Waldorf: an Education for a Future Civilisation

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Introduction

I would like to discuss something of the nature and overall goal of Waldorf Education in light of its Anthroposophical Foundations. It is my contention that: *Anthroposophy, and through it the daughter movement Waldorf Education, provides the basis of a new healthy future civilisation for **all** human beings.*

As a brief background to Steiner's concept of civilisation and the role of Waldorf Education, it is good to recall that in 1924 there were a number of monumental changes in the anthroposophical movement generally that also had educational significance. At the very beginning of 1923, the first Goetheanum had burned down, sending seismic shock waves through the movement which lead to a lecture cycle on "Anthroposophical Community Building" (1923). Later, in the Christmas of that year, Steiner held the Christmas Foundation Meeting which re-established the Anthroposophical Society on a completely new footing. It is here where he presented for the first time the Foundation Stone Meditation, which he called the "most important result of recent years"(The Foundation Stone, p. 12). The meditation describes the place of humanity in the cosmos and the ideal relationships to the higher spiritual realities and the taking of responsibility for the evolution of civilisation on the Earth. Shortly thereafter, in January 1924, Steiner founded the Esoteric School, also known as the School of Spiritual Science or the Michael School; this being the research core of the Anthroposophical Society.

To my mind, there is no doubt that Steiner saw Waldorf Education as a part of taking some responsibility for the development of civilisation. The standard education of the time he described as "leading to a loss of mental vigour... paralysis of soul" and a "physical world empty-headed in respect of thoughts and ideas" (The Foundation Stone, p. 48). For Steiner, the success of a healthy education lay in the connection to higher realities. This is evident also in the earlier education cycle of 1919 (The First Teachers' Course). There Steiner presents a meditation which, for teachers, enables a real connection to be made between the teacher and the higher realities which yield future impulses for the education:

> "if we look at the foundation of the [Waldorf] school not as everyday but as a celebratory act of cosmic dimensions. In the name of the good spirit that seeks to lead humanity out of desolation and despair and to raise human beings to a higher level of evolution through education" (Steiner 1919, p. 20).

It has to be born in mind that this came directly after the First World War which lay waste and devastation to much of Europe, which in turn partly arose from a certain kind of mechanised thinking from the preceding century. A century which some scholars referred to as initiating the "Mechanisation of the World Picture" (Dijksterhuis 1961) and epitomised by Charles Dickens in "Hard Times" as represented by the character of Mr Gradgrind:

> "Now, what I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, root out everything else... Thomas Gradgrind, sir, a man of realities. A man of fact and calculations... With a rule and a pair of scales, and the multiplication table always in his pocket, sir, ready to weigh and measure any parcel of human nature, and tell you exactly what it comes to... Thomas Gradgrind now presented Thomas Gradgrind to the little pitchers (the children) before him, who were to become so full of facts... He seemed a galvanising apparatus, too, charged with a grim mechanical substitute for the tender young imaginations that were to be stormed away." (Dickens, C (1854/1969): Hard Times, Penguin Press, p. 47/48).

Today, one may say that we live in the age of the fulfilment of this notion where much that is human is seen in terms of measure, number and calculation, or as being a mere cog in the economic machine, as represented by Pink Floyd's video "Brick in the Wall" (1979) showing multitudes of children on a conveyer belt leading to a sausage making machine; culminating in the protesting lines: "we don't need no education... we don't need no thought control... no dark sarcasm in the classroom... teacher, leave them kids alone"!

For Steiner, such an education leads to nothing but the death of civilisation through rigidified thinking, feeling and willing; not just about basic subject matters, but also about the relations between nations, peoples, races and sexes. For him, "Gradgrindian" thought ends in conflict between these groups; cognitively, emotionally and practically. Hence, they are a cause of strife, conflict and war. For him, the way out of this is through the education of living thinking, imagination, emotional agility and practical skill through teachers who are *prime examples* of these goals. It is to the development of these that Anthroposophy and Waldorf education are devoted.

