a High School Coordinating Committee, overseen by the Steering Committee and mandated to have significant independence in administering the high school. The High School Coordinating Committee, chaired by the High School Coordinator, is comprised of department heads and the athletic director. This has resulted in a much more harmonious and efficient high school, yet has recently led us to examine what it means to have and to maintain a K–12 program and how to protect and further develop this important aspect of our school's identity.

There has been gradual and ongoing redefinition of the scope of College's responsibilities. We slowly learned that mandating really did mean clarifying, handing over, letting go, and trusting. That was not an easy lesson for a group of teachers accustomed to being in command. Although the College retains ultimate responsibility for the direction of the school, on many issues such as student acceptances, and even in some instances the hiring of colleagues, it is consulted and informed but does not engage directly in the work. Currently, very few decisions take place within the College. We have much greater separation between the "spirit" and the "real practical life" than in former times. The ongoing challenge is to maintain connection and communication, to truly remember that "Spirit is never without matter, matter never without Spirit"<sup>6</sup> and to practice accordingly. In a Waldorf school, although business must be conducted in a business-like manner, if we are to achieve success it can never be disconnected from the impulse that stands behind our work or from relationship to the school's Being and mission. This statement is a given in the pedagogical aspects of our work but is more easily forgotten or neglected when we turn to business and management.

### Current and Future Challenges and Opportunities

Communication remains perhaps our greatest ongoing challenge. The primary work of the College is not easy to report on; it is experiential, at times intensely personal, and often there is no "product" to present. Concerns about confidentiality have also had an impact and were one of our original reasons for removing personnel issues from consideration by the full College. We live in an age of requirements for compliance, increasingly complex regulations, and the potential of significant institutional consequences for ignorance or impropriety. As noted earlier, relationships have been most strained when the Steering Committee has confronted serious concerns about a colleague's performance. In a horizontal, consensus-based structure, it is asking a great deal to empower a small group to deal with questions of a colleague's future—and to be unable to communicate in detail about it. We have struggled with appropriate formats for reporting to the faculty, the Board, and the community, yet we know that without clear and regular reporting, trust can quickly erode.

On a positive note, it is interesting that we have weathered the past few years of recession and resulting economic and enrollment pressures with remarkably high morale; one might dare to hope that this is to some extent the result of the somewhat invisible work of the College. We see much less strain among College members and less illness, compared to those troubled days of the late 1990s. A single teacher no longer bears the weight of College Chair duties. Although much of this work now resides with me as administrator, it is compatible with my other responsibilities and duties, and I have found that my membership on the College has continued to provide a source of strength, learning, and centering.

College meetings lack the drama of former times. A College member with long experience of meetings noted that the mood

is generally much more harmonious—and much less intense. She felt that this is in part a reflection of the redefined work of the College; with many potentially contentious issues and decisions removed, the possibility of conflict has been significantly reduced. Comparing present to former times, she also noted that there seems to be less struggling of several, at times competing, leaders. The mood is more horizontal and less charged.

At various times, including the current year, we have opened portions of College meetings to any member of the faculty and staff who wishes to attend. Few have taken advantage of this invitation; it can be difficult to step in and out of an ongoing group, yet the gesture of inclusion is important. It remains a challenge to maintain a climate of “us” and avoid fragmentation into parts. This is a school with a long history of division into kindergarten, lower school, and high school faculties. The three groups come together only once each month for a shared meeting. “Them and us” dynamics and competing needs surface easily—between sections of the faculty, College and faculty, and Steering Committee and faculty or College. Knowing that this is a repeating motif in the school’s biography, we need to constantly strive to build in shared work, transparency, and regular reporting. It is very easy to forget this in the busy-ness of a school year. Our K–12 identity is a shared value, one that affords many opportunities, and we are currently looking at ways of strengthening cross-school ties and collaboration within the faculty and with other bodies within the school.

The tendency towards “them and us” is but one of a number of our recurring challenges. In any institution, it is important to note the conditions of birth and early years and the themes that resound throughout the years. Anthroposophy was not strongly articulated

in the founding impulse of this school. It was brought to the forefront by the “Kimberton Five” and soon found its home in the College of Teachers. It has been the source of College work ever since. It is interesting to note that the Five had two conditions: They would be granted authority over all pedagogical matters and the Board would relieve the school of a burden of debt. This can easily be interpreted as an early separation of spirit (the realm of the College) and matter (the realm of the Board).

Recently, the College has begun to re-examine the wisdom of this separation and its role in the wider governance of the school. It is likely that this will be a focus of significant work for the next phase of the school’s development. Joint College-Board work has been intermittent since the collaboration that led to College re-founding and administrative restructuring and the completion of a major building project in 2007. Both groups have increasingly relied on the administrator as a primary point of contact, intersection, and—at times—interpretation, rather than engaging in the challenge of more direct contact.

Without the intensity of a major joint project, distance between the Board and College has become evident. In 2008, after examining the effectiveness and intent of College/faculty representation on the Board, the College decided to reduce its presence on the Board from three to two members, and to no longer have a College representative serve as Vice-President of the Board. Since then the College has manifested a degree of indifference towards the Board. Without regular, direct communication, it can become easy for “spirit” to disregard the importance of “matter” and for “matter” to disregard the significance of “spirit.”

The effects of distance are showing, and as we set the school’s course for the next

**A College member with long experience noted that the mood is much more harmonious—and much less intense.**

five to ten years—a recurring task that is necessary in order to navigate safely and with integrity through a new terrain of a changed economy and a new generation of parents and teachers—several old, familiar questions are back before us. What does it mean in practice to have responsibility for the spiritual and pedagogical life of the school? What is the role of anthroposophy in the life of this school? How can the College effectively and helpfully share its work with the Board? How is anthroposophy to be represented at the Board table? How can both groups work collaboratively to shape a shared vision for the school that will protect and nurture the very essence of our work? How can we balance essential business matters, the need for economy, efficiency, and legality of operations with the intangible yet essential aspects of our work? What happens if these two vital aspects of the school—spirit and matter—become disconnected? Important work to address these questions is underway with dialogue currently taking place between the College Steering Committee and the Board Executive Committee.

The Sacramento Waldorf School stands on the banks of a large river; change and motion are recurring themes of its biography. The model of a College described above, with significant separation of spirit and practical, has carried us forward for over ten years. The model continues to change and self-correct in response to the evolving needs of the school. Although it calls for significant separation of spirit and practical, the two remain continuously linked within the pedagogical life of the school by common principles, language, and understanding and by a structure that ensures shared membership of groups to maintain communication and trust. As we enter a new phase of examining relationships among College, Board, and administration, we are likely to need further refinement of our model and to be open to change. Through this work it will be the responsibility of the College “to say to [y]ourselves: We will do everything

material in the light of the Spirit and we will seek the light of the Spirit in such a way that it ignites in us a warmth for our practical deeds”<sup>77</sup> Both are essential for the future health of our school, and we need to find new ways of allowing these poles to infuse one another. Through this new phase of our work, it is likely that a commitment to the central importance of a College of Teachers, and its role in guarding and guiding the mission of the school, will remain as a vital core and source of strength for the school.

### Endnotes

1. Rudolf Steiner, *Supersensible Knowledge and Social-Pedagogical Life-Force* (Stuttgart, 1919).
2. *Education as an Art*, The Rudolf Steiner School Association, Vol. 21, 1961, p. 14.
3. Historical records and personal correspondence courtesy of Betty Staley.
4. Sacramento Waldorf Schools Bylaws, 1970.
5. Sacramento Waldorf School Administration Audit Report, Rudolf Steiner Foundation, June, 2002.
6. Op. cit., Steiner.
7. Ibid.

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# The Artistic Meeting: Creating Space for Spirit

*Holly Koteen-Soulé*

When Rudolf Steiner brought together the individuals who would become the teachers of the first Waldorf school, he asked them to work in a new way, not only with the children, but also with one another. He asked them to work together in such a way as to invite the interest and guidance of spiritual beings into their endeavor.

The challenge of creating and maintaining a connection with the spiritual world, as difficult as it was then, may be even more intense in the present time. Materialism has grown considerably stronger in the 21st century, and with it has come an increasing need to bring a balancing, healing, and renewing element to daily life.

The Waldorf classroom is a place where this renewing spiritual element can be found. It arises from the children themselves and from how we work with them. It can also be found in the meeting life of the school, in how the teachers and other adults work together. There are many resources available today on conducting effective meetings in the workplace. This article will focus on how we can create a space for spirit in meetings and how this endeavor can support us in our individual development, in our encounters with colleagues, and in strengthening our groups and communities.

Meetings as an artistic activity will be a second focus. Understanding meetings as an art form and using an artistic approach when planning and carrying out a meeting can allow participants to be refreshed and inspired at the meeting's conclusion. While including an artistic activity in the agenda can be helpful, it is more critical that the meeting itself be artistic and display the wholeness, drama, and dynamics of any other artistic creation.

Artistic activity can often be a doorway to the recognition of spiritual archetypes and the building of spiritual understanding. A meeting that is conducted as a form of art greatly enhances this possibility for the participants.

