

**Proverbs
of
Purgatory**

by

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Proverbs of Purgatory

Prelude

For years I wondered, would I ever write a book? If so, what? Poetry, a novel, a life?

I listened for a call, for what needed to be written. In one week, age forty-seven, I've had three ideas, all related to my work. At age twenty-one I met Waldorf Education and soon began my training. Seven years after my training, I began to teach. In my twenty-first year of teaching, I just became able to think of certain work-writing, as though Waldorf Education had in some new way started to become Man in me. Here's a little one, with a deep bow and a wink to William Blake, who showed the way to so much.

*Fear and Hope are Vision**
Wrestle with them, dance with them, all ye who enter here.



In my forty-eighth year,
my twenty-first year of Waldorf teaching,
as Dante and Virgil had once again
allowed me to join them,
guiding an eleventh grade through the Inferno,
we stepped out beneath the stars.
I bid the students farewell until Parzival,
having pointed to Purgatorio and Paradisio ahead.
Of my guides I took leave,
though I often felt them near.

I alone stepped forth to the Gates of Purgatorio.
Over the gates shone brilliantly Blakes' words,
"Fear and Hope are ... Vision."
Beneath them shone equally brilliantly,
"Wrestle with them. Dance with them,
All ye who enter here."

I entered, and met the Guardian.
Through eurythmy veils all colors of the rainbow,
I could discern a red, black, and white
basketball uniform, with the name WARRIORS,
and all numbers.
The Guardian's leather-gloved hand
held a long-handled spade.
Beholding me,
the Guardian said, grinning,
"Enter, your colleagues await you."

On my journey up the mountain,
I met Waldorf colleagues
from throughout the century
from all over the world.
Along the way I encountered
in countless forms,
written in sand, "writ in water,"
planted in patterns, knitted, crocheted, kneaded into bread,
moved in eurythmy or out in the fields,
drawn on blackboards,
sung, spoken, painted, carved, sculpted,

embodied in experiments, enumerated in equations,
woven into essays, poems, scenes,
uttered in parking lots, lounges, or meetings,
seen in the stars,
or simply thought:
proverbs galore.

I have gathered as many as I can remember
of these Proverbs of Purgatory
to share what my colleagues shared with me.
And others wash up in the surf from time to time,
like glass balls, or exotic, tough seed pods.
I am always watching, listening for more.



Proverbs of Purgatory

Proverbs of Hell
show things stuck in was.
Proverbs of Heaven
show how things wish to be.
Proverbs of Purgatory
show how things become.

Purgatory
purifies the soul.
The Greeks purified the soul
through Katharsis,
through Pity and Fear.
We purify the soul
through Compassion and Awe.

Any Waldorf parent cares about his or her child.
Any Waldorf teacher cares about his or her children in the class.
Each parent and each teacher needs to care about the whole school.
The more the school cares about other Waldorf schools in the state,
the more the school cares about other Waldorf schools in the region,
the more the school cares about other Waldorf schools in the nation,
the more each member of the school community
regards himself as a member of the national Waldorf community,
the more each member of the school community
regards herself as a member of the global Waldorf community,
the healthier one's particular school will become,
the healthier Waldorf Education will become,
the healthier education will become,
the healthier society will become.

A moratorium on Waldorf Widows, Widowers, and Waifs!!!
It is not required
to be a St. Francis
and sacrifice one's family
on the altar of Waldorf Education!
One can be a St. Martin,
slice one's cloak in two,
and care for family and school.

“Il faut cultiver son jardin.”
It is necessary to cultivate one's garden. Voltaire.
Yes, we must cultivate the garden
of our own family, our own class, our own school.
Yet work with Waldorf Education
can school the heart
to enlargen
to bear the world.

A Nursery-Kindergarten teacher
teaches differently
when a school has a Lower School.
Nursery-Kindergarten and Lower School teachers
teach differently
when a school has a High School.
High School teachers
teach differently
when their school
has a Lower School
and a Nursery-Kindergarten.
All teachers
teach differently
when they train teachers.

