

Mani and the Soul of the Waldorf Movement

Brian Scannell

What does an obscure third century religious leader have to teach us about the socio-emotional health of our students? The answer might surprise people unfamiliar with the biography and teachings of Mani. Mani was known during his lifetime (216-276) as a doctor, not of the body, but of the various afflictions of the soul. He was a visionary who expressed that the human soul was the battleground where the forces of good and evil wage war. This inner battleground was—much more recently—also apparent to the anthroposophical psychologist Bernard Lievegoed who notes in his book, *The Battle for the Soul* (published posthumously in 1993), that the human soul is in grave danger as the forces of our modern world work to traumatize and fragment it. This article will explore how Mani's biography might be a guidepost for the type of healing pedagogy our students need now more than ever.

One of the most remarkable statements Rudolf Steiner ever made was expressed to biodynamic farming pioneer, Ehrenfried Pfeiffer, in the early 1920s, revealing that Waldorf education, while beneficial to humanity at large, was created to provide the right kind of education for one particular individual. That individual was Mani, whom Steiner believed would incarnate in America sometime at the end of the 20th century. If this is true, it is quite possible that Mani is in our midst. Who is Mani and what does their possible incarnation mean for the Waldorf movement more broadly, and for our students more specifically?

Historically speaking, Mani was a religious leader who lived in Persia between 216-276CE. He was born south of what is now Baghdad, in Babylonia, in a region known today as the Middle East, an important meeting place between East and West, but also an area known for its decadence and sinfulness during Mani's lifetime. He was raised by his mother after his father left Mani at an early age to join a religious community of Jewish Christian Baptists known as the Elchasaites. At age four, Mani joined his father only to leave at age 12 after receiving his first vision that told him to forsake the congregation. According to Richard Seddon, who wrote the book *Mani: His Life and Work*, Mani claimed that from youth on he came under special divine protection and that angels and powers of holiness brought him up through visions and signs.



Crystal Seal of Mani. Believed by some experts to be Mani's personal seal (Mani is shown at center). The inscription around the seal reads, "Mani, apostle of Jesus Christ."

At age twenty-four Mani had a second vision that shifted the direction of his life. A Coptic text relates its significance:

He revealed to me the hidden Mystery, hidden from the ages and generations of men, the mysteries of the depths and the heights, the mysteries of light and darkness, the mysteries of the contest, the war, and the great battle caused by darkness. He revealed to me how light and darkness together gave rise to the world... the creation of Adam... the mystery of the tree of knowledge of which Adam ate, by which his eyes were made to see, the mystery of the Apostles sent out to select the churches. Thus did the Paraclete disclose to me all that had been and all that will be, and all that the eye sees and the ear hears and the thought thinks.¹

Here Mani articulates a major tenet of his worldview, the relation of darkness and light. This relationship proved to be one of the most controversial aspects of Mani's teaching (and the reason its most famous practitioner Augustine of Hippo would eventually abandon

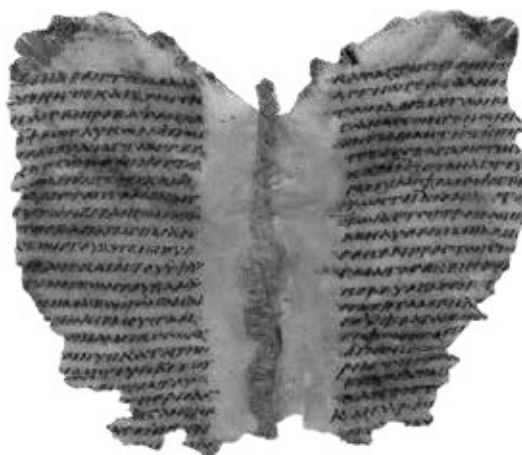
¹ See: *The Kephalaia of the Teacher: The Edited Coptic Manichaean, Texts in Translation with Commentary* by Iain Gardner. Brill Academic Publishing, 1995.

the religion). Mani believed that the dual aspects of light and darkness held equal value and creative potential. In this sense, both good and evil, light and dark, work together as co-creators of the universe. Mani also believed that matter was a special mingling of the forces of light and darkness and that the Earthly task was to liberate light from matter. In his Temple Legend lecture series on Manicheism, Steiner expands on the idea:

The profound thought which lies in this is that the Kingdom of darkness has to be overcome by the Kingdom of light, not by means of punishment, but through mildness; not by resisting evil, but by uniting with it in order to redeem evil as such. (Steiner, *The Temple Legend*)

If this radical idea sounds familiar to a modern audience, it is because nonviolent practitioners like Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., actualized this esoteric wisdom in their respective campaigns for freedom. King even used the phrase “redeem the soul of America” as he attempted to convert racist southerners through the power of love. Of course, these ideas didn’t originate with Mani. In the Christian tradition, Jesus’ *Sermon on the Mount* provided the theoretic framework that Mani shaped his nonviolent practices around, as he attempted to realize Jesus’ vision. Mani’s gift wasn’t in creating new forms, but in creatively synthesizing existing forms in novel ways.