## MEETINGS AS SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

### Waking up in the Other

Near the end of his life, after the burning of the first Goetheanum and during a period of upheaval within the Anthroposophical Society, Rudolf Steiner began to speak urgently about the need to build communities based on a shared spiritual purpose that extends beyond our cultural or hereditary ties. He described physical waking as a response to the stimuli of the natural world in our surroundings. Our waking up at a higher level happens when we encounter the soul-spirit of other human beings. He went so far as to say:

We are also unable to understand the spiritual world, no matter how many beautiful ideas we may have garnered from anthroposophy or how much we may have grasped theoretically about such matters as etheric and astral bodies. We begin to develop an understanding for the spiritual world only when we wake up in the encounter with the soul-spiritual in our fellow men.<sup>1</sup>

On other occasions, Steiner also spoke about a need in our age (the 5th Post-Atlantean epoch) that can be fulfilled only in groups. He referred specifically to the spirit of brother/sisterhood hovering above us in the realm of the higher hierarchies, which needs to be consciously cultivated so that

it can flow into human souls in the future. These statements constitute a strong call for us to create opportunities for more, rather than fewer, encounters with our colleagues, despite the inevitable challenges with which we are all familiar.

### The Reverse Ritual

In considering meetings as spiritual practice, it may be helpful to recall our understanding from anthroposophy that at a certain point in the course of the evolution of the cosmos and humanity, the higher creative beings drew back from the sphere of the earth. This withdrawal was necessary in order for human beings to develop in freedom. As a result, the physical earth is in the process of dying. The human being, having been given freedom and the possibility of spiritual consciousness, has become an increasingly decisive factor in the future of the earth.

One of our tasks is to help re-enliven the earth. We do that with the substance of our human thinking—not our ordinary thoughts and reflections, but spiritual thoughts arising from creative Imaginations, Inspirations, and Intuitions. These creative thoughts represented for Steiner a new spiritual form of communion for humanity. He gave many indications about how both individuals and groups could work with creative, enlivening thoughts for their own benefit and for the benefit of humanity as a whole.

It was Steiner's deep conviction that the appropriate form for community-building in our time is what he called the reverse ritual. He distinguished this ritual from a traditional religious ritual, in which a mediator is charged with drawing the spiritual hierarchies down to a particular place. "The anthroposophical

community seeks to lift up the human souls into supersensible worlds so that they may enter into the company of angels."

We must do more than talk about spiritual beings; we must look for opportunities nearest at hand to enter their company. The work of an anthroposophical group does not consist in a number of people merely

discussing anthroposophical ideas. Its members should feel so linked with one another that human soul wakes up in the encounter with human soul and all are lifted up into the spiritual world, into the company of spiritual beings, though it need not be a question of beholding them. We do not have to see them to have this experience.<sup>2</sup>

The "College Imagination" (also known as the "Teachers Imagination") that Steiner gave to the first group of teachers is an example of such a reverse ritual, in which a group working with a common meditative picture creates

the possibility of connecting with specific spiritual beings and bringing back creative impulses for their earthly work.<sup>3</sup>

If Waldorf teachers wish to work with these ideas and with the example of the "Teachers Imagination," how can we form and conduct faculty and college meetings in this light? How can our meeting life be spiritually sustaining for individuals and build a vital sense of community in our schools?

### Space for Spirit

We 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

Understanding meetings as an art form can allow participants to be refreshed and inspired.

How can our meeting life be spiritually sustaining for individuals and build a vital sense of community in our schools?

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 communications.

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 turns 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 their everyday consciousness into a heightened

sense of presence. An explicit acknowledgment 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 requires 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

**Establishing the sense of group requires an affirmation of the group's purpose or task.**

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 he or she speaks. Marjorie Spock wrote most poetically about the effects of perceptive listening:

First, there is what it does to the soul of the listener. A miracle of self-overcoming takes place within him whenever he really lends an ear to others. If he is to understand the person speaking, he must draw his attention from his own concerns and make a present of it to a listener; he clears his inner scene like one who for a time gives up his home for others' use while himself remaining only in the role of servant. Listeners quite literally entertain a speaker's thought. “Not I, but the Christ in me” is made real in every such act of genuine listening.

Second, there is what happens to the speaker when he is fortunate to be listened to perceptively. Another kind of miracle takes place in him, perhaps best described as a springtime burgeoning. Before his idea was expressed to a listener, it lived in his soul as potential only; it resembles a seed force lying fallow in the winter earth. To be listened to with real interest acts upon this seed like sun and warmth and rain and other cosmic elements that provide growth-impetus; the soul ground in which the idea is embedded comes magically alive. Under such benign influence, thoughts grow full cycle and fulfill their promise.

Moreover they confer fertility upon the ground through the simple fact of having lived there. Further ideas will be the more readily received into such a soil and spring more vigorously for its life-attunement. And the soul that harbors them begins to be the creative force in evolution for which it was intended by the gods.<sup>4</sup>

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 and 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. 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 build trust in 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 recognized 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

review for those taking responsibility for 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 carry one or another aspect of the meeting facilitation make 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 the work of the classroom we need to prepare carefully and 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 Humor 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 impulsiveness) 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 reflect 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 characterizations, 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 is 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

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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 that our meetings are a kind of ritual, then preparation and 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 into the spiritual world ideas that have arisen in the group, 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.

## MEETINGS AS ART

### The Artistic Process

The arts, according to Rudolf Steiner, were experienced in earlier civilizations as more integral to life than is the case today. Artistic

creativity, he said, was experienced as a transcendent spiritual activity, flowing out of the “spirit-attuned state” in which the human being lived in those times. Only since the rise of materialism has the status of art changed from necessity to luxury.<sup>5</sup>

Rudolf Steiner also observed that in our era a longing for the arts comes out of the recognition of the limits of abstract thinking. Ideas alone are not able to illuminate the world

in its full richness; they can only point the way to a deeper reality. Artistic feeling, Steiner said, arises when we sense the presence of something mysterious, such as certain secrets of nature, which can only be revealed through our feeling. Knowing is a matter

for the heart as well as the head. To discover a whole, living reality, we need to create, to practice art. He saw the fructification of the arts in our time as an important task for anthroposophy, and he took up various artistic projects himself during the latter part of his life.<sup>6</sup>

The present-day artist engaged in the creative process moves back and forth between sense perceptions and intuitive visions—awake, but in a somewhat dreamlike feeling state. Steiner described the subtle changes that occur in a person engaged in aesthetic activity (regardless of whether the person is creating or enjoying an artistic creation) such that the sense organs are re-enlivened and the bodily life processes are lifted to soul-like processes.<sup>7</sup>

In artistic activity we use our heightened sense of feeling rather than our everyday sympathies and antipathies. The artist, consciously or unconsciously, approaches the threshold between the sensible and supersensible worlds and brings something back from the supersensible world into the world of the senses. The resulting creation is a specifically experienced reality lifted into a universal expression.

As Waldorf teachers we understand the importance of the arts and our own creativity in the work with our students. Can we also imagine applying a consciously artistic approach and a heightened sense of feeling to our work with our colleagues in our meetings?

### Social Art

In the series of lectures *Art in the Light of Mystery Wisdom*,<sup>8</sup> Steiner connected each of the arts with the various members of the human being. The laws of the physical body, he said, are expressed in architecture, the etheric in sculpture, the astral in painting, and the ego in music. The still developing Spirit Self he connected to poetry and the Life Spirit to eurythmy. The highest art, according to Steiner, is social art.

The first three arts—architecture, sculpture, and painting (including drawing)—are the spatial arts. These are derived out of formative processes and past evolutionary cycles. They are connected to sculptural forces working out of the past and, in the context of education, help children come into their bodily constitution.

In contrast, the time arts—music, speech and poetry, and eurythmy—are connected to impulses coming out of the future. As Waldorf teachers we work out of our higher bodies and what Steiner called our musical forces in order to guide our students properly into their present life. Social art also belongs to this group of time arts, but is younger, less tangible, and even less developed than eurythmy. How can we study and practice this least tangible of arts?

My own experience is that working in any of the other arts can serve as a basic “instruction manual” for social art. Being grounded in an artistic practice makes it easier to apply the principles of creative activity to any aspect of life, including social situations.

**As Waldorf teachers, the conversation with the spirit is the source of our own strength, inspiration, and creativity.**

As an early childhood teacher, when I had a particularly satisfying day in the kindergarten, I felt as if the children and I had spent the whole morning moving to an exquisite piece of music. When I was responsible for meetings, I began to plan agendas as if I were composing or painting and, during the meeting, I tried to pay attention to compositional elements like repetition, variation, contrast, harmony, balance, focus, surprise, and reprise.

In addition to the writings of Rudolf Steiner, we can also learn about social art in certain traditional texts where the renewing or healing spiritual element is represented symbolically: the “water of life” from the world of fairy tales, the Grail in the legend of Parsifal, the philosopher’s stone of the alchemists, and conversation in Goethe’s tale, “The Green Snake and the Beautiful Lily.”

In North America we owe a great debt to Marjorie Spock, who brought Steiner’s concern for community-building to us. She translated Steiner’s *Awakening to Community* lectures into English and wrote two little pamphlets, entitled *Group Moral Artistry*, that are a continuing inspiration for many people. “Goethean Conversation” was the term she used to characterize the process by which a group could invite truth into their midst like a guest. She began with Goethe’s framing of conversation as the art of arts and described Goethean conversation as a form of the reverse ritual and an appropriate means of practicing social artistry.

### 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 become artistic when 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.