One Holy of Holies
is to behold another teacher teach.
A Nursery-Kindergarten teacher
teaches differently
after beholding a Lower School teacher,
a High School teacher.
A Lower School teacher
teaches differently
after beholding a Nursery-Kindergarten teacher,
a High School teacher.
A High School teacher
teaches differently
after beholding a Nursery-Kindergarten teacher,
a Lower School teacher.

Nursery-Kindergarten teachers
need to study and observe
physical body types and ways of movement.
Lower School teachers
need to study and observe
the four temperaments.
High School teachers
need to study and observe
the seven soul types.
All teachers
need to study and observe
the twelve senses.

“Our class teacher knew something about everything,
and whatever it was, he loved it!”

In one’s twenties
one teaches the souls
so they reverberate, resonate
with experience.
In one’s thirties
one masters the material,
the thought-substance of the subjects.

In one's forties
one sees the students anew,
more clearly the emerging I am.
In one's fifties
one teaches the whole student more artfully.

Yes, we teach but through a glass darkly,
yet every year lenses cleanse.

“Smarty, Smarty,
had a party.
No one came
to Smarty's party.”
Smarty, Smarty
gave a lecture.
No one listened
to Smarty's lecture.

The degree to which
our speaking
is imbued with thinking, with feeling, and with willing,
is the degree to which
students of all kinds
will be engaged in some way,
whatever we say.

The goal is
the sphinx carved with the cross,
the Bull, the Lion,
the Eagle, the Man,
fused by the I AM.

The more developed
we become
as individuals
and as teachers,
the more we can be moved
to tears
by the way

our second graders
received and then offered
the copper rods
in eurythmy
on Tuesday.
One could even see
the blue robe, the red robe, the green robe
of each of the three kings.



“Think in the morning,
Act in the noon,
Eat in the evening,
Sleep in the night.” Blake.
Waldorf teachers
and students
need to sleep in the night.
Otherwise,
how can they receive
the help they need
for this mighty work?

Without such help
how can they meet each other
with renewed delight
each day?

Waldorf Education is
a Schooling through the Night.

The more rhythmic the life-body
of the Nursery-Kindergarten teacher,
the healthier the physical bodies of the students.
The richer the soul of the Lower School teacher,
the healthier the life-bodies of the students.
The clearer the ego of the High School teacher,
the healthier the souls of the students.

Full-time teachers carry;
part-time help.
The more full-time teachers,
the fuller the school.
What is knit in the classrooms
is either further raveled, or unraveled,
in the halls and the playgrounds.
The mere presence of adult egos
from beginning to end
harmonizes, composes.
The more who carry,
the lighter the load.
Full-time teachers overflow;
part-time teachers leak.

In a young school
one crucial teacher missing
can mean chaos breaks out.
As the school matures,
the life-patterns become so clear
that one teacher missing
hardly causes a ripple.
In fact,
it can come to seem
the school could carry on well
without any of the teachers.

The cohesion of a school
is the presence in the halls.
Adult presence
harmonizes teen-age souls.

A high school without
small groups of teachers working together
is a body without organs.

Over the years
one head
strengthens the head,
weakens the body.
Over the years
rotating heads
strengthen the heads,
strengthens the body
of many heads.

Over the years
within a department
the more teachers who can teach a given course
the greater the confidence and
the broader the knowledge of each teacher,
the better the teacher knows what students have
learned
in various courses,
the more students experience a common understanding
and frame of reference among teachers,
the more flexibility there is in terms of scheduling,

the more confidence and continuity there is in terms of
substituting,
the less territorialism
the less egotism
the less defining oneself by one's courses.
Yet mastery and cohesion are crucial.

Spectres will suck a school dry.
Teachers and parents
need to give each other the strength
the confidence
to speak to each other directly
about concerns.
Colleagues need to speak to each other directly
about concerns.
Parents need to speak directly to teachers.
Students need to speak directly to teachers
about concerns.
Otherwise fear distorts,
undermines, sucks the sap
out of the individuals
in indeterminate, disproportionate,
untrue ways.
The greatest exorcism
of fear and untruth
is for two individuals to meet
face to face.
To meet, face to face,
between individuals,
strengthens the individuals,
strengthens the community of the school,
strengthens the individuality of the school.