After his vision at age 24, Mani traveled widely around the Middle East and eventually to India. Biographer Richard Seddon notes that Mani likely learned “the middle way” from Buddhists in India and that Mani’s chief aim was to make Christ accessible to adherents of every faith. The prophet Mani envisioned his religion (which included the teachings of Zarathustra, Buddha, and Christ) as a universal and therefore “transcultural” entity, which led to its vast spread from Europe to Asia. His followers became known simply as Christians, though their understanding of the significance of Christ was not tethered to any dogmatic ideologies. They rejected the sacrament of baptism and most of the Old Testament. These followers formed a community in Babylon dedicated to living a nonviolent lifestyle and freeing light from matter. They privately referred to themselves as *sons of a widow*, in part because they sought spiritual enlightenment from within, without the aid of external authorities. Adherents lived in varying degrees of poverty, were vegetarians, and took a vow of abstinence. Because of their beliefs about light being trapped in matter they were also environmentally conscious and operated on a “do no harm” basis to the living world around them.



The Cologne Mani-Codex was discovered near Asyut, Egypt, in 1969, and purchased by the University of Cologne. It gives one of the most complete pictures of the early life of Mani. It has a remarkable resemblance to a butterfly.

In addition to his ideas about the nature of light and darkness, Mani was an artist. In fact, in the Islamic world he is remembered more as artist than as a religious leader. Mani believed that the visual arts could communicate the same truth as writing or speech. He seemed to intuit that some might be hindered by language and that the image could serve as an alternative pathway to spiritual transformation. A writing attributed to Mani and relayed by biographer Richard Seddon reads, “Let him who hears these truths in words also see them in an image and let him who is unable to learn them from words learn them from pictures” (Seddon, 1998, p. 9).

Much like his idea of the equality of light and dark, Mani also believed that the written word and the image held equal value. This equality of image and word is a central tenant of the first project that I highlight in this article. This view also makes a lot of sense in light of recent discoveries in neuroscience around brain lateralization. Most brains process words with one hemisphere of the brain and images with the other, therefore Mani’s approach speaks to the two distinct ways our brains learn.

The Modern Adolescent Soul

Before exploring how Manichean ideas might find form in the Waldorf curriculum, it is important to identify the current issues that a modern curriculum needs to address. In the preface to her book *A Practical Guide to Curative Education*, author Robyn Brown notes:

Many years ago, when I was first a class teacher, I would say that there were perhaps one or two

students in each class that could have benefited from the work of Curative Education. Now I am often asked to observe classes. I would say that, on average, one-third of the children in each class I see could use this work; another third could use it to a lesser degree; and another third fit the picture I was given to expect in my Waldorf teacher training 30 years ago. (Brown, 2016, p. X)

Brown's observation is echoed by anthroposophical doctor Michaela Glöckler in her book *A Healing Education* (2000) where she notes, "The children I remember [in the US] in the 60s were more or less healthy children from a doctor's point of view. And in our time we must say that healthy children are becoming even more rare, something special." Both Brown's and Glöckler's observations are consistent with data from the last decade that shows a marked increase in the psychological suffering of our youth. Data from the National Institutes of Health shows that nearly 1 in 3 of adolescents ages 13 to 18 will experience an anxiety disorder. These numbers have been rising steadily over the last few decades. Between 2007 and 2015, anxiety disorders in children and teens went up 20%. During roughly the same time period, the rate of suicide for those ages 10 to 24 increased nearly 60%, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In 2019, an estimated 4.1 million adolescents aged 12 to 17 in the United States had at least one major depressive episode according to the National Institutes of Health. Finally, according to the National Survey of Children's Health, almost half the nation's children have experienced at least one or more types of serious childhood trauma.

All this data came before the entire world went on lockdown for COVID, which has greatly accelerated these alarming trends. While this is not an article about the root causes of these trends, it is clear that new technologies like social media, our consumer culture, and significant changes to our diets all play a role in pushing adolescents to the breaking point. As Brown notes, Waldorf schools are not immune from these problems. In fact, to some degree these issues were present when Rudolf Steiner founded the first Waldorf school over a hundred years ago. Steiner gave a series of lectures in the summer of 1924 that became known as the *Curative Education Course*. He opens those lectures by stating: "We have, as you know, quite a number of children whose development has been arrested and whom we have now to educate—or again, to heal, in

so far as this is possible." The Manichean stream brings this healing impulse to all matters of soul health. This soul realm covers spiritual afflictions, like anxiety and depression, and also issues like psychological trauma that is often a root cause of the arrested development Steiner referenced above. In his book, *Trauma and the Soul*, Jungian analyst Donald Kalsched pinpoints the epicenter of trauma: "In trauma work, we must learn to speak a soulful language, because it is uniquely the human soul that is threatened with annihilation by early trauma in a child's life" (Kalsched, 2013, p. 117).

As the souls of our youth come under unprecedented attack, it becomes especially important that the healing stream of the Manicheans take on a larger role in Waldorf pedagogy. The trauma, depression, and anxiety that many students experience are of course in addition to the necessary crises of adolescence that are part and parcel of the difficult transition from child to adult in any culture. Even in the most ideal circumstances, coming of age is a perilous journey that requires thoughtful educators who essentially function as psychological midwives helping students to successfully negotiate this crucial spiritual transition. Mani biographer Christine Gruwez notes that the inner gesture of the Manichean impulse is "noticing the one who stays behind, rather than looking for the one who is already ahead on the path" (Gruwez, 2014, p. 74). Any honest assessment of our students would conclude that more and more are being left behind as they attempt to navigate our perilous world.

Who is Mani and what does his possible incarnation mean for the Waldorf movement more broadly, and for our students more specifically?