### Conscious Conversation – An Invitation

We swim in a sea of spirit. Our matter-bound everyday consciousness, however, easily forgets the reality of spirit living in and everywhere around us. In this age of Michael especially, we have to wake up in those places where we are sleepily swept along with the materialistic tides of existence. It is not easy to push aside pressing everyday concerns again and again to make space for encounters with spirit in one another and with spirit beings on the other side of the threshold.

As Waldorf teachers, this is a task we have taken on not only for the sake of our students but also because the conversation with the spirit is the source of our own strength, inspiration, and creativity. In our meeting life and through an artistic practice of conscious conversation, we have an incredible opportunity to enter as a group into the realm of spirit-sensing. Our own work as individuals—likewise the whole Waldorf movement—needs this renewing spiritual force as it continues to grow and proliferate in far-flung corners of the world.

### Endnotes

1. Rudolf Steiner, *Awakening to Community* (Spring Valley, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1974), p. 97.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 157.
3. For a description of the Imagination, see *Foundations of Human Experience*, pp. 45–48 [or the appendix to Roberto Trostli's article in the previous issue of the *Research Bulletin* 16 (2) –ed.].
4. Marjorie Spock, *Group Moral Artistry: Reflections on Community Building* (Spring Valley, NY: St. George Publications, 1983), p. 18.
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# Contemplative Practice and Intuition in a Collegial Context:

An Action Research Project in a Waldorf School

*Martyn Rawson*

**I**ntuition is a form of knowing-in-practice. It means knowing the right thing at the right moment. It is obviously helpful in understanding children, classroom practice, lesson preparation, and so on, but it is also crucial to the challenges of collegial work in teachers' meetings where intelligent decisions have to be made, problems have to be solved, complex issues resolved, prejudices overcome, and people with different backgrounds, views, and energies have to find ways of working together. This is a field that requires just as much inspiration and intuition as the classroom.

Guy Claxon<sup>1</sup> defines intuition in education as "immediate apprehension, without the intervention of any reasoning process." Intuition belongs to the field of what Michael Eraut<sup>2</sup> calls "ways to knowing" that involve recognizing previously unrecognized patterns, connections, and meaning, finding novel and creative solutions, grasping complexity, seeing things holistically, making quick decisions, and doing things that can be described as expertise that do not call for lengthy reflection, deliberation, or weighing up of options. Most theories of intuition assume that it draws on existing knowledge and perceptions that we are not aware of in the moment of intuition in a way that enables us to recognize new patterns. Over the past decade there has been an increasing number of studies on the nature of intuition in education,<sup>3</sup> medicine and nursing,<sup>4</sup> psychology,<sup>5</sup> and business.<sup>6</sup> There seems little doubt that intuition as a basis for action, decision-making, and judgment is widely acknowledged as

**Intuition as a basis for action, decision-making, and judgment is a valid counterpart to more rational and systematic forms of knowledge.**

a valid counterpart to more rational and systematic forms of knowledge.

There are a number of ways in which intuition can be enhanced. Noddings and Shore<sup>7</sup> speak of the importance of acknowledging the validity of intuition as a form of knowledge, and Gill Gregory<sup>8</sup> speaks of developing trust in one's ability. McMahon<sup>9</sup> reports on two other factors: reflection on practice and finding periods of inner calm. Peter Lutzker<sup>10</sup> has shown empirically that artistic activities such

as clowning and improvisation have helped Waldorf teachers gain "enhanced openness and attentiveness, a heightened sense of empathy, a larger degree of presence... and played an important role in helping teachers learn to address their own uncertainties, anxieties and mistakes in a constructive and creative manner." Rudolf Steiner's approach, discussed below, adds to these elements the

activity of meditation and the notion that the human mind has access to spiritual knowledge in intuition.

## **Spiritual knowledge and teachers**

As I discussed in a previous article,<sup>11</sup> Steiner described how teachers can learn to develop the intuitive abilities to know what a particular child needs or what the essence of a lesson should be in a few seconds by practicing *meditatively acquired knowledge of the human being*. There is no doubt that Steiner understood intuition as having a spiritual source; it is our way of grasping the spiritual dimensions of reality. He also made it clear that Waldorf teachers need to gain access

to spiritual knowledge and that this is the main reason why schools should determine their own curriculum and approach. The core aim of Waldorf education is both social and individual. A healthy society can arise only when each individual is enabled to develop his or her potential rather than fulfill the wishes of parents to reproduce their values or meet government targets and measurable outcomes. The potential of the next generation is by nature unpredictable and therefore cannot be predetermined or molded by existing forms, but Steiner had trust in this potential. The only people who can know what helps young people realize their potential in education are their teachers,<sup>12</sup> and they will know this only through intuition, which is a way of knowing that includes the future. Steiner told parents at the first Waldorf school:

It should be characteristic of our teachers that they draw again and again from the living spiritual sources. In doing so they must feel responsible to the spiritual life and know that the spiritual life is free and independent. The school must be self-administering; teachers cannot be civil servants. . . . The activity of teaching, if it is to be really independent, requires this direct connection to the sources of spiritual life.<sup>13</sup>

The question then for Waldorf teachers is: how can this connection be made effectively? In the course of my research with Waldorf teachers over the past few years I have encountered many theoretical explanations based on readings of what I have called elsewhere<sup>14</sup> the *Waldorf body of knowledge*, which includes Steiner's works as the primary source. However, hardly anyone I surveyed said they had independently gained access to spiritual knowledge. Given Steiner's

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commitment to the parents cited above, this ought to be worrying. However, I suspect that we are dealing with a mistaken interpretation. In my view, every teacher who experiences a profound insight or an intuition that later appears to have been pedagogically fruitful has been working with direct spiritual knowledge which they generated without recognizing it as such. Perhaps many Waldorf teachers are so daunted by Steiner's massive contributions that they expect spiritual knowledge to have a different form. Perhaps that makes them overlook the small everyday moments of spiritual insight that accumulate to make a significant difference in Waldorf education and that are not just simply the reproduction of Waldorf traditions. In the end this spiritual insight is what makes the difference between good teaching and good *Waldorf* teaching.

Whilst there is no doubt we can improve the quality of our teaching through more systematic work with intuition, school leadership and self-administration—the other core activity of teachers—seems to have far greater need of attention in this respect. My research<sup>15</sup> has highlighted considerable dissatisfaction with forms of collegial working, decision-making, leadership and self-administration in teachers' meetings, and there is very little evidence of teachers actively working to enhance intuition in this field.

### **Steiner and intuition**

In his book *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity*,<sup>16</sup> Steiner posits the possibility of human consciousness being able to free itself from sensory, temporal, and spatial boundaries and become able to apprehend concepts and ideas that cannot be perceived using our senses but can only be thought. In Steiner's epistemology we are able to grasp concepts through intuition. He wrote: "The manner in which the content of thought first appears we

will call intuition. Intuition is for thinking what observation is for perception. Intuition and observation are the sources of our knowledge.”<sup>17</sup> If we think about what the relationship between observing and perceiving actually is, we realize that seeing is not the same as perceiving. *Observing* is more than seeing; it is focused looking.

*Perceiving*, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is becoming aware or conscious of something and even realizing or understanding it. Applying the analogy to the other side of creating knowledge, to the thinking side, we can thus understand intuition as the focused act of consciousness that reveals something in the form of a whole concept or idea that we then become aware of in thinking.

Thus one could say that without intuition we would see only the pixels and not the content of the picture on an LCD monitor, or only a canvas covered in colored patches of varying sizes and not the painting. Intuition reveals to us not only the image, but something of the being, meaning, or consequences of that image. I say the *consequences* because intuition enables us to reach into the possible future inherent in what we experience—not the actual future, just the potential future. Without intuition, we would lack a sense of the whole, our relation to it, and its potential meaning for us, and indeed this is generally what happens when we are confronted with totally new experiences. Thus intuition, according to Steiner, is firstly the ability to grasp the whole inherent in a conglomeration of parts. This process starts at the mundane spatial level of being able to recognize objects and images in our field of perception and with practice extends to the ability to grasp non-visible processes such as the passage of time or the processes of development, metamorphosis, and evolution in living beings. This means being

able to grasp connections and meanings over time and space, and this is the level we need as teachers if we are to understand people as they develop and recognize their unrealized potential. We need it to follow navigational ideals, such as social justice, and to understand complex phenomena in the world such

economics or history that call for long-term awareness at multiple levels of complexity.

Steiner<sup>18</sup> calls this intuitive activity spiritual, not only because it draws on a non-material context, but because as an activity it is transformational. We generate knowledge by engaging our minds with the sense world. Rather than gaining knowledge directly from the sense world, which

we experience in effect only in the form of pixels or their equivalence in sensory data, we construct knowledge in matching perceptions with what our mind already “knows” or at least has access to as a realm of ideas. In doing so, new experience occurs which changes us. Because these processes constitute spiritual reality, each new experience by a human being changes the world content in some way. Knowledge is constructed in the encounter of the world of ideas (accessible in thinking) with our experience of the world as revealed to us through observation and perception. The world content is nourished by human experience and revealed through intuition. The stage upon which this process occurs is the human mind, or in Steiner’s terms, the soul. That’s why we are not merely passive observers of events, simply computing quantities; we are living actors participating in the drama of life—feeling, knowing, and creating qualities—and the script of the drama is intuition.