It is worth keeping this context in mind when trying to form a judgement about the role of oppositional theories such as critical race theory or economy driven forms of education. Both these views are fundamentally materialist approaches to human beings. They observe people

in terms of their economic functionality or judge them in terms of their skin colour rather that their independent inner character. In fact they deduce character from physical appearance. In that sense, Anthroposophy tries to transcend the merely physical and appeals to the true inner nature of the person. From this perspective, Anthroposophy has more kinship to the Civil Rights Movement: "I refuse to accept the idea that the 'isness' of man's present nature makes him morally incapable of reaching up for the eternal 'oughtness' that forever confronts him." Martin Luther King jr, Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech (1964).

Two Fundamental Principles: Creativity and Adaptation

Another event that occurred in 1924 was the presentation of the education lecture series often called the "Torquay" course. This re-presented his educational ideas from previous years. The original title of the course was "The *Art* of Education on the basis of an Understanding of the Human Being". This is *the* theme for all of Steiner's lectures on education as it encapsulates the essence of the pedagogy. To begin with, Steiner proposed that the teacher becomes creative in the pedagogical deed, somewhat like a musician or painter is in their productions. At the same time, it also means that the curriculum is partially taught through the various means the arts have to offer. But it also needs to be noted that this was to be no random freedom, for him teaching needs to be done in relationship to the way human beings develop over time. One can find that these two themes are central to all his proposals for education:

- *Teacher Creativity*
- *Child Development*

For him, pedagogy consists in the *process of adaptation* between these two polarities. That is *lived knowledge* and *adaptation*, to individuals, nations, races and genders in their specific contexts. This means that, for Steiner, the principles he suggests should not lead to "colonisation", but be reflective of the local social-culture whilst also maintaining those universals of human development that are relevant. The agent for enabling the coming into being of free individuality in the young person is the teacher. The teacher is intended to be the *principle example* of free individuality which enables that civilisation impulse that includes but transcends "groupism". The free individuality of the teacher is intended to be the model of the free individuality of the learner.

On the Nature of Waldorf Pedagogy: Universal Child Development at the Centre

It has to be noted that the central focus of Steiner's ideas on education is that of *universal* child development. It would be no exaggeration to that say without this there would be no Waldorf Education. It might be good to focus on this concept for a while otherwise there is a danger that what it means could be lost and with that the civilisation impulse for the future would also be lost. Steiner made the claim that his ideas of education were literally for all human beings:

> ""But the anthroposophic view of the world engenders a strong desire to build bridges across all divisions into nationalities, races, and so on. In its inmost being Anthroposophy feels compelled to speak with a voice that is supranational, or international... The anthroposophic worldview itself is intended to help people, wherever they live on earth, toward knowledge that is beyond all limits of race or national language." (Steiner, R (1921/2, pp. 270-2)

In terms of universal child development and general pedagogy, he made no exception for nationalities, races or sex, for him the most central elements of child development were the same for all human beings, but also bearing in mind that we are first and foremost *individuals*. The question of gender is a special case and the issue of race and nationality would have been parts of the adaptation process. In this sense, Anthroposophy in its special manifestation as Waldorf Education is intended to help humanity across the whole globe. With that a future civilisation is meant to arise which cultivates, freedom, equality and solidarity for all. The concept of child development is intended to help with this process.

Whilst Steiner did give indications concerning the *content* of the Waldorf curriculum (The First Teachers' Course" in the First to Third Curriculum lectures, pp. 330-345); it is without doubt that his main focus was *pedagogy* (the art of teaching) and its relationship to child development, or *ontogeny*. The Torquay course reiterates this approach and many of the child development themes from earlier lecture cycles. The most important of these is the idea that education should help the development of *Human Nature*; in his terminology that is of body, soul and spirit. In Waldorf education, the idea of Human Nature is normally associated with wholeness as Steiner often said that education should aim to develop the "Whole Human

Person": "Our task is to introduce an education that concerns itself with the whole person - body, soul, and spirit - and these three principles will become known and recognized" (Steiner (1924/1995, p. 5). Steiner develops this concept from a three-fold understanding of the human being to an educational picture over developmental time:

Human Development Phase	Physical Body 0 – 7 years	Life Body 7 – 14 years	Soul 14 – 21 years	Spirit or "I" 21 +
Pedagogical and Learning Principles	Imitation & Creative Play	Imagination & Memory & Feeling.	Independent Thinking and Psyché	Free thinking and action
		Process of Development		
School period	Kindergarten	Lower School	Upper School	University – Life