This article will explore several areas from Mani's biography that hint at what Mani-inspired curricular impulses might look like. Firstly, as Mani held the image as sacred, I will highlight a project I created where the image and art hold a soul-healing potential. Secondly, inspired by Mani's adoption of the middle way and his ability to synthesize disparate ideas, I will explore an assignment that grew from this mediating impulse. Finally, I will comment on the polarities that have emerged in the Waldorf movement around the work of diversity, equity and inclusion and offer a pathway to heal those divisions.

The Healing Image

From what little is known about Mani it is clear that he placed a high value on the image as a pathway to spiritual transformation. One of his canonical writings (of his seven or eight major works) was known as *Picture Book* and it was essentially a series of illustrations by Mani

himself, in which he attempted to convey key elements of his cosmology in pictorial form. The power of the image to illuminate and heal is the focus of this section.

In 2016, I started doing research for a new class themed around the monomyth or hero's journey, a pattern that mythologist Joseph Campbell discovered in stories across all cultures and time. In essence, Campbell discovered that all cultures are telling the same story. Campbell gives a very detailed breakdown of this cycle (see below), but also offers a three-part overview. In it he states that the hero first *separates* from his or her known world; then is *initiated* through a series of trials; and, finally, the hero *returns* home with some new treasure or boon, which typically is some new way of understanding or being. The initiation stage of the hero's journey involves a series of trials leading up to a final challenge Campbell called the supreme ordeal. It is during the supreme ordeal that the hero is tested to confirm whether the changes that have been awakened—typically in the belly of the whale stage—have become permanent.

I designed this hero's journey class with the idea that students in the 10th grade would first be able to identify this pattern in myths across different cultures, with the end goal that they would be able to recognize the pattern in their own lives. I have found that introducing the hero's journey is most appropriate for 10th graders, as they seem well suited for the type of comparative analysis this pattern recognition requires. Like cycles in nature, the healthy pattern involves the continual death of the old to birth the seeds of the new, for as Goethe noted, "Until you have experienced this—die and become—you are but a ghost-like visitor on the earth." In this sense, the hero's cycle is to the inner life what the plant cycle is to the life of a plant.

As a culmination to my hero's journey class at the end of 10th grade, I teach the myth of Theseus, have my students write a literary analysis paper about it, and end the year with a project I designed called *The Labyrinth of Your Mind*. I start this project by showing the class a piece of art entitled *The Maze*, by Canadian artist William Kurelek. Kurelek painted the piece in 1953 when he was an inpatient at Maudsley Psychiatric





The Maze by William Kurelek—Canada (1953)

Hospital in London, England. During his self-healing process, Kurelek completed several paintings over the period of his several years residency at the hospital. In his autobiography, *Someone with Me*, Kurelek writes that *The Maze* was “a kind of pictorial package of all my emotional problems” (Kurelek, 1980, p. 18).

The autobiographical painting shows the artist’s skull cut open to reveal the inner compartments of his mind, each of which represents a troubling memory from his life. In the center, there is a dead rat which, according to the artist, symbolizes his depression and feelings of depersonalization. In another section, a young Kurelek is literally kicked out of his house by his father.

In yet another section, Kurelek sits alone as other children play together behind him. The painting offers a glimpse into a deeply suffering mind, a suffering with its root in significant childhood trauma. In his conception, the artist sees his mind as a trap with each traumatic episode pushing him further into the unescapable maze of his inner life. It is clear to me, after years of working with *The Maze* and learning about the artist, that in addition to his childhood traumas, Kurelek was a highly sensitive person who acutely felt the pain of living in

the spiritual wasteland of our modern world. Part of his recovery involved his becoming a Catholic to address his spiritual longing. The other element of his recovery was naming his trauma and giving it form. Kurelek’s artwork is a great visual representation of the pain of being cut off from the spiritual world and can help students identify and navigate the unique challenges of the age of consciousness soul. The beauty of art is that it doesn’t speak to the intellect (which in Kurelek’s case is identified as the source of the problem) but is instead written in the visual language of the soul.

It is important to note that a maze and a labyrinth, though in writing are often used synonymously, are not the same thing. A maze (which Kurelek represents) presents a series of dead-end passages with the intention of trapping or confusing someone. A labyrinth—the focal point of the story of Theseus—follows a long but continual passageway to a center and out again. One cannot get lost in a labyrinth but may turn back before reaching the center. Labyrinths are ancient in origin and date back to indigenous peoples and early civilizations. At Newgrange, in Ireland, a spiral, a version of the labyrinth, can be found decorating the outside of