The individuality of the school
becomes clearer
the more clearly
the individuals of the school community
meet each other.

In dangerous territory
the presence of a third person, a witness,
can help the two individuals be fully present,
as responsible human beings.
An anonymous letter
is a poison, a virus.
Direct communication will heal,
sooner or later.

The written word, reflecting living conversations,
protects individuals,
objectifies memories.

When you knock heads, lock horns,
with a colleague,
be patient.
This opposition,
not the end of your work together,
marks the edge
of one of many circles.
In another life-stage,
you each may hold
the other's present view,
for perfectly valid reasons,
or be firmest allies.
Colleagues spiral,
with ever subtler surprises.

Yes, you are here to give to and receive from
your students.
You also are here
to work with your colleagues,
and to give to and receive from
your students' parents.
The students and parents come and go;
your colleagues may stay.

In those teaching moments when indeed
“the Tygers of Wrath are wiser
than the Horses of Instruction” [Blake],
our wrath must be that,
not of the blood-eyed tiger,
but of lucid Zeus, of cunning Hermes (Mercury).
The lightning will strike; the blade will lance the boil.
The student and the students
will see/sense the sun, the slight smile, accompanying.
All will know
the deed was the need of the moment,
not the mood of the day,
with respect in tact, all around.

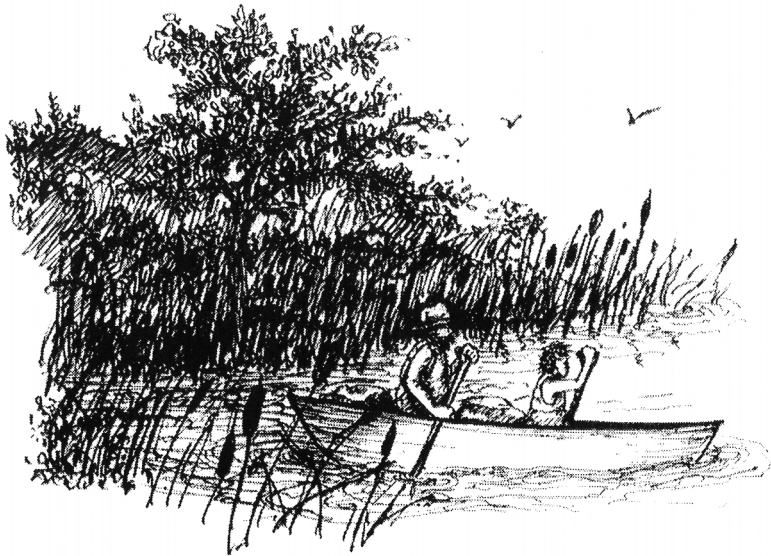


Children always need to feel
the Sun in the teacher
and, whatever their mistake or sin,
they need to be reminded
of the stars in the night.

Some read a book
with awe,
as though it were an angel,
not deigning, daring,
or blaspheming,
to mark it.
Others underline,
annotate, illuminate,
as Jacob wrestled
with the angel,
to become Israel.



In everything the students do in school
they are learning to read.
So outside.
Gardening, farming,
one learns to read the earth,
the plants, the sky.
Hiking, skiing,
one learns to read accurately
the contours of the earth
and respond rhythmically
with one's whole being.
Canoeing and rafting,
one learns to read the water.
Sailing,
one learns to read the water
and the air, pneuma (wind, breath, and spirit).



Nature lives green.
Man lives red.

October's light spears
the sleeping green beast,
shafts its slumber.

Nature awakens, Man.
Green retreats,
 leaves red.
Man awakes.

Work the earth
walk the earth
swim the water
paddle the water
ski the snow
sail the sea-breeze.

Waldorf Education is
a Schooling through the Elements.

No school trip
is just entertainment;
all school trips
are educational.

Boys will play sports.
Girls play as they feel.
The best girls sports teams
are masculine-feminine,
aggressive offensively and defensively,
persistent, self-controlled, courageous,
cool under pressure,
yet warm under pressure,
ten players, one team,
aware of each other on the court,
graceful, patient, and amused,
able to kiss and hug, to laugh and cheer,
to support and encourage
in victory and defeat.