Steiner's idea, in simplistic terms, is that each phase of human development has a unique pedagogical principle and way of learning. The intention was that pedagogy should serve the ontogenetic needs of the children. It also needs to be added that each of the main phases above is further differentiated into three, giving nine subtle sub-phases which in terms of pedagogy leads to a learning metamorphosis and gradual transformation over the developmental time of the three school periods. In the above, we see a gradual metamorphosis in how learning is approached to accompany and aid the natural development of the children. In the kindergarten years imitation and creative play are the key principles of learning. By the second phase, it is imagination, memory and the strengthening of the feeling that is appealed to, but which also evolves towards the next phase of development. In the third period, teaching and learning encourage the development of the independent psyché of the young person. The fourth period lies outside of normal schooling but is dependent on and an enhancement of the third period. ***The ultimate goal is the development of free independent human beings no matter their race, nationality, gender***. The fundamental goal of Waldorf Education is the freedom of the individual embedded within thinking, feeling, memory, imagination and creative play. This is intended to be the ground of a future civilisation.

The point of this is to integrate the three major human *levels of being* into the learning process with the aim of developing the integrity of the whole person. This in turn is to provide a foundation for the *wholeness* of the individual's life and their place in society and civilisation. Without this wholeness there is always the danger of dissonances between thinking, feeling and willing. These dissonances may then become reflected in civilisation.

The Content of the Curriculum

The curriculum in terms of content is truly holistic in broad terms and its aim is to aid the ontogenetic process: the content is chosen to enhance the existing child development. Instead of being presented as a mere collection of parts, Steiner recommended that each topic needs to go through an evolution from the whole to the parts and back again. To aid this process, the content is taught in periods, also known as blocks, of three or four weeks. This enables the healthy creation of a whole topic that is taught.

The evolution of the topics over the years is correlated with the development of the child and how they learn in each stage. Beginning in the early years, there are no specific subjects as such but an encouragement to learn out of the holistic human experience in relationship to real life. This is why the learning environment is shaped as far as possible to resemble a healthy home-like experience. In a sense the environment, inner and outer, *are* the content of the "curriculum". Though the cultivation of "Being Together" the first foundations of a civilisation impulse can be achieved.

By the second phase, the content of the curriculum is sculptured by the imaginative-memory-feeling approach to learning, but out of the previous wholeness of content there emerges the three primary topics represented above. Thereafter, the topics further diversify, but in the teaching-learning process consciousness is kept on the whole from which the individual topics arise. The subjects below are derived from the "First Teachers' Course", First to Third Curriculum lectures, pp. 330-345:

Phase 1 Kindergarten 3-7th year	Phase 2: Classes 1 to 8: All within the context of Imagination: 7-14 years			Phase 3 Upper School 14-21 years
Differentiation and Reintegration: between the wholes and the parts				
Pedagogical Principle: Imitation & the Good Example	Pedagogical Principle: Imaginative Anthropomorphisms	Pedagogical Principle: Imaginative Facts	Pedagogical Principle: Images of cause and effect	Pedagogical Principle: Independent thinking
Curriculum: Being and Togetherness; The Universal Human Experience	Curriculum: Literacy & Literature Home & Environment Mathematics	Curriculum: Literature/Drama Geography Plant & Animal History Mathematics	Curriculum: Literature/Drama Geography History Mathematics Plant & Animal Physics & Chemistry	Curriculum Literature/Drama Geography History Philosophy Mathematics Plant & Animal Physics & Chemistry

One can observe in this process how the topics gradually differentiate from the wholeness of early childhood consciousness to a more differentiated understanding of young adult awareness and yet retain and find the whole for each of the parts, which manifest as subjects of study. More importantly, it is through an education like this that a sense for the *wholeness of life* may come into being and enables young people to find their way in life as well as create a new wholeness for others in society as well as themselves. *It is a kind of signature for a future civilisation based simultaneously in respect for the whole of society and nature as well as the individual.*