Steiner gave teachers a methodology for receiving meditatively acquired knowledge<sup>19</sup> (study, meditative contemplation, and creative remembering). This methodology is an exercise

Every teacher who experiences an intuition that later appears to have been pedagogically fruitful has been working with direct spiritual knowledge.

that helps us intensify experiences gained through textual study, observation, child study, discussion, and our own questioning curiosity. In meditative contemplation we focus our inner energies on an image (or words expressing a thought) drawn from these experiences. Steiner suggests that through contemplation we can arrive at a meditative understanding of what we have studied. Thereafter this process enters our whole rhythmic system and goes yet deeper into our being below the threshold of consciousness. Steiner says that this may be followed in some situations by an awakening, a remembering out of the spirit that brings new impulses. My own reading of this process is that in forgetting we allow the meditative understanding or insight into what we have reflected on to sink into unconsciousness, where the processes of assimilating, contextualizing, and connecting carries on beyond our daytime consciousness in what is, in effect, the spiritual dimension. Steiner speaks of meditating in the evening and knowing in the morning, using the analogy of nutrition, much of which is unconscious. Since our physical self is permeated with spirit, the meditated theme becomes literally embodied as a part of our organism, like a disposition.

Furthermore, since the spiritual world permeates all of us, such dispositions become distributed amongst all those people connected with us, such as pupils or colleagues. The community becomes sensitive to this new potential; the classroom or the meetings become primed and charged with affordances—that is, opportunities and preconditions for potential to be realized, like the conditions a seed needs to germinate. Intuition, when it occurs, is not merely a solitary event in an individual; it is always situated in a context related to it; otherwise, its meaning and potential would not be recognized

**Thus intuition, according to Steiner, is firstly the ability to grasp the whole inherent in a conglomeration of parts.**

or recognizable. Many intuitions are probably unfruitful because the situation is not fertile for them; only we don't notice.

When we engage in practice with the world (meeting a pupil, planning a lesson, working to find a decision in a meeting), our preparation makes us sensitive to the situation in ways we call intuition. The solution to the problem is intimately related to the problem. The mind—yours or mine—is the place where they meet and become conscious through us. An intuition about a pupil can occur only because of the spiritual (i.e., unconscious, non-physical) connection between seer and seen. Intuition always has both a subject and an object and both are reversible. The solution to the problem seeks me as much as I seek the solution to the problem. The one who is seen is as much a part of the process as the seer, though probably not consciously. This is why such processes (e.g., child studies, reflecting on children, considering applicants for a teaching post) need to be handled with the utmost ethical propriety. Thoughts are as real as physical deeds.

Summarized and simplified, the sequence leading to intuition may involve:

- engaging in study, observation, discourse, gathering data
- consolidating and concentrating what we have learned into representations such as words, ideas, or images
- undertaking regular meditative contemplation of these understandings, which may further clarify themselves through repetition
- allowing this process to sink deeper into unconsciousness
- experiencing intuition during professional practice

The intuition is also the start of a new cycle of knowledge since it has changed me and, especially if acted upon, has altered or at least affected the subject of my intuition. In my view, the cycle should always conclude with a critical review of the process, leading to new questions. Not all intuitions prove to be true, or we may interpret them inappropriately, and not all experiences we take to be intuitions are indeed intuitions. Whatever the case, it is wise to reflect rationally and honestly on what has happened.

### Contemplative practice

Many teachers appear to be unfamiliar or uncertain about how to meditate and relate this to study and practice. I was fortunate to have been shown a simple way of practicing meditative contemplation at the outset of my career many years ago, and I decided to write down some basic instructions, which I called *contemplative practice*. I also drew on Arthur Zajonc's inspiring book *Meditation as Contemplative Inquiry*,<sup>20</sup> which provides a culturally rich context for contemplative inquiry as well as guidance on its practice. I have introduced this practice in several schools and in various countries.<sup>21</sup>

The exercise requires one to create and visualize an image relating to the topic or theme one is studying or working with. This is then the focus of contemplation for around ten minutes. During this time each person keeps his or her focus on the image and observes compassionately, i.e., with care and interest but without judgement. Then the image is allowed to dissolve. The person then remains observant of the inner space that is created for a further ten minutes. This activity is repeated daily and requires only a brief period of quiet relaxation beforehand and afterwards. Before starting the teacher recalls, and records in a

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journal, relevant events and experiences since the last time the exercise was practiced.

It is important to stress that this form of contemplative practice does not focus directly on finding solutions. The "observer" observes his or her own thoughts and feelings as they arise in this context, without judgement, but with

interest. Arthur Zajonc describes this process as follows:

If we hold to the phenomena, they gradually become intelligible. We begin to see the relationships and patterns of appearance, and in this way work ourselves up to a high level of perceptive judgment that sees the coherence or meaning in what initially was indecipherable. (Zajonc, 2009, 148)

In this contemplative approach one is not striving to solve problems or riddles with rational thinking but rather engaging with the phenomenon in a conscious and attentive way. It is not an interrogation of the phenomenon but rather an invitation for it to show itself. The "observer," who at the same time constructs the mental image, seeks to engage in dialogue with the phenomenon by observing both the image and her or his own inner responses to it. The field of this dialogue is the individual's consciousness, during the first part of the exercise in wakeful consciousness, in subsequent phases at an unconscious level in forgetting.

Contemplation in this sense differs from meditation since it does not use mantra or breathing exercises to enter into a deeper state of consciousness. Thus one should not meditate intensively using images of pupils or other people because meditation is a powerful medium and as such can be invasive of other persons' intimate spaces, especially since

they are unaware that it is happening. The exercise described here is carried out in full consciousness and can be done even with eyes open. The images chosen should also therefore relate to school situations or pedagogical ideas and should avoid being too personal. We are part of such a situation, and the contemplation is only a few degrees more intense than observing the situation in a classroom or meeting. It involves more the quality of thinking *about* than thinking *into*. It may even take the form of carrying on the conversation about the subject internally. It assumes a good degree of observation and preparatory thought beforehand.

### An example of contemplative practice

In the final part of this article I wish to report briefly on the outcome of an experiment with contemplative practice in one school that I twinned with a small-scale action research project to explore how contemplative practice can enhance the quality of problem solving in the teachers' meeting. The teachers involved agreed to follow every day for a period of several weeks a practice I had described. On the day this was to be introduced a crisis occurred involving the implementation of rules banning smoking on the school's grounds, which were being ignored by pupils and not consistently implemented by teachers. This topic had regularly been divisive, controversial, emotive, and the unsuccessful subject of repeated discussions over several years. It had now re-emerged and needed to be dealt with urgently. It was decided to use the contemplative practice method to enhance the discussions on this subject. The aim of the exercise was to come to a manageable and sustainable solution for the immediate problem and to implement this within four weeks, with three weeks being taken for the discussions. I gave each colleague a short written introduction to the contemplative inquiry method. Every Thursday about 45 minutes was devoted to the discussion of this topic.

Each week following the discussions in the meeting, each individual undertook to select an aspect of the discussions or topic itself and make this the subject of his or her meditative focus. At the beginning of each subsequent teachers' meeting, each colleague shared his or her experiences with one other colleague but otherwise these experiences were not discussed. What people would choose for their contemplative image was left open. Some chose to imagine actual situations on the playground, others focused on the discussions in the college, and others observed their own thoughts and feelings on the matter. Towards the end, most people said they focused on imagining the conditions necessary for possible solutions to the problem. I had not anticipated that the image might be an imagination of what was necessary, in other words an image of the future.

At the end of the process all those who had participated agreed to answer questions about their experience using a questionnaire, with open and closed questions, designed to establish whether the teachers thought the process had been fruitful and worth continuing, as well as to garner what they had experienced and were willing to share with the researcher.

A week after filling out the questionnaire, the teachers reviewed the process in a meeting and agreed to continue using the method with subsequent themes in the meetings. Following that I presented them with a summary of all the answers to the questionnaire, anonymously and mixed so that it was not possible to identify who had made each comment. 16 people participated in the process and 13 filled out a questionnaire. In addition, five people were then interviewed by me in follow-up to the questionnaire.

Most (11 from 13, with 2 "don't knows") of the participants felt that the exercise had been helpful, meaningful, and had enhanced the discussions and outcome. Typical comments included:

- The topic was more thoroughly brought into movement. The discussions however were less emotional, and there was a greater willingness to listen to one another.
- The “outcome” was experienced as the result of a working together.
- New ideas came; one could experience distinct changes in feeling and thinking.

Most of the participants felt that the exercise had enhanced the quality of discussions in the meetings (of the 13 questioned, 5 said yes definitely, 7 said probably). Asked to describe the process, the following descriptions were recorded:

- Predominantly goal-focused
- More consensus, less determined by personal feelings
- Over the course of the week an ever-growing clarity about the given theme, including suggestions for solutions and a surprising and astonishing clarity in the gathering and distributing of suggestions for solutions
- More courage in speaking [about my views] or saying anything at all
- Greater trust in what arose. Perhaps an “Aha” effect with more weight than usual
- To the theme: I had the impression that the discussions were generally and, for the first time, more possible without the emotional resistance of the participants. Basically (or in general): that has to do with one’s own feelings and thoughts about the theme. If I become more conscious of my fears, defensiveness, tension, and rejection, etc., then I can relax more (“Aha! So that’s how I think.”). Through this relaxation, trust grows that that which happens is the best that can happen. That doesn’t mean that I don’t care about everything, but rather it means that I can wait with awareness in a relaxed way until I perceive the moment in

**The exercise helped create conditions within which individuals could gain more confidence in their intuitions..**

which I can make my strength and ability available to what has to happen (from a higher perspective, that is, not only my opinion).