The best girls teams
develop the will to work,
and the habit of skills,
so they can think their game
according to a plan, a living plan.
The best girls sports teams
are masculine-feminine appropriately,
healthily proportioned in feeling,
in willing, in thoughtful action.
Such teams enjoy sports most fulfillingly.

Many of our students wrestle with the four S's:
Suburban, Soft, Spoiled, Selfish.
When is "I don't feel like it"
a determining factor?
If there are problems,
take them to the math teachers.
Actually, the more students help students,
the more they respect themselves and each other,
and the more they respect the teachers
for respecting the students enough
to expect them to help each other
within reasonable guidelines.
A teacher's eye and ear
must be busier than
her mouth.

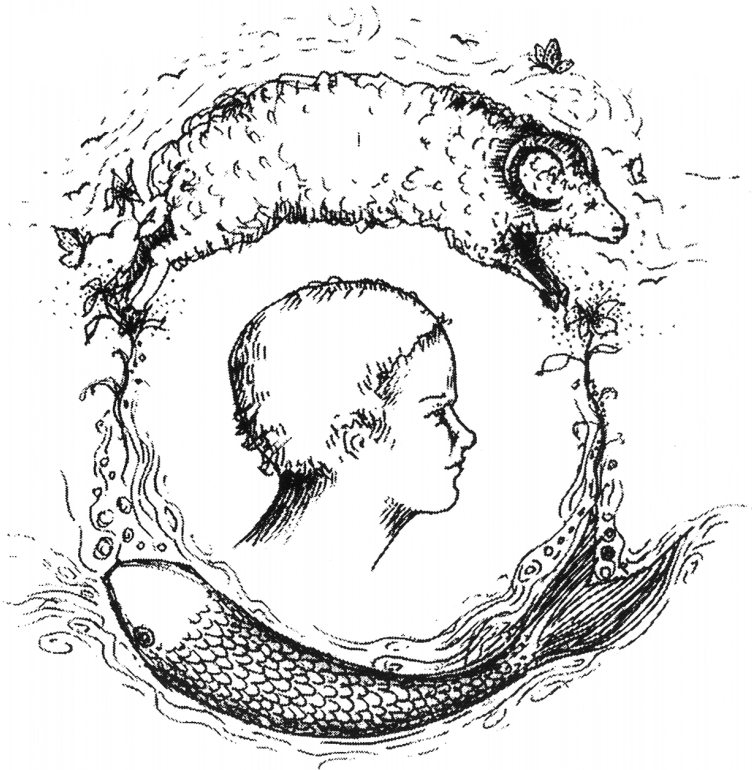
The artful artist
plays with, works with,
the golden section,
plays with, works with,
echo, repetition,
plays with, works with,
contrast.

The artful playwright
ebbs and flows,
between intimate and public,
individuals and groups,
particular and universal.

The artful playwright
has an uncanny knack
for unexpected humor,
often just before or just after
the most serious moments.
The artful playwright echoes phrases,
both immediately and symmetrically
(earlier and later in the play),
echoing yet transforming.
Sometimes whole scenes even reappear,
yet transformed, with a symmetry
in the shape of the play as a whole.

“Do your work,
and men will know you.” Emerson.
Do your homework,
upper grade students, and teachers,
and you shall know,
and you shall be known.

As the water to the fish,
The rock and the air to the ram,
so the word to the man.
As the adult moves,
the child will move.
As the adult speaks,
the child will speak.
As the adult thinks,
the child will think.
Yet, whatever the adult may think,
the child will become
who he or she is.



As the child moves,
the adult will speak.
As the child speaks,
the adult will think.
As the youth thinks,
the adult will...

Walk to talk;
speak to think;
think as I am.

Move Body
Sing Soul
Speak Spirit.

A class that sings together
in Lower School
sings together
in High School,
and forever.

The young child moves
from song into speech.
The speech must move,
dynamic, crisp-clear,
and full of color.
The living laws of the language
must inform the student's being
before puberty,
before the new life-body is fully formed,
before the bones start to harden
in adolescence.
The laws need to be
known in the bones,
second nature,
before the bones close,
in puberty.
The living laws of the language
have to live in the students,
in a continuous, rhythmical way,
week by week, day by day.
One flash of a three-week exposure
simply does not suffice.