Teacher Self Development as a Principle of Civilisation

For Steiner, the nature of learning is not just concerned with the absorption of learned content but, perhaps more importantly, on the *healthy relationship* between teacher and student. For him, the teacher is in a kind of leadership position such that the teacher needs to *exemplify* the civilisation impulse. We might say: be the change you want to see in the world. The *inner nature* of the teacher's being comes into particular focus here. Consequently, one of the most fundamental principles of Steiner's views on education is the development of the teacher:

> "If you make a surly face so that a child gets the impression you are a grumpy person, this harms the child for the rest of its life. This is why it is so important, especially for little children, that as a teacher you should enter very thoroughly into the observation of a human being and human life. What kind of school plan you make is neither here nor there; *what matters is what sort of a person you are*" (Steiner 1924, p.19).

Of course, Steiner is not just proclaiming "Thou shalt not make grumpy faces", it is about the totality of the person of the teacher, or parent, is what matters here, in their inner life of thinking, feeling and willing:

> "When the inner nature of a person is filled with a living knowledge of what the human being is, this will be expressed in his or her face, and this is what can make a really good teacher" (Steiner 1924, p.22).

It is this striving for knowledge, for the truth which, for Steiner, that needs to be a part of the inner life of the teacher so that they can become good at teaching; it is from out of this inner reality that the children can learn in a healthy way:

> "The first essential for a teacher is *self-knowledge*... Teachers must always keep themselves in hand, and above all must never fall into the faults that they are blaming the children for." Steiner, R (1924): Kingdom of Childhood, p. 54.

This idea is confirmed in other places:

> "Here you can see how much of what people call the question of education is actually a question about the *qualities of the teacher*." Steiner, R (1924): The Renewal of Education, Anthroposophic Press, p. 125.

Some of these qualities to be acquired are represented by a verse given by Steiner near the end of the First Teachers' Course (p. 310):

> Imbue yourself with the power of imagination
>
> Have courage for the truth
>
> Sharpen thy feeling for responsibility of soul

For Steiner, these are the essential teacher qualities that will provide a foundation for a good education. For him, teaching is not an abstract *pedagogy*; it is a way of *Being*: *the good learning of the pupils follows from the good Being of the teacher.*

Inner Tranquility and Self-Knowledge: Reflecting on Life

The call to practice self-knowledge was presented by Steiner in his early work "Knowledge of the Higher Worlds" (1909/10). There he presents it as "Inner Tranquility":

> "Provide for yourself moments of inner tranquillity; and in these moments learn to distinguish between the essential and the non-essential... [the practitioner] must seek the power of confronting themselves, at certain times, as a stranger. He or she must stand before themselves with the inner tranquillity of a judge. When this is attained, our own experiences present themselves in a new light. As long as we are interwoven with them and stand, as it were, within them, we cling to the non-essential just as much as to the essential. If we attain the calm inner survey, the essential is severed from the non-essential." (Steiner 1909/10, chapter 1)

The aim of the exercise is for the practitioner to reflect on their life in terms of their thought, feeling and will within a state of inner calm. Through this the true inner Self, what Steiner calls the "I" evaluates the three activities of their own psyché and comes to resolutions concerning their life. For the teacher, this can include the practice of reflecting, in tranquillity, on their teaching activity with the aim of evaluation and improvement. This is also applicable to their relationships with the other teachers, parents and pupils. In terms of the latter, due to

the leadership principle outlined above, this practice can, over developmental time, become an inner attribute. In that sense: *Self-Reflection with Inner Tranquility becomes a Principle of Civilisation when extended across the globe. This practice then also is a principle of peace for all nationalities, races, genders, groups and individuals*.

Openmindedness

As a vital part of teacher development is also the acquisition, development and practice of the ethical virtues in education. One of the primary educational virtues is that of **openmindedness.** In the context of his educational philosophy, Steiner formulates this in terms of its significance for teaching:

> "This is why a most essential aspect in Waldorf teacher training involves **receptivity** to changes in human nature... A Waldorf teacher must be prepared to face something that will be completely different tomorrow from what it was yesterday... We need **open minds** ready to receive new wisdom each day, and a disposition that can transform accumulated knowledge into a sense of potential that leave the mind clear for the new. This keeps people healthy, fresh and active... [This] **must be a Waldorf teacher's basic mood and nature**". Steiner, R (1922): The Spiritual Ground of Education, Anthroposophic Press, p. 124/5. [My bold]

Steiner is clearly pointing out that this inner disposition is a kind of *thinking* **virtue** of openmindedness and is significance for teachers. At the same time though, openmindedness requires a *feeling* **virtue** of receptivity and *willing* **virtue** to act in a different way in each situation. In the text, Steiner gives some advice on how to develop this within oneself.