- Calming, gathering, accelerating, keeping the goal in view.

The sixth comment above expresses very well the subtlety of the increased self-observation process that was associated with this exercise.

Some of the participants described the process of creating a suitable image for the contemplation, though only briefly. These comments showed that, with increasing experience, greater certainty in the choice of image was achieved, which is only to be expected in what for many was a new experience. The extent to which the newness of the experience led to heightened awareness and how much was due to the contemplative practice is at this stage impossible to judge. The perceived effectiveness of the exercise in so short a time

was also no doubt due to the careful leadership of the meetings. This factor, though desirable in itself, does not, however, explain the fact that most participants felt better prepared inwardly for the meetings. For the record, this exercise did not solve the smoking problem. Sadly, the pupils still smoke. However, they do so now in a designated area, and it is easier to regulate this and deal with those underage smokers by applying clear rules. What changed was the collegial atmosphere and the sense that it is possible to find working solutions in a constructive way.

### Conclusions

In this case contemplative practice seemed to support the process of collegial deliberation mainly by enabling the participants to focus on the issue and recognize, overcome, or revise their tacit and implicit attitudes, knowledge, and assumptions, thus making them more open to new ideas and possibilities. A wide range

of creative solutions came up, which suggests an increase in creativity. It also highlights the point that complex problems are less likely to be solved by a single intuition, but rather from several individual intuitions that relate to aspects of the situation. The teachers' group was markedly coherent and collegial. I think one can tentatively say that the exercise helped create conditions within which individuals could gain more confidence in their intuitions, and the group of teachers was able to find creative solutions more quickly than usual. Even after a relatively short time teacher learning within the community of practice was enhanced, if only temporarily. Obviously continuing the practice would be recommended. In other experiments being carried out, contemplative practice is supporting child studies, curriculum studies, and in some cases management decision-making.

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# Contemplative Work in the College Meeting

*Elan Leibner*

## Introduction

The possibility of developing a successful collaborative, spiritual-leadership model depends on the participants' ability to become, collectively, a vessel for wisdom greater than their own. This wisdom may reveal itself in fundamental insights (Moral Intuitions, in the language of *Intuitive Thinking as a Spiritual Path*<sup>1</sup>), creative visions for addressing the ramifications of those insights (Moral Imaginations), or plans for incarnating the visions into the specific reality in which the school is operating (Moral Technique). While individuals may well be capable of achieving some of those steps on their own, the fundamental idea of the collaborative model is that single capacities can be enhanced through collaboration. Furthermore, collaboration may indeed allow individual capacities to reach their full fruition by providing the listening attentiveness that often holds the key to sounding out one's inherent potential.

A second facet of this model is the spiritual dimension: The group is engaged with spiritual beings, and this engagement implies spiritual effort. This dimension is the one with which this essay is primarily concerned. The third facet is the element of leadership; the model is meant to offer guidance that can be followed by the school. Engaging in spiritual work, even in a collaborative fashion, is insufficient in itself; the group still needs to provide leadership. The guiding imagination for this model, at least in Waldorf schools, is the so-called College Imagination, delivered by Rudolf Steiner at the inception of the *Study of Man* course in 1919.<sup>2</sup>

**The fundamental idea of the collaborative model is that single capacities can be enhanced through collaboration.**

Steiner describes a circle of teachers, with each member's Angel standing behind him/her, placing a hand on the teacher's head, and allowing strength to stream forth. Steiner later refers to this as "the spiritual meeting of each individual with his angel." This strength allows imaginations to stream into the pedagogical work. Above, Archangels are gathering the strength, which "has been enhanced through uniting with all the others," and make "a chalice of courage" out of it. Into this chalice, Archai (angelic beings of a higher order than the Archangels) allow a drop of light to fall. Light is a spiritual term synonymous with wisdom, and the process of helping teachers become recipients of light in the manner indicated by the College

Imagination is the main goal of this essay. For the full text of the College Imagination, see also the appendix to Roberto Trostli's article in the previous issue of the *Research Bulletin* (Volume XVI Number 2).

Crucial for the idea we are trying to develop here is Steiner's description of how the capacity to receive intuitive wisdom ("drop of light") is preceded by the forming of a vessel ("chalice of courage"), and how this vessel is composed of "what is coming to birth through the spiritual meeting of each individual with his angel." It is clear that this *spiritual meeting* is the very foundation of the collaborative spiritual model being inaugurated. I would suggest that this meeting consists of inner, meditative work.

The space here is too limited for a full discussion of the nature of inner work, yet a few germane points can be singled out. One such point is what Steiner calls "the gate of

humility.”<sup>3</sup> When one practices humility in the pursuit of wisdom, an enhanced ability to relinquish a supposed ownership of ideas, or to allow better ideas to improve and/or change what had been brought into the discussion follows. The very notion of reaching for higher wisdom suggests that there exists a wisdom higher than what one may presently possess. Absent this practice, one may cling to one’s “own” ideas out of an all-too-human vanity. But one learns on a meditative path to release one’s attachment to ideas-as-possession. Ideas are placed at the service of others, or, in this instance, of the leadership process. This is, I believe, what Steiner meant when he spoke of the Archangels carrying from one individual to the other “what is coming to birth through the spiritual meeting of each individual with his angel.” I will refer to this later in this essay as “freed spiritual substance.” It means ideas that have been freed from ownership. Together a group of such ideas can serve as the preparatory vessel, or chalice.

A second contribution of the inner path is the notion that one’s colleague is also “on the path.” Sensing that the other, too, is working to become a better vessel for the spirit increases the willingness to be patient with his or her idiosyncrasies, since there is hope that the gaps that yawn between colleagues may narrow in the next minute (or the next year). Colleagues are less likely to view each other as forever destined to remain the same. Sustained over years, collegueship in Waldorf schools needs the optimism that the hope (indeed the anticipation) of change brings. Group processes can otherwise suffer “occlusions of the light” born of the blindness people always have for the “better angels of (each other’s) nature.” The willingness to see—and the practice of seeing—the good in one’s colleagues forms an essential aspect of what Steiner calls the reverse ritual, meaning

**One learns on a meditative path to release one’s attachment to ideas-as-possession. Ideas are placed at the service of others.**

the elevation of the striving community to the company of spiritual beings.

The most important contribution that a meditative practice offers a collaborative spiritual-leadership model, however, is the presence of concentrated, receptive attentiveness. A meditative path begins with exercises to improve the focus of one’s attention. Once attention is focused on a “something,” we can remove that “something” and have a moment of becoming aware of attention itself as a form-free *capacity*. *Empty, receptive attention* is the pre-requisite for new ideas. When a group can develop an “empty attention,” when it is available and willing to receive new ideas, it has also

developed an essential aspect of the “chalice of courage.” The surest way for developing this collective capacity is for the individual members to engage in developing their own capacities.

We can say, therefore, that for this collaborative spiritual-leadership model to succeed, the members of the leadership group should be actively engaged in a meditative practice. It is indeed my view that most of the failings of Colleges of Teachers in Waldorf schools can be traced to the absence of sufficient meditative work. Freed spiritual substance (created and freed through the individuals’ meditative efforts) is then missing for the chalice-forming activity of benevolent spiritual beings, and the members of the College are then left with nothing but their too-limited earthly powers. “Drops of light” can be difficult to receive without the spiritual chalice having been formed. Even when individual members receive new ideas, the receptivity of the group is not sufficient for these ideas to become fruitful.

Assuming that the collaborative-leadership model depends on individual meditative practice, a new difficulty arises. An individual inner path is difficult to establish. During

teacher-preparation courses, many a student focuses on other aspects of the profession, and the habit life of a meditative practice is not firmly established. Afterwards, many new teachers make an attempt, encounter the inevitable obstacles, and essentially give up on a regular practice, perhaps replacing a cognitive path with prayer. Such individuals may even be quite gifted teachers, but their capacity to serve as contributors in a chalice-forming process is undoubtedly compromised. Sooner or later they come up against obstacles (some alluded to here, others elsewhere in this publication) and, absent the tools developed through inner practice, may either burn out or burn others out. Burnout is essentially the consequence of an inability to renew oneself, and renewal, in this context, means tapping the source of new ideas.

Sometimes a school will have a few 'old timers' who have an active meditative life that allows them to carry the spiritual essence of Waldorf education and serve as pillars for the work of the College. But as they begin to retire or move on to other chapters in their biographies, a kind of spiritual implosion results. Colleagues, parents, and former students may remark that the school "doesn't feel the same anymore." Whereas the implied change is not necessarily bad, it may point to a kind of active absence, if you will, of that "something" that made the school work more deeply in the past. Peripheral teachers are asked to become central pillars and leaders of chalice-forming practices, yet they lack the foundation of an independent spiritual practice. This possible picture is not to suggest that every old-timer is a meditative

practitioner, or that newer colleagues are not meditants, but merely to point towards a phenomenon that may illustrate the role of meditative practice in the collaborative spiritual-leadership model.