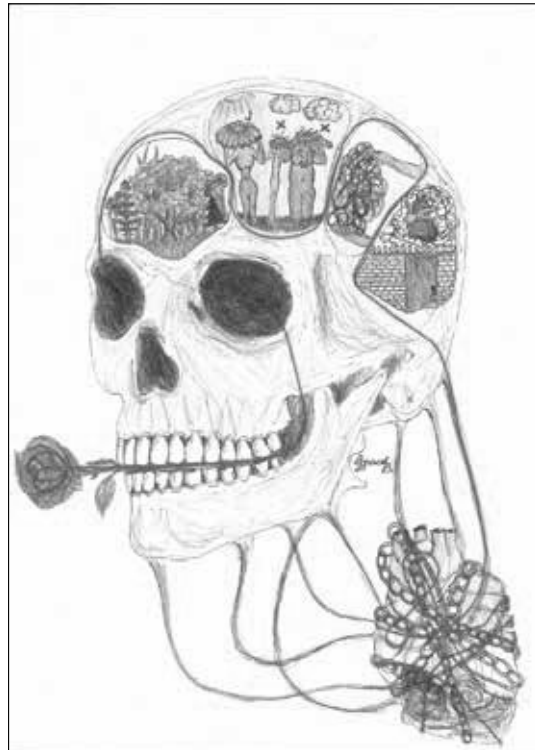
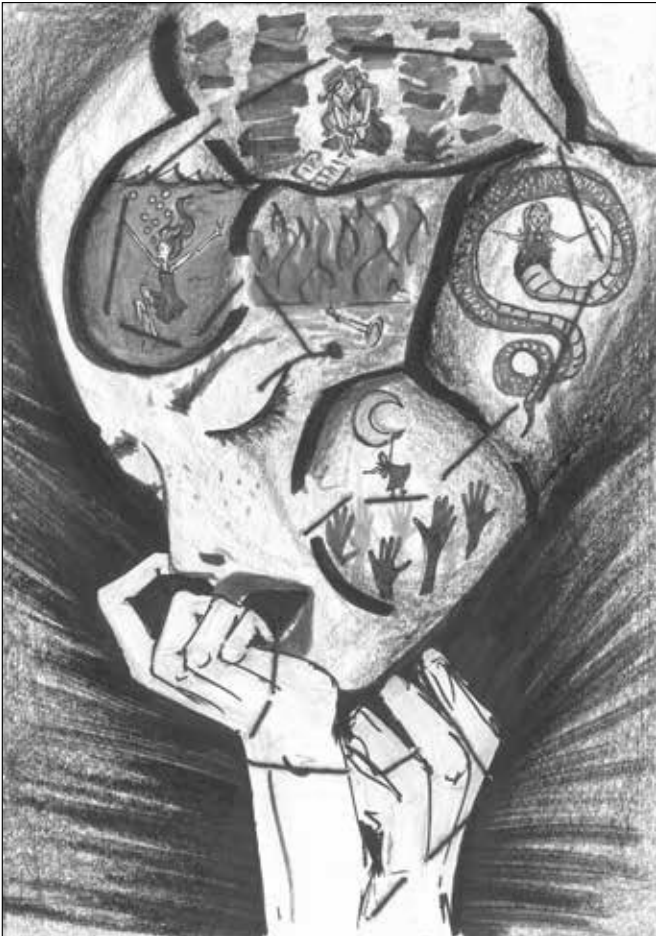


the chambers that were created over 5000 years ago. Unlike a maze, a labyrinth is a healthy conception of the mind or inner life. One enters, moves toward a goal or obstacle, then exits. Inward navigation or in-sight is facilitated by both courage and human will. The movement in and out of a labyrinth is a microcosm of the movement of the universe with its in and out breath or expansion and contraction. The in-and-out rhythm of the labyrinth is also a metaphor for the soul incarnating into a body. The labyrinth symbol is so important that it decorates the floors of many important churches including Chartres Cathedral in France.

Many students I work with have unhealthy conceptions of their minds or inner lives. I suspect that these unhealthy pictures are for many a result of trauma, which we all experience to varying degrees, though this seems to be steadily increasing as our world becomes increasingly unhealthy. Students often express disbelief when we discuss the idea that they could have control of their thoughts. For many high school students, their inner worlds feel more like Kurelek's maze than a labyrinth that they can enter and exit at will. After we spend some time looking at *The Maze* and analyzing its symbolic significance, the next step invites the students to produce art in which they begin to visualize their mind as a labyrinth and in essence map their own inner hero's journey. The assignment requires students

to look objectively at their lives, and, in this sense, is helping them understand that there is a level of awareness beyond the suffering that many feel so intensely.

I assigned this project for the first time during the 2016-2017 school year and have had hundreds of students complete it since then. Many of the students have said that the project has stayed with them and that it helped them understand their lives better. This project helps them envision confronting and overcoming challenges in their lives. It has also been interesting to notice patterns in the supreme ordeals the students select. Overwhelmingly, female students have placed issues with body image at the center of their minds. For males, their supreme ordeals range from anger issues to substance abuse to problems with procrastination. Here a quote by David Oldfield, author of *The Journey: A Creative Approach to the Necessary Crises of Adolescence*, seems relevant. In speaking about the importance of this envisioning process, Oldfield notes, "Prior to anyone making any lasting changes in their lives, they first must imagine themselves changed" (Oldfield, 1987, p. XV). Ultimately, the hero's cycle is about this spiritual or inner change. Along with the myth of Theseus, Kurelek's *The Maze* is an integral part of this curriculum, as it creatively represents an inner life that has become stuck due to trauma, and students increasingly can see themselves in it. In this way, this



