

## Conclusion

The future of Camphill is uncertain. The movement has grown and thrived for eighty years, but it is at least remotely possible that it will not reach its hundredth anniversary. More plausibly, by the time it celebrates that anniversary in 2039, Camphill may have evolved decisively beyond its communal stage, becoming a network of educational and care facilities for persons with disabilities. Or it may have ceased to be a network of lifesharing communities, in which persons with and without disabilities create community together, and become a network of disability-specific intentional communities populated entirely by persons with intellectual disabilities. On the other hand, it is possible that by 2039 Camphill will have decisively reaffirmed its communal identity by creating new organizational structures that empower people of all abilities to choose cooperation over self-sufficiency, sharing over private wealth, and spirituality over bureaucracy. And it is possible, even likely, that in 2039 it will be possible to tell both hopeful and despairing stories about Camphill's future, just as is the case today.

From my own perspective, the key to a hopeful future may be the movement's willingness to expand its decision-making structures to include all the people who have contributed to the growth of the movement thus far: students, villagers, coworkers, young coworkers, employees, parents, board members, and many more. Initially, some of these constituencies were invited into Camphill on an instrumental basis, with the expectation that they would make a limited contribution without directly shaping Camphill's culture. But if—as anthroposophy teaches—everything is interconnected, then it is not only unethical to instrumentalize another person, it is also metaphysically incorrect. Whenever I enter into relationship with another person—or animal, plant, or even mineral—I invite that being to participate in my own evolutionary development. Camphill's challenge is to make that mutual participation fully conscious.

Camphill's future also depends on the capacity of people who cherish Camphill's traditions to recognize that ongoing change is itself a Camphill tradition. The

founders of Camphill ensured the success of its first generational transition by opening their “inner community” to people who did not share their experience of exile, and by allowing decision-making power to pass out of the inner community and to even more inclusive bodies. A similar transition is needed today, both with regard to the structures that carry legal responsibilities for the governance of Camphill and the groups of people who carry responsibility for its spiritual essence.

Whatever the future may hold, Camphill has already demonstrated an important truth about intentional community: it is possible to create a cooperative alternative to mainstream society without cutting one’s community off from the developmental processes active in the larger society. All of the utopian attempts to replace mainstream society with a fixed alternative blueprint have failed, because it is simply not possible to shelter any community from the larger ecology of society for more than a generation. Yet a community that takes responsibility for its own ongoing transformation may pose just as radical an alternative in its fifth generation as in its first. This is evident today not only at Camphill, but in a host of places that are continuing to evolve after one, three, or (in the case of monastic communities) dozens of generations.

Camphill’s openness to ongoing transformation is the most important fruit of its rootedness in anthroposophy. Though anthroposophy is often perceived as a “conservative” force within Camphill, and though that perception sometimes accurately describes the behavior of individuals with a strong commitment to anthroposophy, the true spirit of anthroposophy is not conservative but evolutionary. Whenever Camphillers choose not to cling to particular social forms, but to attend creatively to change and evolution, they are reconnecting to anthroposophy.

Rudolf Steiner made this point when he proposed social threefolding as an alternative to both capitalism and socialism. Though he shared the socialists’ conviction that in the twentieth century the private ownership of capital had become the source of much oppression, he refused to believe that the problem could have a once-for-all solution. “It is not possible,” he insisted, “to ask how something that grows should be organized in order that this organization, which is thought to be correct, be preserved into the future. One can think in this way about something which remains unchanged from its beginnings. But it is not valid for the social organism. As a living entity it is constantly changing whatever arises within it. To attempt to give it a supposedly best form, in which it is expected to remain, is to undermine its vitality.”<sup>1</sup>

I heard a strong echo of Steiner’s words in Veronika van Duin’s account of Camphill’s “central task.” As the daughter of cofounder Barbara Lipsker, Veronika has lived through almost all of Camphill’s history, and she blends the critical perspective of the staff kid with the commitment of the lifelong coworker. Anthroposophy, she reminded me, is both a “modern path of transformation” and a continuation of the work of the Rosicrucians, who served humanity without being noticed. In keeping with that tradition, Camphill’s work is not about “bricks

and mortar” or about being recognized. Rather, “the central task of Camphill is to continue to exist as a striving, messy, doesn’t-quite-manage, anthroposophical attempt at community in which we always accept anybody who comes into our doors and try to show them that there are other ways to do things, there are other ways to think. To open minds, and then leave those people to live their lives as they choose, taking with them perhaps a little seed of that.”<sup>2</sup>

This is both a modest task and an audacious one. Unlike the utopias of the nineteenth century, Camphill has never sought to replace the larger society, only to renew it. It has never been a shining city on the hill, calling all the world’s attention to itself. At times, it has been a “bubble,” an “island,” a self-enclosed society hidden in a valley, but in its fourth generation it can no longer be any of those things. It is, rather, a messy mix, planted deep in its many contexts, always growing—and in its continued growth, still inspiring and transforming those of us whose lives have been touched by it.