If we agree that contemplative practice is crucial to successful leadership in Waldorf schools, and that establishing this practice is fraught with challenges, are there steps that can be taken to support individual teachers attempting to develop such a practice? Practicing exercises and even engaging in contemplative work in groups can be of great help for those trying to launch an individual meditative life. The reason might be that successful concentration is often easier to achieve when undertaken with others. Whereas as physical organisms we are always separated from one another, in soul and spirit we are more woven together; the efforts of those around us can help draw our spiritual capacities in the desired direction. There are legitimate concerns about doing this work in groups, and some of those concerns will be addressed below, but once individuals experience what a concentrated state 'feels like,' they are more likely to persevere in attempting to reach it on their own. Put another way, once we know what we are looking for, we may have more patience trying to find it. Even for people with many years of faithful practice, doing contemplative work together can provide enhanced strength, often leading to new and surprising directions in their individual work. Hearing how another has approached a verse or an image is helpful when the sharing is done with the proper restraint, but actually practicing *that* approach with them seems

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to offer a gift, a benefit born of their many years of practice. One feels “gifted” by one’s colleague, and deeply thankful.

In my own experience, a College that had struggled for years to overcome personality-driven conflicts and endless debate was transformed within a matter of weeks into a far more receptive and cogent leadership group once various forms of inner work were practiced during the opening segment of meetings. In my view this occurred because the shared substance of the opening segment was already uniting the individuals’ higher capacities by the time discussion of school matters began. The College members had engaged a demanding text or an exercise, had spent time reflecting on the content or the experience, and had dedicated themselves and their efforts toward the wellbeing of the school. A shift had occurred in their consciousness and mood. The daily hubbub of teaching and the experience of interacting with people on the level of intellectual, informational consciousness had been replaced by a period of intentional dedication at the contemplative level. The ground was then prepared for a different kind of interaction.

It might be argued that shared substance can also be created through ordinary study. The essential difference, however, is that in contemplative work the shared substance is actively taken into each individual’s inner life, and the attempt is made to understand the “content” at the level from which it originated. Rudolf Steiner (or another spiritual researcher) had experiences across the threshold, and then had to “clothe” those in words; our task as students is to proceed in the reverse direction, starting from the words and reaching across the threshold to the experience. A conscious effort is undertaken as well to invite something more than one’s ordinary understanding to

enter the process, something that transcends what the individual is already thinking. In some “regular” studies, the discussion rarely, if ever, transcends the informational, content level. This informational level of consciousness is the level of arguments, not the level of humble receptivity indicated by the chalice imagination. But a group of people that has engaged in a period of contemplative practice is primed for a meeting that can become something more than “just a meeting.” We can get a feeling for the difference from a lecture Steiner gave on February 28, 1923:

And if several people come together with what they have from their everyday consciousness, and don’t with full sensitivity lift themselves up to the supersensible world, if such people meet together merely to hear the language of the supersensible world in the everyday state of soul, then there is an infinitely great possibility that they may begin to argue, because in the most natural way they become egotists in relation to each other. ...If people take their normal soul life into their supposed understanding of the teaching from higher worlds, then of course this leads to egotism and argument.<sup>4</sup>

In contemplative work ... the attempt is made to understand the “content” at the level from which it originated.

### Objections and Dangers

Some people might object to the idea of contemplative work in groups because “Rudolf Steiner did not do this kind of work in groups, and therefore it is not appropriate for us to do it.” This kind of orthodoxy is dangerous, since it restricts anthroposophy to precedent rather than allowing it to meet the moment, but it also misses an important factor: the effect of Rudolf Steiner’s personal presence at the first Waldorf school. Anyone who has worked with a genuine spiritual researcher (e.g. Jørgen Smit

or Georg Kühlewind) knows that listening to such a person is in itself a meditative exercise. His thoughts blaze a trail of light that has to be followed by attentiveness unlike the one we use for ordinary intellectual content. In *How to Know Higher Worlds* Steiner says of the communications of the spiritual researcher:

For such instructions are culled from the living inner word...they are themselves gifted with spiritual life. They are not mere words; they are living powers. And while you follow the words of one who knows...powers are at work in your soul which make you clairvoyant.<sup>5</sup>

When Steiner assembled the first Waldorf school teachers and instructed them, the “content” was given in the *Study of Man* lectures and other such pearls of higher knowledge. When he subsequently attended their faculty meetings, the discussion was sometimes entirely practical, but then would veer into insights that could not be properly received without subsequent meditative reflection. Steiner assumed that the teachers were meditants, and he gave them “content” and even mantras to support their work. He spoke directly about the need to meditate on the “content” of his lectures:

And it is especially interesting to allow everything I have presented today to work on you; let it invigorate you. ... If you bring all these things together and form mental images of them in *active meditation*, you can be sure that the vigorous power of ingenuity you need when facing the children you are educating will be kindled in you.<sup>6</sup> [Emphasis mine]

In the absence of a spiritual researcher to guide the teachers in a school, other forms of support for the faculty members’ meditative work may well be needed, and the exercises

discussed here could be one approach for providing such support.

Contemplative work in groups does present some legitimate dangers, however. Those dangers are born of the temptations that beset the path toward higher knowledge, and just as the presence of others may help along this path, it can also exacerbate some of the pitfalls. A few of the potential dangers are discussed below, and a group that intends to pursue this kind of work is encouraged to discuss these and reach a set of agreements to mitigate them. This set of agreements may be spoken at the beginning of each session, or in some form be mentioned as a reminder to those present

~Danger: Contemplative work in a group infringes on individual freedom by coercing a person to engage in it when s/he might not want or feel able to do so. Such a person would either engage in the practice against his/her better judgment, or, if the practice is expected of everyone, leave the group altogether. One possible solution is to engage in this work before the official beginning of the meeting; another option is to allow members to excuse themselves; a third possibility is to allow members to be present quietly without engaging in the work. Each group should decide how to handle this difficulty.

~Danger: Since work in groups is easier for some, individuals might choose to replace their personal practice with group work. This is not what anthroposophy should promote. Anthroposophy is an individual spiritual path first and foremost. The group should discuss what, if anything, the members might commit to doing outside the meeting. In my view, some form of commitment to individual practice should become one of the agreements.

~Danger: Individuals sometimes suggest or imply that they have achieved more in their practice (or during the group exercises) than is actually the case. This brings an element of

untruth into the very heart of the school and creates a mood around the spiritual practice that is harmful rather than helpful. Absolute honesty, integrity, and humility must pervade every aspect of this work. Of course, these attributes are generally expected of College members, but a special emphasis should be placed on them in this context.

~Danger: Details of people's individual spiritual life might be shared during parts of these sessions, leaving those individuals open to a breach of trust. Thus what was offered in full confidence can end up coming back in a completely different context. If the group discusses the question of moral character (see below), then additional aspects of vulnerability are placed in trust. Some form of agreement regarding confidentiality is needed. This might include provisions regarding (not) sharing with members absent from the group, and of course (not) sharing with non-members, including spouses. It cannot be overemphasized how important this agreement is for the long-term health of the group.

If these four dangers, in whichever form College members opt to address them, are countered, then I believe the group may safely engage in contemplative work together. As already mentioned, it is a good idea to have a short reminder of these agreements at the beginning of each session. Obviously, in specific circumstances additional agreements may be necessary, and every group is free to create and amend any agreements it makes.

### Examples of Formats and Practices

A group will usually assign an individual to prepare and lead the sessions. This assignment may last for just one meeting or for an extended period of time. The group has to determine the scope of the leader's mandate in terms of choosing the themes and formats of the sessions. Some experimentation is recommended so that the comfort zone of

a particular group can be established. Some groups need parameters set in advance (e.g., length of time for each session, length of assignment of leading the sessions, restrictions on the themes for meditation, and review format), while for other groups a more open-ended beginning is preferred. Even in open-ended beginnings, a review of the practice should be planned within the next two or three months, if not sooner. Inner work is delicate, and we do not want members of the group to have growing frustrations or resentments over issues that could be resolved through a review. A sensitive leader will seek to navigate the practice so that individual concerns may be addressed before they become festering problems, but a regular review is also important.

There are many ways to engage with contemplative content, of course. For the purpose of the work discussed here, three steps seem basic enough to be regarded as fundamental:

1. Centering: concentration exercise/s to focus the attention
2. Engagement (with the theme)
3. Review

There are other steps that could be considered. It is possible to begin a session with a dedication. The members dedicate the work to the school/organization and renounce personal gain or attachments. Another step that can have a profound effect is "stooping through the gate of humility." Members remind themselves of their own shortcomings and of the notion of a wisdom higher than one's own. By remembering Steiner's exhortation to take three steps in the perfection of one's moral character for every step taken in spiritual development, participants can think of three moments in the past day/week/month during which they fell short of their moral ideals. One then resolves to place three balancing gestures into the world during the following day.

However the session is opened, the first step in the actual work is centering. There are many examples of concentration exercises in the anthroposophical literature. Of particular note for all three of the steps mentioned above is Georg Kühlewind's little booklet, *The Light of the "I."*<sup>7</sup> It contains a wealth of practical guidance and examples of exercises, as well as advice on dealing with obstacles. The period of concentration cannot be too long because of time constraints, but it should not be shorter than a minute.

A 2–5 minute timeframe is usually sufficient. Members may concentrate on a simple man-made object, the movement of the second-hand of a clock, or other non-interesting subject. The point is that the attention is focused through one's effort and not through the object's being interesting.