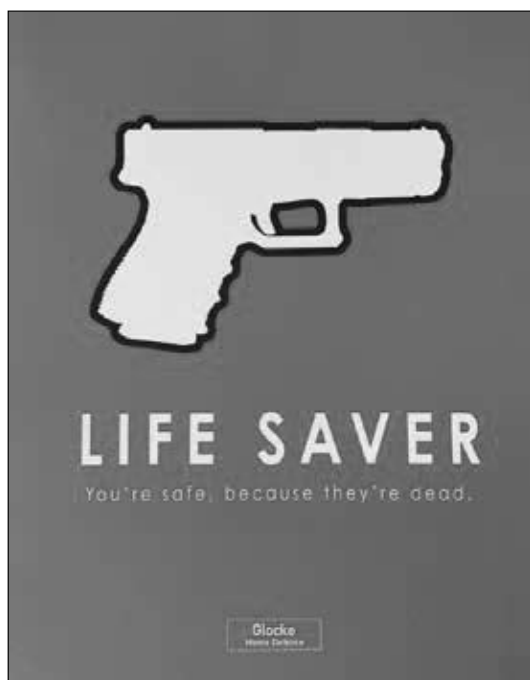
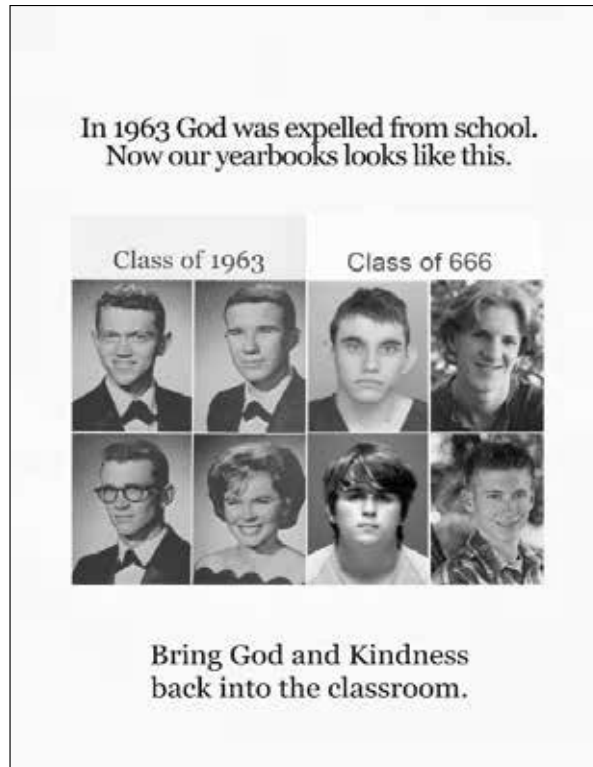
project acknowledges and bears witness to the psycho-spiritual realities of modern life, but also introduces the idea of the labyrinth as a healing impulse. What follows

are a few examples of *The Labyrinth of Your Mind* project, all of which were done by students at the end of their sophomore year.

The Synthesizer of Polarities

Manicheism is often mistakenly referred to as a dualistic religion because of its belief in light and darkness (good and evil are also used synonymously) as two distinct forces that shape our world, but Mani believed

that light and darkness were co-creating forces and were actually mixed together. Manichean communities worked tirelessly through their thoughts and actions to redeem darkness, so that, as Steiner noted, “transformed evil [could] become a quite special good.”



Examples of student propaganda posters for “1984” class. The students are tasked with creating effective propaganda for positions they don’t actually support.

Mani traveled widely during his life and was probably drawn to Buddha's concept of the middle way during his time in India. The Buddha preached about the middle way—the path between polarities—in his first sermon after his enlightenment. Relating this back to curriculum, a Mani-inspired curriculum is therefore one that attempts to identify and synthesize any given set of polarities.

There is no question that in America we are living in one of the most polarized times in our history. While I don't attribute this division to former President Donald Trump, there is no doubt that the rhetoric of his presidency pushed people further into their already established political camps. In my own life story, I have experienced both extremes of this political polarization, from growing up in the conservative state of Georgia, to settling after college in the progressive Pacific Northwest. Though I disliked growing up in Georgia with its conservative politics, as I lived longer in the states of Oregon and Washington (in many ways the polar opposite of the South), I began to appreciate how important it is for governments and institutions to have some checks and balances to their political ideologies. The more I taught in Washington State, the more I became convinced that the prevailing political ideology was being unconsciously adopted by most students in a way that served as a major barrier to their ability to think for themselves and to their striving to become spiritually free.

In his 1946 essay "Why I Write," George Orwell noted, "The more one is conscious of one's political bias, the more chance one has of acting politically without sacrificing one's aesthetic and intellectual integrity" (Orwell, 2005, p. 8). I use Orwell's essay as an introduction to his book *1984*, which, in my opinion, is one of the best books for helping students identify the myriad ways in which society attempts to keep them under control. One of the main ways people are controlled in *1984* is through *ideological* indoctrination. The 12th grade is the optimal time to teach *1984* because by that age students have usually made significant strides in the ability to be objective in examining their own lives. This objectivity allows them to ask the hard questions the book raises about what they believe and why they believe it.

While reading *1984*, we spend a large amount of time talking about propaganda: what it is, examples from history, how it works, etc. At the conclusion of those conversations, I ask students to make a propaganda poster, but with the caveat that it has to be for an issue

or cause they *don't* support. In addition to that, part of their grade is based on how effective their poster is. This aims to ensure that they do not design a poster that mocks the cause they are meant to promote. As my students have been overwhelmingly Democrats in their political leanings, most of their posters over the years have been in support of policies championed by conservatives. In the examples that follow, the issues that students took up included the police, religion in schools, gun control, and abortion. My goal for the assignment is not to change their minds, but instead to force them to carefully consider the opposing arguments to what they believe. To ensure they do that research I ask them to prepare for the poster by writing an annotated bibliography with three *reputable* sources, the key word here being reputable.