Ahriman fixes finally
on the laws of the grammar:
what's right; what's wrong.
Lucifer's loose
grammar schmammar
write whatever you wish
however you're moved.



It's not a question
of either or.
It's a question
of how, when.
How can a flower
have no roots
or leafy stem?
How can a soul
find where to go
without vital health
and a physical body
that functions lawfully?
Grammar can be the yoga
of the language.
Through grammar
unconsciously used language
becomes consciousness.
Through grammar
we become self-conscious.

Grammar has to fully inform
in sixth, seventh, and eighth grades.
Then ninth and tenth grades
can review, remember.
Ninth and tenth grades
can never learn grammar
as sixth, seventh, and eighth can.
But they can and need to review it.
Then in eleventh grade
the soul has earned wings,
can navigate through boundless realms.
By twelfth grade
the soul is becoming I am.
Consciousness of the living laws of the language
enables the student to move
from me to I am.

It's not a matter
of established or pioneer,
of traditional or progressive,
of classic or romantic,
of form or freedom,
it's a matter of and.

It's a matter of child development,
of what form at one stage
can allow the fullest freedom later,
proper freedom
(in the French sense of "propre,"
one's own.)

I, me, myself.
Me, myself, and I.
"ere's ta me, maseln,
ën na forgettin' ma wife's ëusban!"
(Scottish toast)

The young child
first refers to herself by name,
like everything else.
Then the young child
becomes *me*,
me, me, me,
the perpetual object,
the receptive center of the world.

The three-year-old
first says I.
The growing child
grows into I.
I should become
the increasing subject,
the active center of the world.

I hate *myself*.
I love *myself*.
I know *myself*.
I transform *myself*.
Myself does not play games.
Myself does not go to meetings, conferences, or power
breakfasts.
Myself does nothing.
Myself only exists
through the activity of the *I*,
as the object of the *I*.
No *myself* without *I*.

However,
I can't do anything to *me*.
In fact, *Me* can't do anything.
Me, Buddy, and Janie can't go to the store.
Me only exists
through the activity of
you, he, she, it, and they.
They define *me*.
They define **me**.
Only I define *myself*.
“*Me*” needs “*they*.”
“*Myself*” needs “*I*.”
“*I*” needs neither *me* nor *myself*.
Only, *I am*.

The real mystery is:
what I needs
is other *I am*s.

Our highest goal
as teachers
is to serve the unfolding
I am
of each student.

So doing,
we serve the *I am*
of all humanity.
The *I am* of all humanity
is composed of the *I am*
of each member of humanity,
Hindu, Buddhist, Shinto,
Jewish, Christian, Muslim,
Native American, African,
atheist, agnostic ...
The *I am* of all
is the *I am* of each.

Does one's Waldorf Education continue
after graduating from a Waldorf school?

Yes and no.

Waldorf Education has served the child's development
for the sake of an evolving, healthy relationship
between the individual and the world.

What is of interest after graduation
is not how Waldorf Education continues in the individual,
but how the individual continues to unfold,
meeting the world.

Waldorf Education is
a Schooling at Sea.
Every Waldorf teacher
is a captain,
every Waldorf student a mariner.

Yes, we get to know our materials
as well as possible:
wood, hemp, canvas,
iron, steel, fiberglass,
even motors,
water and wind.
Yes, we use our tools well,
our quadrants, sextants,

our compass, even perhaps
our radar, our global positioning system,
maybe a good old log and line,
and certainly the anchors.
But wherever we sail,
the deck beneath our feet always sways,
the wind always shifts, dies, rises,
tides ebb and flow,
currents alter.
Always we have to watch
the sun, the stars,
the clouds, the horizon,
the wind on the water, in the sails,
always reading the moment,
in the context of the unchanging,
always sensing the imminent shift,
a firm, light touch on the tiller,
always adjusting the sails,
trimming, slacking,
to take best advantage of the wind.