The second, central part of the session is engagement with the theme. This theme may be a verse (such as one of the *Teachers Meditations*), an image (such as Michael and the Dragon, or the *Rose Cross*), a

theme from a lecture (such as the physiological locations of auditory and visual processes described in the third lecture of *Balance in Teaching*), or a phrase (such as "Wisdom lives in the Light"). The leader suggests a manner of working with the theme for that session, and the group engages. One example of working with a theme is to

"condense the verse" into its verbs only, so that the meaning is sought through the movement of the verbs. If that is successful, the verbs, too, can be removed and the whole theme is held in wordless attentiveness. As with all meditations, the theme itself has to be removed after it is beheld wordlessly. Most people are not able to have an empty attentiveness for more than a brief moment, so one returns to the theme,

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**In its essence...[Waldorf education] is meant to be ever the newborn creation, mediating the intentions of spiritual beings directly into the physical world.**

reduces it, and tries to reach the empty state again. It is important that one is not worried about "getting somewhere" during this period, but simply engages as far as is possible on that day.

Another possibility is to imagine that one is writing the verse: Each word is "selected" from amongst other words in the "meaning vicinity" so that this word is chosen as opposed to that one. Thus "*Spirit beholding*" at the beginning of the second Teachers Meditation is chosen instead of "*soul*" or "*inward*

*beholding.*" Next, "*beholding*" is chosen instead of "*meditating*," or "*remembering*," and so on. The experience of "writing" the verse in this way gives one an intense level of identification with the text, much as one would have when writing a poem. One can contemplate a line, a section or an entire verse in this manner. Again, once the meaning has been explored, a wordless beholding should follow, and finally a removal of the theme itself.

There are many possibilities of working with themes, and the two chosen above should be taken only as examples to illustrate the process. Steiner's books, as well as those of other anthroposophical authors, offer an abundance of themes and instructions. In addition to the Kühlewind book mentioned earlier, Dennis Klocek and Jørgen Smit have also published excellent instructions. It is left for each group to determine, or leave it to the leader to determine, how long the engagement should last. A general suggestion is 10–15 minutes.

When the engagement period is over, some review should occur. The review can be brief or prolonged, done inwardly by each member or through a verbal exchange, but

it should happen. It allows each member to re-cognize what just transpired, and to thank the spiritual world for its help. If the review is conducted through conversation, the tone should be restrained and reverent. Questions, insights, or suggestions may be shared, but the conversation should not lapse into casual chitchat. There should also be a clear ending for this part of the meeting. The session leader or the meeting chair should clearly separate the meditative segment from the rest of the meeting. It may even be good to stand and stretch, or read a verse, in order to transition out of one mode of conversation and into another.

### Concluding Thoughts

Waldorf education is nearing the hundred-year anniversary of its founding. In some respects, it is a mature movement with traditions, standards, and habits. In its essence, however, it is meant to be ever the newborn creation, mediating the intentions of spiritual beings directly into the physical world. I believe that the sine-qua-non of Waldorf education is the teachers' meditative lives. Unless a conscious path is cultivated for spiritual beings to support the human being, "Waldorf" will become ever more a noun, a thing. It is a bit better when used as an adjective, but perhaps we should aim to make it into a verb. We should aim "to Waldorf," meaning to actively connect a child to his/her pre-birth intentions, to work in such a way that our work is "a continuation of what higher beings have done before his birth" (Study of Man, Lecture 1). I hope that the path offered in this essay can support for this intention.

### Endnotes

1. Rudolf Steiner, *Intuitive Thinking as a Spiritual Path* (Hudson, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1995).
2. Rudolf Steiner, *Study of Man* (Forest Row, Sussex, UK: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2007).
3. Rudolf Steiner, *How to Know Higher Worlds* (Hudson, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1994).
4. Rudolf Steiner, *Awakening to Community* (Hudson, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1974).
5. See note 3 above.
6. Rudolf Steiner, *Balance in Teaching*, Lecture 3 (Great Barrington, MA: Anthroposophic Press, 2007).
7. Georg K uhlewind, *The Light of the "I"* (Great Barrington, MA: Anthroposophic Press, 2008).

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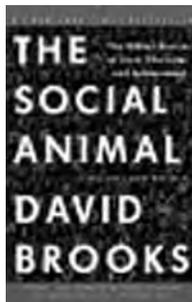
## Review of *The Social Animal: The Hidden Sources of Love, Character and Achievement* by David Brooks

by Dorit Winter

David Brooks, the author of this “landmark sociological explanation of how we make decisions, how the subconscious mind drives our lives, and why some succeed and others don’t,”<sup>1</sup> first caught my attention in his regular appearances on the PBS *Newshour*. Almost always paired with the liberal commentator, Mark Shield, Brooks has a refreshingly original cast of mind when it comes to politics. Although he anchors the conservative point of view, he always seems ideologically humanistic. He is clearly a very well-read, well-informed intellectual, whose thinking is, nevertheless, not abstract. He does not talk along straight party lines. If you read his Wikipedia page, you see that his perspectives on American foreign policy and social norms have evolved. He might even be called progressive.

Born in 1961, he is an acclaimed journalist with an impressive resumé: “David Brooks’ column on the Op-Ed page of *The New York Times* started in September 2003. He has been a senior editor at *The Weekly Standard*, a contributing editor at *Newsweek* and the *Atlantic Monthly*. He is the author of *Bobos in Paradise: The New Upper Class and How They Got There* and *On Paradise Drive: How We Live Now (and Always Have) in the Future Tense*, both published by Simon & Schuster. Mr. Brooks joined *The Weekly Standard* at its inception in September

1995, having worked at *The Wall Street Journal* for the previous nine years. His last post at the *Journal* was as op-ed editor. Prior to that, he was posted in Brussels, covering Russia, the Middle East, South Africa and European affairs. His first post at the *Journal* was as editor of the book review section, and he filled in for five months as the *Journal*’s movie critic.”<sup>2</sup> What’s interesting about this summary is that it includes an international scope and a cultural reach.



*The Social Animal* is a creative, intelligent, and perceptive attempt to understand what it means to be human and, in particular, what it takes to be “successful” at it. It becomes clear early in the book that success is not measured in material terms alone. To get at his thesis, Brooks invents two people to demonstrate that character determines who is successful, and that “the inner mind—the unconscious realm of emotions, intuitions, biases, longings, genetic predispositions, character traits and social norms [is] the realm where character is formed and street smarts grow” or, in other words that “we are primarily the products of thinking that happens below the level of awareness” (p.x).

Before going on to consider these two invented characters, let’s have a look at Brooks’ list of what constitutes the “unconscious realm.” He has a string of

words there which pretty well describe astral and etheric activities. In this respect, Brooks is onto something that resonates with an anthroposophical perspective. His book presents data demonstrating that at the core of the human decision-making process there is something imponderable. Brooks ponders. What he is getting at is what, in spiritual scientific terms, we would refer to as “karma” and “ego” and “higher self.” How does the Self make decisions? How does the individual prevail over circumstances, or not? Where does character come from? Such questions drive Brooks’ survey of prevailing research into what makes people tick. He knows what he’s doing: “I’m writing this story, first, because, while researchers in a wide variety of field have shone their flashlights into different parts of the cave of the unconscious, illuminating different corners and openings, much of their work is done in academic silos. I’m going to try to synthesize their findings into one narrative.”<sup>3</sup> He achieves this goal handily, in part because he does not rely solely on his findings in the silos of academia. Instead, in an unscientific leap of creative imagination, he makes up his prime subjects, Harold and Erica, and their parents, and uses them as unique but statistically credible subjects. Brooks is nothing if not witty, never biting, often hilarious, and his writing never pales, though toward the end of the book his track becomes diffused and the book became less compelling.

“We are living in the middle of a revolution in consciousness,” (p.x) writes Brooks in his introduction. That is exactly what Rudolf Steiner also tells us, whether discussing the shift into the consciousness soul or the shift out of the Kali Yuga. How Brooks sees this revolution is, of course, predicated on a materialistic worldview. Nevertheless, he is keenly aware that something is missing from that worldview. “The unconscious is not merely a dark, primitive zone of fear and pain. It is also a place where spiritual states arise and dance from soul to soul. It collects the wisdom of the

ages.”<sup>4</sup> This does not sound like a materialist talking. Brooks arrives at such understanding from profound observation and consequent thought. He is a thinker, and he relies on his thinking, and it is his thinking which allows him to conclude his introduction with these words:

If there is a divine creativity, surely it is active in this inner soul sphere, where brain matter produces emotion and where love rewires the neurons. . . . The unconscious. . . . has shortcomings. It needs supervision. (p. xviii)

The vocabulary is materialistic, but not the thought. Brooks perceives the need for what anthroposophy calls an “ego.” The last paragraph of his introduction is a wonderfully optimistic view of human potential and ends with: “Of all the blessings that come with being alive, it [the unconscious] is the most awesome gift.” (p.xviii) You get the feeling that Brooks has been touched by something vital and vibrant. For him, “unconscious” is not a psychological term in the ordinary sense; it is akin to what spiritual science call the soul.

In making up the two characters he invents (“constructs” is probably a better word), Brooks says he is following in the steps of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who invented Emile for his innovative book by that name on how humans should be educated. By inventing the biographies of Harold and Erica, but describing them as case studies rather than fictional characters, Brooks gets to annotate their every move. Along the way he analyzes just about every aspect and phase of ordinary human development.