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In debriefing with students after they have completed the project, countless students over the years have confessed it was the first time they had ever considered that there were perfectly sound, logical reasons why someone might hold a belief counter to their own. This is especially true of the many female

students who have chosen to create pro-life posters. They often started by finding weak religious-based sources, but with some prodding, found sources that challenged their preconceived notions about what the pro-life argument really is about. Again, while I don't think the project changed their minds, I do believe an assignment like this allows for some freedom in how these politicized ideas live in students. In many cases, students have reported that the assignment helped them be less rigid in their thinking and increased their empathy for others.

In his biography of Mani, Richard Seddon notes that, "If what is good is to remain good, it must constantly harmonize with what hinders it" (Seddon, 1998, p. 30-31). In this sense, these propaganda posters help students to understand and make peace with the ideas that exist in opposition to their own. Speaking of the danger of polarization in *Art Heals: How Creativity Cures the Soul*, author Shaun McNiff says, "The absence of an intermediary realm between polarized positions can create a tight squeeze that is both restrictive and dangerous. When there is little room between opposing positions, each is likely to perceive the other as a threat, rather than as a partner in the larger interplay of creation" (McNiff, 2004). This quote is a wonderful summary of the dangers Manicheans perceive in polarization, and McNiff's assertion that polarities work together as part of creation mirrors the way Manicheans view

light and darkness as working together as co-creators of the universe.

The Polarizing Work of DEI

As this issue of the *Research Bulletin* is focused on the socio-emotional world of students, it might seem abrupt and misplaced to end this article with a section on the work of DEI, focused mainly on faculty and staff development. But DEI trainings and the initiatives that arise from them directly impact students, especially if those trainings have the potential to polarize the school community. A polarized faculty radiates spiritual energy to its students in the same way that the unspoken tensions of antagonistic parents affect their children. A feeling of shared purpose and unity are the hallmarks of any healthy institution, and the following section is meant to raise important questions about whether our approaches to DEI at both the institutional and nationwide levels might be negatively impacting the health of our students and of our schools more broadly.

Most Waldorf schools have prioritized the work of diversity, equity, and inclusion, which, I am told by some frustrated people in the movement, was something that took way too long to realize. The work of making Waldorf education accessible, inviting, and relevant to a global community is one of the most important tasks of our time. And yet, there is great irony that the work of making our schools more inclusive and diverse has actually served to polarize our movement. I have been associated with three different Waldorf schools, and at each, the ways in which DEI initiatives were implemented served to divide the faculty and push them into various camps. I am not alone in this observation, as it is happening at Waldorf schools throughout the country. In his *Bulletin* article from Spring/Summer 2021, Selim Tili—formerly of the Rudolf Steiner School of New York City—names two camps: the activists and the academics. Checking in with my own experience, I might call them the traditionalists and the progressives. Whatever labels you put on the phenomenon, the results are the same—a polarized movement where communication has broken down and trust in each other has eroded. Not only does this have major consequences on the health of our schools and our students, it also makes it nearly impossible to do the type of a healing DEI work that this moment demands of us. If what I’m describing doesn’t sound like your school, perhaps this tension lies

below the surface; dissenters may not feel comfortable voicing their views.

At a Waldorf high school I worked at in the Pacific Northwest, this polarizing approach to DEI was particularly pronounced. Like many schools, the faculty there was interested in doing a book study to better understand how to make Waldorf schools more inclu-

sive. In addition to reading what was at the time the mainstay of the mainstream DEI movement, *White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo, I suggested pairing it with a book by a conservative black author, *White Guilt* by Shelby Steele. Though the faculty overwhelmingly voted to read both books together, my former school’s administration told us we couldn’t read *White Guilt* in a school spon-

sored reading group because the author didn’t believe that racism still existed (this claim is in fact not true). For all the talk about conservatives banning books, here was a liberal organization deeply rooted in the idea of freedom telling its faculty what they could and couldn’t read together. How could an educational movement such as ours, that ends every staff meeting with a commitment to have “courage for the truth,” get to the point where we were unable to see the value in reading and understanding a different perspective on such an important topic?

The DEI reading lists that many schools now post on their websites are a key indicator of the ideological and political leanings of their respective schools. What becomes clear in reading these lists is that most schools in our movement lean heavily to the left, and that shouldn’t be a surprise to most people. This becomes problematic when the ideas that inform the work of DEI originate exclusively from one perspective, even when that requires excluding the perspectives of people of color whose ideas run counter to the prevailing narrative. I have yet to see any of these lists mention books by heterodox authors of color like Glen Lowry, Coleman Hughes, John McWhorter, Thomas Sowell, and Chloe Valdary, among other scholars like Jonathan Haidt, Douglas Murray, and James Lindsay. The irony is that several of the people on this list identify as liberal Democrats. With all our focus on diversity, why is ideological and political diversity given such short shrift? If the goal of DEI work is inclusivity and wholeness, it seems counterproductive to exclude voices that make up nearly half of our country. To bring this back to students, our schools are made up of a myriad of student

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voices, and not all of them fit neatly into progressive boxes. By not honoring political and ideological diversity with the same level of focus and attention that we are now giving racial and gender diversity, we are creating new problems as we attempt to solve already existing ones.