The **place** of openmindedness in Steiner's suggestions should not be underestimated: If a person does not have this to a sufficient degree already, then the potential teacher development of all other virtues becomes a moot point: if a person is not open to the notion of developing inner virtues in themselves, then they will not attempt to acquire them. For Steiner, the whole of virtue development depends on this, without openmindedness the whole of Self-Development stops. Consequently, as child development and learning depends on teacher virtues, without the cultivation of teacher virtues Steiner / Waldorf Education is not possible and neither is a future civilisation for all.

Four fundamental attributes:

1) The teacher must be a person of initiative in everything done, great and small. **[Universal Initiative]**

2) The teacher should be one who is interested in the being of the whole world and of humanity. **[Universal Interest]**

3) The teacher must be one who never compromises in the heart and mind with what is untrue. **[Universal Truthfulness]**

4) The teacher must never get stale or grow sour. **[Universal Enthusiasm]**.

Steiner, R (1919): Discussions with Teachers, *Closing Words, pp. 180-82*

Initiative

This lies at the foundation of creative educational activity in Steiner education, amongst other things. As a soul / spirit virtue, it is a kind of **inner *will* to create**. As has been indicated previously, Steiner Education does not have a fixed curriculum; rather it has a set of pedagogical principles and a few content indications. These enable teachers to create a curriculum for their own particular case. Through initiative, the teacher is able to enter into a subject in a free way and create opportunities for learning for each unique context, class group and child. Developing initiative for the teacher in Steiner settings becomes paramount as without it either the education does not happen or it becomes based on tradition. Were that to happen, then the uniqueness of situation and the children is not recognised. Hence Steiner encouraged initiative in teachers in order to enable the creative source of the education. Consequently, if pupils perceive teachers having, or trying to attain, creative initiative, they will strive for this too and which may lead to a more positive future civilisation.

Interest

To be interested in all things is likewise crucial to the education. Interest is an *emotional – cognitive* process that can positively enhance learning. In one of the original meanings of the

term, interest meant something like: "between the essences". Through the virtue of interest, the teacher is able not only to engage with the essence of the subject they teach, but also develop a deep understanding of the children, that is in their typological age-phase characteristics, temperament and individuality. Genuine interest bridges the gulf that can exist between teacher and student and helps form educational connections and later to social cohesion.

Truthfulness

This lies at the core of Steiner education in the sense that the teacher strives to establish the truth content of that which they teach as well as of their knowledge of the children. In this sense, **truthfulness incorporates *observation* and *thinking* as teacher virtues**. It may be recalled from Steiner's "Philosophy of Freedom" (1894), that "truth" is defined as the rightful union between concept and percept. It is a simple formulation but it is well worth remembering. Many things we regard as true are often merely due to thought processes without accompanying perceptions. Speculations, guesses, hypotheses, rumours, etc, fall into this category. A person we trust or an authority may have told us an idea and we consider this to be true. But without the right set of perceptions they are just thoughts, ideas or concepts and are not therefore necessarily true. Many problems which exist in society are due to a lack of truthfulness and which can lead to a breakdown in social connections, doubt and fear.

Through the virtue of truthfulness a teacher can recognise this and apply the principle of the *epoché*, what Steiner called "presuppositionlessness" (Steiner 1892, Husserl 1970): we hold concepts, hypotheses, etc, in *temporary* suspension until corroborating perceptions can be acquired. Similarly, if something is merely perceived, the virtue of truthfulness enables the teacher to seek for the appropriate concepts that should go along with the perception. The mere linking of a percept with a concept is not necessarily the result of truthfulness – sometimes people associate the wrong concept with the percept. It is only when the right concept has been found that truthfulness can be attributed.