He describes decision-making as “an inherently emotional business” (p.17), and speaks of “the role of emotions in human cognition.” (p.19) This pairing of feeling and cognition is familiar to us from, to mention two sources, *Theosophy* and *Study of Man*. Brooks points out that babies do not arrive as blank slates, after all. “Starting before we are born, we inherit a great river of knowledge,

a great flow of patterns coming from many ages and many sources.” (p. 32) He details the importance of touch for the newborn child. He wants to get at the connection between parents and child and declares: “Loops exist between brains. The same thought and feeling can arise in different minds, with invisible networks filling the space between them.” (p. 41) Would he welcome the concept of the etheric world to expand on his idea of this invisible network?

Brooks has done a huge amount of research. His book contains 371 endnotes, mostly providing sources for his data. But the parts of the book that struck me most forcefully were the passages in which Brooks’ own personal acumen, his keen unbiased insights surface. He populates the world of Harold, and the world of Erica, and then the world of Harold and Erica with a whole panoply of particular characters. Parents, teachers, friends, classmates, bosses, employees, associates... Each invented person allows Brooks to point out that our assumptions about relationships are fraught. We are caught in generic expectations. We are victimized by conscious guidelines. Yet something else seems to be guiding us.

About one of Harold’s made-up high school teachers he says, “Ms. Taylor was one of those teachers who understands that schools are structured on a false view of human beings. They are structured on the presupposition that students are empty crates to be filled with information.” (p.81) How often has that line been used to distinguish the contrasting Waldorf approach? And although Ms. Taylor, as Brooks imagines her, is not a Waldorf teacher, she wishes she would have been. “Human knowledge is not like data stored in a computer’s memory bank.” Hurrah! “Human knowledge is (p. 85)... hungry and alive.” A few pages later: “Learning is not merely about accumulating facts. It is internalizing the relationships between pieces of information.” (p. 89)

Brooks’ descriptions of Harold’s adolescent years in a typical high school and his groping, confused college years are both hilarious and spot on. He does the same for Erica, and the conclusions he draws from the data he collects to individualize these fictional people are not just realistic, but very revealing. In discussing intelligence, he comes up with: “...A thinker may be very smart but unless she possesses moral virtues such as honesty, rigor and fair-mindedness, she probably won’t succeed in real life.” (p. 166) I suspect that such words come from the heart of David Brooks. I get the feeling he has worked on himself, because there’s no question about his intelligence. Very likely the other attributes are what enabled him to write this book. “I am not a touchy-feely person, as my wife has been known to observe,” he explains in the introduction. And then he extols the inner life: “If you ignore the surges of love and fear, loyalty and revulsion that course through us every second of the day, you are ignoring the most essential realm.” (p. xii)

Somehow Brooks has learned that his brain alone is not the whole of himself, and for a brain like his, schooled in the institutional world he so pithily runs down in this book, that’s a terrific achievement, and I’d love to know what really happened to make him see that. It wasn’t anthroposophy. It was conventional research, analyzed by an unbiased mind and a seeing heart. The thesis of his book is that uncountable conditions, many the results of our own decisions, make us what we are. But I think he must have come with a positive outlook which could not be throttled. Here is another conclusion he reaches after sifting through the data: “People who place tremendous emphasis on material well-being tend to be less happy than people who don’t.” Researched has proved that. We, in the chronically underfunded Waldorf world, can use that reminder. And how often, in a myriad places, does Rudolf Steiner tell us that spiritual advancement, not earthly achievement, is what counts?

“It is not merely reason that separates us from the other animals, but the advanced nature of our emotions, especially our social and moral emotions.” (p. 286) Much as we can applaud yet another discerning insight, we could also wish for David Brooks that he would find personal corroboration that the world he is at such pains to elucidate does really exist, objectively and universally, and that there is data of a different sort, spiritual scientific data, to illuminate it.

In the meantime, this is one of those bridging books that can be handed to the neighbor who suspects that Waldorf education is medieval, or the niece who assumes that anthroposophy is mystical. Brooks makes it brilliantly clear that conventional education is stuck and that individual achievements come in spite of it. The achievements he highlights are, in the final analysis, equanimity, openness, and positivity. For that reason alone it behooves us to take note of him and his perspectives.

### Endnotes

1. From a flyer for the Marin Speakers Series, Marin County, CA, 2011–2012.
2. <http://www.nytimes.com/ref/opinion/BROOKS-BIO.html>.
3. Introduction, p. xiii.
4. Introduction, p. xvi.

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and Achievement*  
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## Report on the Online Waldorf Library

*By Marianne Alsop*

The Online Waldorf Library continues to help facilitate research and answer questions on a wide variety of topics. In recent months these have included: creating a eurythmy program for homeschoolers; organizing a lower school library and student reading lists in a Waldorf-inspired charter school; how handwork, especially knitting, supports healthy movement; how Waldorf schools establish media policies; spacial dynamics and eurythmy as alternative movement therapies; Michaelmas and Christmas plays; doll making in the handwork curriculum; and articles and references on phenomenology, among others.

I would encourage visitors to the OWL site to have a look at the issues of the *Journal for Waldorf/Rudolf Steiner Education* published by the Initiative Circles of the Education (Pedagogical) Section in Australia, Hawaii and New Zealand. A link is on the home page. Despite having had a number of devastating earthquakes in New Zealand, where the journal is published, the April 2011 issue includes thoughts and directions concerning resilience and curative education.

The number of books in our search database is nearing 500 in addition to 75 eBooks in pdf format which are available to download to Kindles, Nooks, and iPads or any computer. Our eBooks are now widely used in teacher training courses and by students in other Waldorf professional development courses. Homeschooling parents are using our articles and eBooks to plan and develop their lessons.

Work continues on the new Online Waldorf Library site; the massive shift of data is nearly complete! By early spring the new site will be live, and I look forward to any comments you may have that will improve its search capability.

The Online Waldorf Library invites your questions and comments and appreciates your interest and support! This is a remarkable resource!

Visit

[www.waldorflibrary.org](http://www.waldorflibrary.org)

The Indices will no longer be listed in the *Research Bulletin*. Rather please go to our website at:

[www.waldorfresearchbulletin.org](http://www.waldorfresearchbulletin.org)

Here you will find the contents of each *Bulletin*.

# About the Research Institute for Waldorf Education



The Research Institute for Waldorf Education is an initiative working on behalf of the Waldorf school movement. It receives support and guidance from the Pedagogical Section of the School of Spiritual Science and financial support through the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA), the Midwest Shared Gifting Group, the Waldorf Schools Fund, the Waldorf Curriculum Fund, and private donors through the Rudolf Steiner Foundation.

The Research Institute was founded in 1996 in order to deepen and enhance the quality of Waldorf education, to engage in serious and sustained dialogue with the wider educational-cultural community, and to support research that would serve educators in all types of schools in their work with children and adolescents.

The Research Institute has responded to the call for research as a top priority of the Waldorf school movement by becoming a supporting organization of AWSNA and by co-sponsoring research projects with the Association and with the Pedagogical Section.

We support research projects that deal with essential contemporary educational issues such as the role of play in early childhood, attention-related disorders, trends in adolescent development and innovations in the high school curriculum, survey of Waldorf graduates, learning expectations and assessment, computers in education, the role of art in education, and new ways to identify and address different learning styles. The Research Institute has sponsored colloquia and conferences that have brought together educators, psychologists, doctors, and social scientists. We have published a *Research Bulletin* twice a year for the last decade, and we are developing and distributing educational resources to help teachers in all aspects of their work.

We sponsor the Online Waldorf Library: [www.waldorflibrary.org](http://www.waldorflibrary.org), whose mission is to make available contemporary writings on Waldorf education, and we host our own site: [www.waldorfresearchinstitute.org](http://www.waldorfresearchinstitute.org), where up-to-date research is posted.

The Research Institute is a 501(c) (3) tax-exempt organization and gratefully accepts donations.

## Summary of Activities Supported by the Research Institute

### Projects

The following projects are in process or have been undertaken by the Research Institute:

- Teaching Sensible Science Seminars
- Sexual Education Grades 4–12
- Technology in the Waldorf Curriculum
- Waldorf High School Research Projects

### Books and Papers

The following books and papers were printed by the Research Institute and are available from AWSNA Publications:

- *Topics in Mathematics for the 11th Grade*
- *Tapping the Wellsprings of Health in Adolescence*
- *New Approaches to Teaching Grammar*
- *Developmental Signatures: Core Values and Practices in Waldorf Education for Children Ages 3–9*
- *Education, Teaching, and Practical Life* by Rudolf Steiner
- *Survey of Waldorf Graduates, Phase I*
- *Survey of Waldorf Graduates, Phase II*
- *Survey of Waldorf Graduates, Phase III*
- *Effects of High-Stakes Testing on Children*

Subject-Specific Colloquia, 2000–2010:

- Chemistry
- Mathematics
- Computer and Information Technology
- English
- United States History
- Life Science and Environmental Studies
- World History – Symptomatology
- Physics

Proceedings for all of the above are available from AWSNA Publications at: [www.whywaldorfworks.org](http://www.whywaldorfworks.org).

### Resource Development

Online Waldorf Library, a website of resources for Waldorf education

*Themes in Waldorf Education*, compilation of Rudolf Steiner's indications on teaching language arts and mathematics

*Education, Teaching, and Practical Life* by Rudolf Steiner

*Developmental Signatures* – new source book

*Earth Science* by Hans-Ulrich Schmutz

Over 200 articles placed on OWL from Steiner Library

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