The Manichean solution to the polarization around DEI in the Waldorf movement is no different than the propaganda poster assignment I assign my students, but instead of researching an opposing view, it involves reading across the aisle and outside our bubbles. One thing that might be helpful is a truly inclusive DEI reading list, and I suggest one at the end of this article. The world and its algorithms are getting very effective at surrounding us with only the ideas that please us. When I think about the power of this technology, I am reminded of a quote by Steiner where he says that in the future, “[People] will practice evil consciously, exquisitely, and with the aid of highly developed intellects.” An algorithm is evil when it serves to isolate us and break us off from the whole. Imagine a more spiritually enlightened algorithm that instead of giving us what we wanted, suggests what we needed. The true work of DEI is based in compassion and complexity as we move courageously toward wholeness. Our movement has become politically lopsided, and yet to heal we need to acknowledge this and hold the tension of opposites. It is only through this spiritual holding that something new can be born, and to truly meet the moment, we must make space for something new to be born. Both the activists and the traditionalists have important contributions to make. The only way we survive is by working together.

Conclusion

In her book *Walking with Your Time*, author Christine Gruwez notes:

The primeval gesture of Manichaeism is the gesture of inclusion, welcoming and integration. The primeval gesture of the power of evil [...] is the gesture of fragmentation, division and exclusion. Being connected may be experienced in any of the three areas of human life described above, certainly, but in all cases we are concerned with one and the same fundamental question: in what way, when something threatens to split off, can I succeed in integrating it after all, and so allow an open space to be created for a possible (but not

guaranteed) process of transformation and healing. (Gruwez, 2011, p. 118)

Each time I read this quote I think of Abraham Lincoln and his thankless mission of saving the Union. The reconciling of North and South in order to give a new birth to The *United States of America* was a powerful Manichean gesture. I also think of the opposite gesture, the fracturing of the Catholic church in the wake of Martin Luther’s Ninety-Five Theses, a fracturing the church never recovered from. The forces of division and fragmentation are more powerful now than they have ever been.

There has been much written over the years of all the various divisions and spiritual streams that make up the Waldorf movement. On one level there is the classic divide between the Platonists and the Aristotelians; another view sees the Cain and Abel streams active in the West. In his book *The Battle for the Soul*, Bernard Lievegoed talks about the spiritual streams of the Anthroposophists, Rosicrucians, and the Manicheans coming together in the 21st century. What is clear is that we need each other’s gifts and insights if we are to thrive and remain relevant in a world that is crumbling all around us. Words like cooperation, equanimity, and tolerance should become our mantras as we figure out together what this moment is asking of us.

It is possible that the incarnation of Mani is among us and even possibly sitting in front of us each day in our classes. I imagine the question to ask ourselves is: “What are we each doing—regardless of the perceived impact—to help our broken world heal and move in the direction of wholeness?” Polarization, trauma, and algorithms are among the major fragmenting forces active in our modern world. From the Manichaeian perspective, they each work against our inner light and await redemption through re-unification. In a sense, we are living out the myth of Osiris as we are chopped up by our political allegiances, sophisticated mathematical equations, and more and more, just from the trauma of living in our spiritual wasteland. This might sound bleak, but the potential for healing exists all around us.

I sometimes show a video to my students of a Trump rally where the organizers invite Hawk Newsome, a Black Lives Matter activist, onstage to share their platform. Instead of using the opportunity to chastise and instigate the Trump supporters, Newsome chose to find middle ground, at one point saying, “If we really want to make America great, we do it together.” These simple

yet racial gestures from both sides—inviting Newsome onstage and Newsome’s decision to use the platform to find common ground—moved these two groups from intense polarized opposition toward dialog. Newsome admitted after his speech that he came to the rally to raise his fists militantly in the air and exchange insults with the Trump supporters, and yet something altogether different happened. Newsome says, “I feel like two sides that never listen to each other actually made progress.” The video ends with Newsome taking a picture with the head of *Bikers for Trump* and his son Jacob. Newsome reflects, “Here I went from being their enemy, to someone they wanted to take pictures with their children.” The nonviolent impulses that both sides opened themselves up to in this important, yet unfortunately all too rare example are not new. They grow from seeds planted by a radical, nonviolent spiritual leader nearly two millennia ago, and our world may finally be ready to begin reaping the harvest.



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Appendix

Healing our political and ideological divide through a multi-perspective, multidisciplinary approach to the work of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

The following suggested reading list seeks to broaden the scope of DEI work by introducing texts that bring more political and ideological diversity to our important conversations around diversity, equity and inclusion. The list also attempts to highlight DEI categories—neurodiversity, for instance—that are sometimes neglected as we prioritize this work. Lastly, in several instances the list offers suggested pairings of texts that contain similar themes but that are explored from different ideological perspectives.

