Forming School Communities

The renewal of the social organism

Matthias Karutz

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The Renewal of the Social Organism

by

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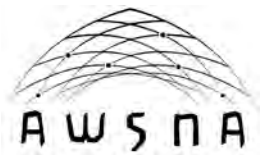

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Editor's Note

The questions of school governance and the cultivation of a healthy "social" life in the mantle of warmth around and within each Waldorf school continue to call for attention and consciousness.

This book was written by Matthias Karutz, a colleague at the Kräherwald Waldorf School in Stuttgart, Germany. Karutz was born in Lübeck in 1928. He attended the Waldorf schools in Stuttgart and Dresden, until they were shut down by the Nazis during the start of World War II.

He completed his high school diploma in Dresden and then went to Marburg to study law and political economics. He terminated these studies to study the technology of the paper industry in Münich. In 1959 he joined the faculty at the Rudolf Steiner School–Kräherwald as a high school teacher of technology, mathematics, and physics.

We are pleased to introduce his thoughts to the English-speaking world.

– David Mitchell
Boulder, CO
September, 2001

Translator's Note

With deep gratitude I would like to acknowledge the great help which I received from John Armstrong in translating this work into English. I also extend my thanks wholeheartedly to Robin Blackmore for typing the manuscript and so making it available for further printing.

I hope that this thoughtful and thorough study which arose out of practical application of the "Threefold Social Order" and many years of experience in working with it will find open minds and active responses.

– Ulrike Brockman

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Foreword

Matthias Karutz, a long-standing and faithful colleague at the Independent Waldorf School Kräherwald, in Stuttgart, has concerned himself for decades not only with questions of technology and life studies but also with most diverse areas of the spiritual and social life. This publication has grown out of that engagement. In it he has endeavored to penetrate thoroughly the idea of the Threefold Social Order. In 1919 Rudolf Steiner aimed to make the spiritual life independent and to encourage schools and universities in Württemburg (South Germany) to administer their affairs themselves. Matthias Karutz has developed a capacity to present these considerations in an impressive and living way using the concrete example of a school. He brought these thoughts to a parents' group of his school and met with a positive response. This caused him to write a small publication containing the ideas of the Threefold Social Order, as well as the thoughts which are fundamental for the administrative organization of his school at the Kräherwald.

Self-administration can be practiced in very different ways. A school which wishes to reflect three socially functional circles according to the legal, economic, and spiritual life needs organs or teachers' meetings which can accomplish the corresponding tasks. This has been worked out at Waldorf schools, quite rightly, in manifold ways. In the example put forward here we see a clear representation of the threefold order. This example can be helpful and instructive for communities who are seeking their form.

We wish this publication widespread success and stimulating results!

– Stefan Leber

Introduction

Wherever founders and members of communities are concerned, the question of communal life and its forms will sooner or later arise. In many cases people within these initiatives will be confronted with problems which go beyond minor frictions and are of a fundamental nature, i.e., how shall we form our community? How can we reach joint decisions? How do we, together, bear responsibility?

It has become apparent that many recent initiatives were started up rather carelessly. Old, customary, hierarchical structures were rejected as outdated, but no one bothered to look for a replacement. Yet one cannot expect that a community can exist without some inner structure. If the hierarchical order is jettisoned, then another system must be created which gives inner firmness to the community.

This involves laws. Any neglect of these will be punished. But one must know them if one wants to act in unison with these laws. We should, therefore, concern ourselves with the ideas of the "Threefold Order of the Social Organism" by Rudolf Steiner.

We often hear it said: "It is impossible for me to concern myself with the Threefold Social Order as well." The day to day running of the institution demands every scrap of energy. Workers are stretched simply to cope with the essentials.

This is so regrettable because the Threefold Social Order holds the keys for new structures which every community needs. What might perhaps at first look very theoretical may turn out to be very practical later. It will not only help to save labor and working time but also bring new life to the productivity of every member in the community and become a central source of strength.

At the heart of the following exposition lies the description of the structure of an independent Rudolf Steiner school. This is embedded in a brief sketch of the basic ideas of the "Threefold Social Order," so we can study both theory and practice in the example of a Rudolf Steiner school which has, after all, proved viable over twenty-eight years.

Although we are concerning ourselves here with a specific case of a school, this has a more general significance because the laws for cooperative communities are the same everywhere. So everyone seeking to form a community of any kind can draw encouragement and possible inspiration from this little book.

– Matthias Karutz
Stuttgart, Germany

What This Publication Endeavors to Promote

Every community has—metaphorically speaking—a living body and a spiritualized soul. As in man, the intentions of soul and spirit give impulses to the life of the body; this is also the case with a group of cooperating people. They have joined for a task, an aim. On the one hand the soul and spirit of a single human being are quite individual; on the other they reveal objective laws. The same holds good for a community. If one gets to know it, one can describe its individual being, often over a long span of time, even if people withdraw and others join.

This being needs a body, an "instrument," to be able to work. It also has its individual form, filled with pulsating life. And although shaped individually, it also succumbs to objective formative laws. What is their nature?

Our human form is a gift from God. The form of a community has to be shaped by ourselves. We can only approximately solve this task if we become conscious of its formative laws. In his comprehensive plan of the Threefold Social Order, from spiritual insight Rudolf Steiner has given us help to achieve this. What has been presented in it for the mutual life of the whole of humanity holds good also for smaller communities, although naturally in a changed form.

It is, therefore, my endeavor to trace the laws working in an organism and to do this from the background of everyday experiences, for example in a school community. Thus, we are concerning ourselves with the task of forming a body through which soul and spirit can work.

The constant development of this soul and spirit nature itself as a presupposition for a bodily form cannot be the claim of this brief publication. It would entail questions of individual training in connection with forming community consciously through daily life. With regard to school communities it applies specifically to teachers' meetings. Splendid impulses have been given to this theme during recent years. I would like to mention here only the publications of Jørgen Smit and Heinz Zimmermann.*

Every organization is threatened by rigidity, by death forces. Yet in an organism forces of life, uplifting qualities, and metamorphoses are at work. To stimulate them in order to form and keep the body of a community healthy is the endeavor of this publication.

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*Jørgen Smit: *Der Werdende Mensch—zur meditativen Vertiefung des Erziehens*,Verlag Freies Geistesleben, 3.Auflage, Stuttgart 1990. Jørgen Smit and others: *Erziehung und Meditation*, Verlag am Goetheanum, 1983. Jørgen Smit and others: *Freiheiteruben*, Verlag Freies Geistesleben, Stuttgart, 1988.

Heinz Zimmermann: *Speaking , Listening, Understanding: The Art of Creating Conscious Conversations* (available from AWSNA Publications). Heinz Zimmermann: *Von der Auftriebskraften in der Erziehung*, Verlag am Goetheanum, Dornach, 1997.