Each boat is different.
All crews differ.
All weather differs.
The only constants are
Sun, Moon, and Stars,
Air, Water, and
the essential laws of navigation:
magnetic north, true north,
latitude, longitude,
distance, rate, time, $D=RT$.
Everything else is always changing.

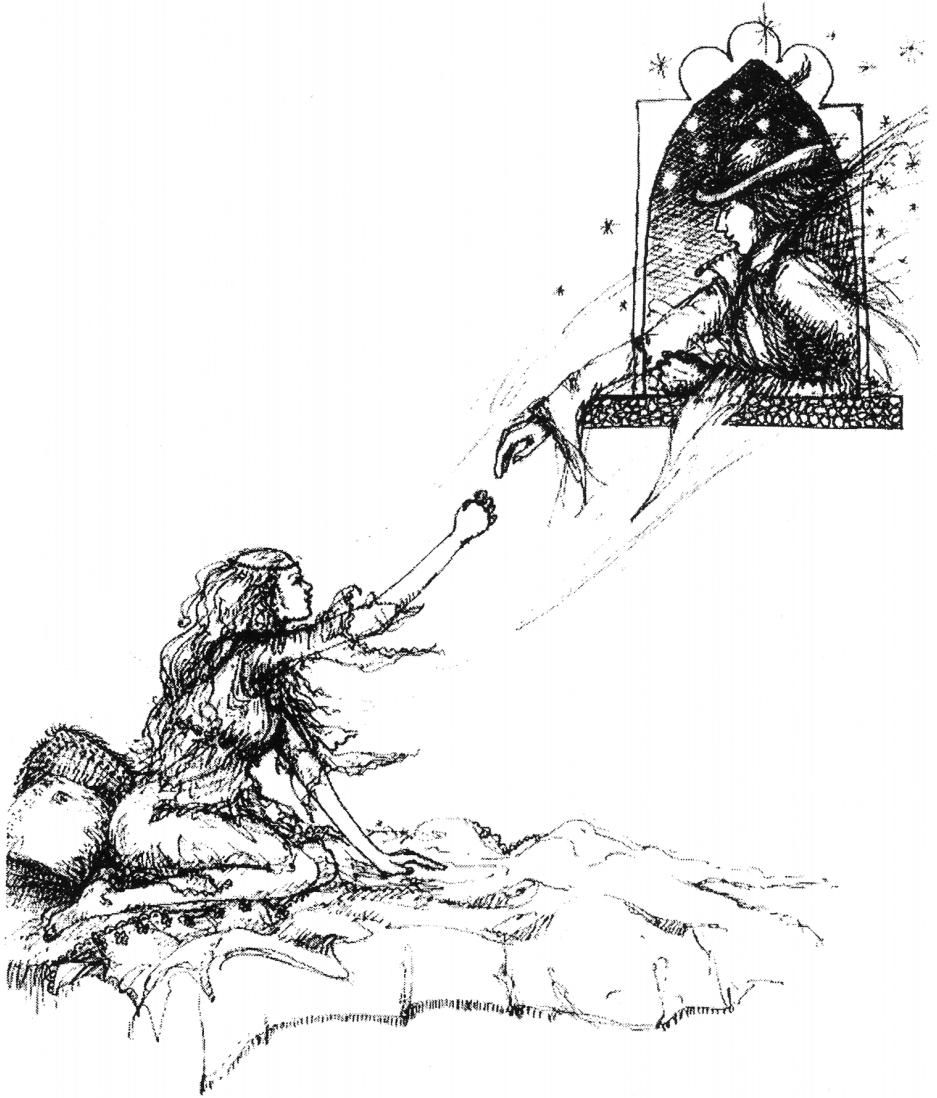
An eye on the stars,
a hand on the tiller,
we read the wind.

Everything else will always change.
Materials will change.
Instruments will change.
The Waldorf student must learn
the essential laws
to navigate through seas of change.

A fairy tale, every myth
that speaks the language
of the eternal present,
that tells us what happens,
guides us into life.

Somehow, in a similar way,
every great story
also prepares us for our journey
through the afterlife.

Similarly, the art with which we teach in Waldorf Education
will help our students to become,
and the art with which we are becoming Waldorf teachers,
working with many and varying winds,
will enable us to become
throughout all our lives.





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