Mainstream progressive/left perspective:

1. *How to Be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi (pair with *Discrimination and Disparities* by Thomas Sowell)
2. *White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo (pair with *White Guilt* by Shelby Steele)
3. *Me and White Supremacy* by Layla F. Saad
4. *Raising White Kids* by Jennifer Harvey
5. *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates (pair with *A Lot Like Me* by Larry Elder)
6. *Why are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* by Beverly Daniel Tatum
7. *So You Want to Talk about Race* by Ijeoma Oluo
8. *Tears We Cannot Stop* by Michael Eric Dyson (pair with *Please Stop Helping Us* by Jason L. Riley)

Mainstream center/right perspective:

1. *Discrimination and Disparities* by Thomas Sowell (pair with *How to Be an Antiracist*)
2. *White Guilt* by Shelby Steele (pair with *White Fragility*)
3. *A Lot Like Me* by Larry Elder (pair with *Between the World and Me*)
4. *Black Rednecks and White Liberals* by Thomas Sowell
5. *Please Stop Helping Us* by Jason L. Riley (pair with *Tears We Cannot Stop*)
6. *The Madness of Crowds* by Douglas Murray
7. *Diversity Delusion* by Heather Mac Donald
8. *Blackout* by Candace Owens

Academic Centrist Perspective:

1. *Whistling Vivaldi* by Claude Steele (Stanford University)

2. *Cynical Theories* by Helen Pluckrose and James Lindsay
3. *The Coddling of the American Mind* by Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt (offers a counter-perspective on microaggressions) (NYU)
4. *Woke Racism* by John McWhorter (Columbia University)

Historical perspective (progressive/left):

1. *Stamped from the Beginning* by Ibram X. Kendi (pair with *Land of Hope* by Wilfred McClay)
2. *The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story* by Nikole Hannah-Jones (pair with *1620: A Critical Response to the 1619 Project* by Peter W. Wood)
3. *Caste* by Isabel Wilkerson
4. *A People's History of the United States* by Howard Zinn (pair with *A Patriot's History of the United States* by Larry Schweikart and Michael Allen)

Historical perspective (center/right):

1. *1620: A Critical Response to the 1619 Project* by Peter W. Wood (pair with *The 1619 Project*)
2. *American Marxism* by Mark Levin
3. *Land of Hope* by Wilfred McClay (pair with *Stamped from the Beginning*)
4. *A Patriot's History of the United States* by Larry Schweikart and Michael Allen (pair with *A People's History of the United States*)

Spiritual/religious perspective:

1. *The Seventh Shrine* by Orland Bishop
2. *Fault Lines* by Voddie T. Baucham, Jr. (pair with *Be the Bridge* by Latasha Morrison)
3. *Radical Dharma* by Rev. Angel Kyodo Williams and Lama Rod Owens
4. *Live Not by Lies: A Manual for Christian Dissidents* by Rod Dreher
5. *Be the Bridge* by Latasha Morrison (pair with *Fault Lines*)

Pedagogical perspective:

1. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* by Paulo Freire (pair with *The Marxification of Education* by James Lindsay)
2. *The Marxification of Education* by James Lindsay (pair with *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*)

3. *Teaching to Transgress* by bell hooks
4. *Education for Adolescence* by Rudolf Steiner
(pair with *School Without Fear* by J. Krishnamurti)
5. *School Without Fear* by J. Krishnamurti
(pair with *Education for Adolescence*)

Jungian (psychological) perspective:

1. *The Racial Complex* by Fanny Brewster
2. *Archetypal Nonviolence*
by Renee Moreau Cunningham

Books about Gender:

1. *Irreversible Damage* by Abigail Shrier
(controversial to many on the left;
pair with *Supporting Gender Diversity
in Early Childhood Classrooms*)
2. *Supporting Gender Diversity in Early Childhood
Classrooms* multiple authors (controversial to
many on the right; pair with *Irreversible Damage*)
3. *The End of Gender* by Dr. Debra Soh
(pair with *Delusions of Gender* by Cordelia Fine)
4. *Delusions of Gender* by Cordelia Fine
(pair with *The End of Gender*)

Books about Neurodiversity:

1. *Neurotribes* by Steve Silberman
2. *Thinking in Pictures* by Temple Grandin
3. *The Autistic Brain: Helping Different Kinds of Minds
Succeed* by Temple Grandin
4. *The Dyslectic Advantage* by Brock
and Fernet Eide
5. *The Gift of Dyslexia* by Ronald Davis
6. *Scattered Minds: The Origin and Healing
of Attention Deficit* by Gabor Mate

Books about the Environment and Biodiversity:

1. *Oneness vs the 1%* by Vandana Shiva (pair with
How to Avoid a Climate Disaster by Bill Gates)
2. *How to Avoid a Climate Disaster* by Bill Gates
(pair with *Oneness vs the 1%*)
3. *Unsettled? What Climate Science Tells Us, What it
Doesn't, and Why it Matters* by Steven Koonin

4. *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom,
Scientific Knowledge and the Wisdom of Plants*
Robin Wall Kimmerer
5. *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson

Books about Polarization:

1. *All About Love* by bell hooks
2. *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided
by Politics and Religion* by Jonathan Haidt
3. *Why We're Polarized* by Ezra Klein

Brian Scannell is a middle and high school humanities teacher at Hawthorne Valley Waldorf School. Brian grew up in Georgia and from a young age was drawn to literature, the arts, and music. He felt called out west for college and earned his B.A. in English literature from Montana State University. After graduation he worked for a number of years in outdoor education before moving to Portland, Oregon. There he worked for many years at educational non-profits until he eventually turned his focus to photography and journalism. He followed that dream out to Amman, Jordan, where he worked for a variety of magazines. Brian and his wife Julie also worked on Semester at Sea, a university that circumnavigates the globe. Brian went back to graduate school in 2014 to earn his Master's in Teaching degree from the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, WA, and has been a high school teacher ever since. He shifted into Waldorf education in 2020 and holds a Waldorf teaching certificate from the Center for Anthroposophy.