This virtue can sometimes put teachers in difficult position because they may be expected by society to teach something they themselves cannot establish the truth of. This becomes particularly pertinent in the upper school, say in science, when the knowledge content of what is taught is dependent on specialised knowledge and specialised methodology. So the question

here would be how to deal with this in the sense for "striving for truth" rather than "having the truth". Obviously, this is dependent on the teacher's virtue of "truthfulness" as a **striving** rather than a **having**.

Enthusiasm

Enthusiasm for teaching what you teach and who you teach also is significant for Steiner Educators. As a soul / spirit virtue, it is this that provides the *emotional* ground for teaching and learning. Steiner was of the conviction that if a teacher could teach with enthusiasm, then this would enable the pupils to feel enthusiastic about the subject being taught and overcome emotional barriers to learning. A teacher who is bored with teaching and with what they teach erects those barriers and obstructs or prevents learning. Enthusiasm for knowing the world can start a process to overcome civil unrest and provide a ground for mutual interest and mutual tolerance.

Three golden rules

Steiner thought that certain rules are necessary for being a teacher, rules which are essentially virtues that all good teachers need to have or need to acquire. These can be intuitively seen as being fundamental for society. These virtues are, unusually, distinctive for the three main phases of child development:

"These must become the **three golden rules** in the art of education: they must imbue the whole **attitude of teachers** and the whole impulse of their work. The golden rules that must be embraced by their **whole being**, not as a theory, are these:

First, **reverent gratitude** toward the World for the child we contemplate every day;

Second, **gratitude** to the universe and **love** for what we have to do with the child; and

Third, **respect for the child's freedom**, which we must not endanger, since it is this freedom that we must direct our teaching efforts, so that the child may one day stand at our side in freedom in the World." Steiner, R (1922): The Spiritual Ground of Education, Anthroposophic Press, p. 56/7.

Gratitude

This enables the early years educator, as well as the later years teacher, to genuinely accept the children in their care. Without this, there will always be a gulf between the child and the teacher, sometimes with the latter seeing the former as a mere functionary of their work: "I teach children because I have to for my job". Steiner sees the teacher's role as an act of care: you teach because you care for children – it is central therefore to be grateful for the actual children that come to you, not just the "ideal" ones you would like to have. Gratitude creates "being to being" relationships and enables the teacher to be a good example: without the feeling of the teacher's gratitude towards the children, they may not feel recognised and therefore not perceive you as good example.

Love

Moral *educational* love, is, for Steiner, twofold: love of the subject and love of the children. Love is, at least in part, an *emotional* virtue that enables the teacher to really engage with the subject at hand. Whilst Steiner designated this virtue as relevant for the lower school teacher, it is just as valid for the other teacher periods. If a teacher only has an intellectual

understanding of their subject there may be an inner feeling barrier to the subject for the teacher and thereby the pupils. If the children have the perception that the teacher does not love or even like what they are teaching, then they will wonder why they should. Similarly, if the teaching does not have moral love for the children, then the latter will feel the gulf between them and have the feeling that this person does not really want to be with them; so the child's feeling would be: "how could I learn from them?"

Respect for Freedom

This is especially relevant for the gradually becoming independent adolescent. As all virtues are, respect for freedom is, or can be, an **inner reality** of the teacher; but it is not only a *cognitive* respect but also *emotional*, this can then become expressed as an outer *deed*. In other words, this can manifest in how a teacher teaches: it manifests itself in the creation of learning spaces whereby students can exercise their independent judgement which has a formative influence on the inner life. If a teacher attempts to operate just out of their authority, or the authority of others, this is, at least partially, a denial of the student's growing independence. "Bad behaviour" may follow as a consequence. When educational **content** is presented as merely based on "authorities", i.e. even in a more positive sense of the term, such as from the scientific community, it is important to create a framework whereby this content can be questioned and debated in a free way. In this way, is the teacher's virtue of "respect for freedom" important for the education of the free judgement of the student. Put another way, a Steiner teacher should neither accept nor expect students to merely follow their authority or that of others, it has to be gained. We can represent these teacher values in the following way:
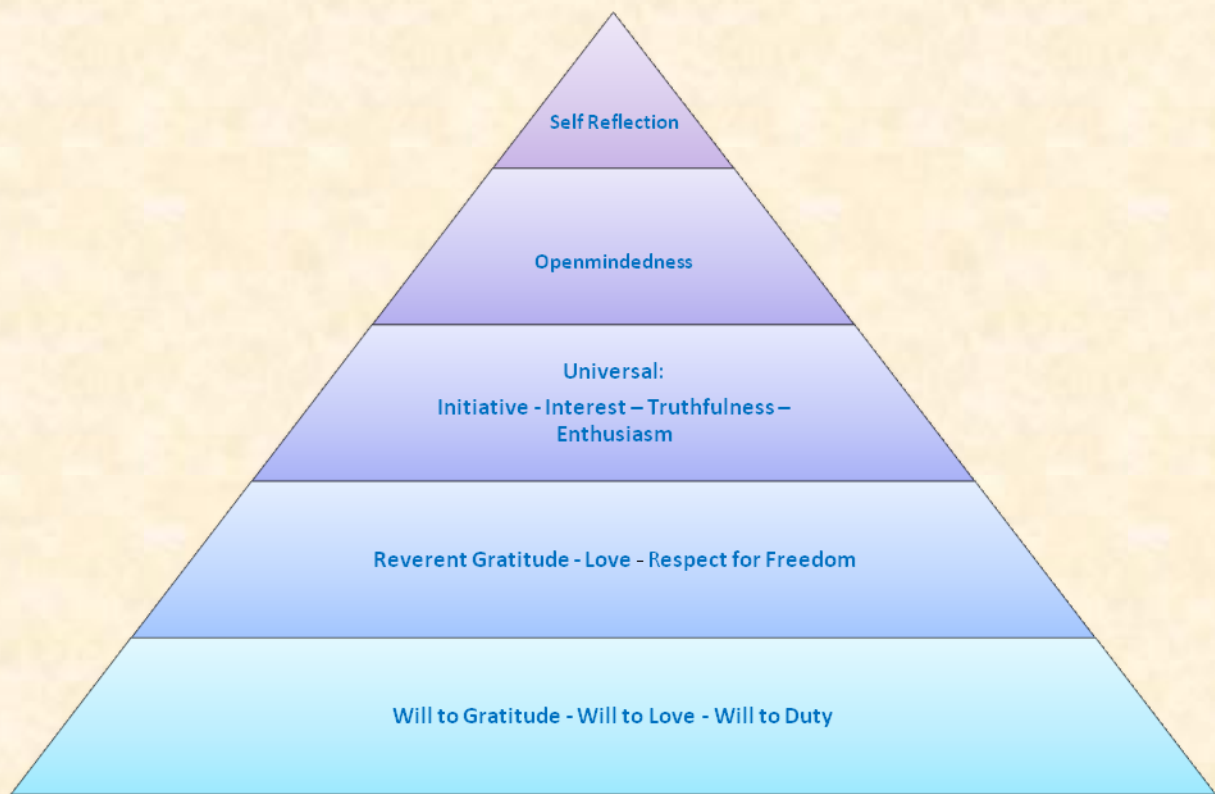
Each of these virtues can become the foundation of a positive civilisation for all human beings no matter their other group memberships. *It is an education away from authoritarianism and towards freedom and respective for the freedom of others; this is case whether it is the children or the teachers who strive to be true exemplars of these principles.*

The Social Significance of the Education – the Future of Civilisation

For Steiner, his proposals are not just about providing a good education for children; they are about the future of all individuals, society and civilisation. It is his view that education is the primary social condition for an evolved civilisation. In the Torquay course he speaks of this:

> "It is no fanatical idea of reform that prompts us to speak of a renewal in educational life; we are urged to do so out of our whole feeling and experience of how humankind is *evolving* in *civilization* and in *cultural* life."
>
> (Steiner 1924, Kingdom of Childhood, p. 1)(My italics)

Steiner formulated his social ideas in the wake of the catastrophe of the First World War, around the same time as the founding the first Waldorf School. He saw the root of the war and

the consequences thereof in the anti-social behaviour of **individuals** as well as the nature of the then contemporary economic **structures**:

> "The current anti-social state of affairs is the result of individuals entering society who lack **social sensitivity because of their education**. Socially sensitive individuals can only develop within an educational system which is conducted and administered by other socially sensitive individuals. No progress will be made towards solving the social question if we do not treat the question of education and spirit as an essential part of it. An **anti-social** situation is not merely the result of **economic structures**; it is also caused by the **anti-social behaviour of the individuals who are active in these structures**. It is anti-social to allow youth to be educated by people who themselves have become strangers to reality because the conduct and content of their work has been **dictated to them from without**."
> Steiner, R (1919): *Towards Social Renewal, Preface 1920,* p. 14. (My bold)

The primary origin of this anti-social behaviour he located in the education system of the time. This in turn he considered to have its source in an education dictated to teachers from without. For him, the Waldorf School should provide an impulse in the opposite direction*: a free teacher who adapts their creativity to the growing child creates a possibility of a free a creative young person.*

For Steiner the "social" consists in three spheres or sectors that interact in distinct ways:

> "In the course of the last three to four centuries a social life has been formed: a **state/rights life**, a **spiritual/cultural life**, and an **economic life**. This social life, particularly the education system, "resists", we might say, the renewal of the social relationships... But what we strive for here is a *transformation* of the present social configuration".   Steiner, R (1919/20): *The Spirit of the Waldorf School*, Anthroposophic Press, p. 9. (My emphasis)

His claim is that society resists change and that education as normally conceived is a part of this resistance. So it was his intent that Waldorf Education should provide a means to bring about the beginnings of a positive change to the three spheres of society and future civilisation.

One example of this is Steiner's social philosophy. Steiner intended that Waldorf Education should embody social ideals:

> "Obviously, the Waldorf School can be successful only if it is completely inspired by the Spirit that aspires towards the ***threefold nature of the social organism***" Steiner, R (1919/20): *The Spirit of the Waldorf School*, Anthroposophic Press (p. 7) (My emphasis).

This led him to the conviction that the Waldorf School needs to aim towards an education rooted in the three principles of the *social, democratic* and *freedom*:

> "Adults will have to live in a social organism which, in regard to the economic aspect, will be social; in regard to the government, democratic; and from the spiritual aspect, liberal, free. *The great problem of the future will be that of education.* How will we have to deal with children so that they, as adults, can grow into the *social, democratic*, and *spiritually* [cultural] free areas of living in the most comprehensive way?" Steiner, R (1919/69): *Education as a Social Problem,* Anthroposophic Press, (p. 12) (My emphasis).

For Steiner though, social education is not just a question of teaching children about social concepts, it is also about the exemplification of the social though the nature of the teachers themselves:

> "The second thing that we must develop as we work toward a more ***humane form of society is a social attitude of teachers... We must find it so that a new love of humanity may come into the relationship between teacher and pupil".*** Steiner, R (1919/95): *The Spirit of the Waldorf School, Anthroposophic Press.*

The grounding point for a social attitude is the moral principle of "love of humanity". For him it is this orientation of the teachers toward the children that would lead ultimately to a social attitude to the World. The social then has its grounds in morality:

> "We can bring the social question into proper perspective only through a genuine comprehension of morality" Steiner, R (1922/96): *Waldorf Education and Anthroposophy 2,* Anthroposophic Press.

Steiner's view was the social life consists in at least two different components: an individual's social abilities, or sensitivities, and social form. These have their source in education, in thinking and learning:

> "Therefore it is necessary that we not only reflect upon the transformation of single institutions, but that we really adjust ourselves to a genuine transformation in our ***thinking*** and ***learning***, down to their innermost structure". Steiner, R (1919): *Education as a Social Problem*, Anthroposophic Press, p. 111 (my emphasis).

The question then is how can one integrate the two components within the three sphere of the social life which he then goes on to describe? The key is to have social values and abilities that coincide with the appropriate social principle of the spheres of the social form: sensitivities or abilities in freedom, equality and "brotherhood" – if these are established as ***social sensitivities*** then the ***social forms*** can work; if not the latter will always struggle to succeed if not they may fail outright. For Steiner, it is the task of education to provide the foundation for a social future that is at the same time a civilisation worthy of the name for *all* human beings whatever they are as individuals, social class, race, nationality, ability or gender.

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