

# Why Waldorf Programs are Unsuitable for Public Funding

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Text version of a slide talk given at the American Family Foundation conference in Orlando, Florida, on June 14, 2002.

## Abstract

The author tells the story of his experience as a Waldorf school parent, and his discovery that the school was a front for a cult-like sect called Anthroposophy. Waldorf education appears to combine artistic and academic learning and claims to be child-centered, but critical examination reveals that it is devoted to promulgating the ideology of its founder, Austrian mystic Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925). Penetration of Waldorf philosophy into public schools has raised legal issues of Establishment Clause violations and ethical concerns about racism inherent in the system. The author illustrates his discussion with examples from Waldorf and Anthroposophical publications.

## Introduction: My Encounter with Anthroposophy

I enrolled my son in the San Francisco Waldorf School halfway through the sixth grade. I was very impressed with the school. I liked very much the way art is integrated into the curriculum in Waldorf. Drawing, calligraphy, music, dance, and drama aren't separate subjects, but part of the regular lessons. Students hand-write and illustrate their own books for every subject. Subjects are taught in blocks that last several weeks. When Roman History is studied, for example, students will draw and paint Romans, write about them, sing, dance, and act out plays about them.

One day while visiting the school, I browsed through some books by Rudolf Steiner that they had for sale. I saw some very strange things about "astral bodies" and "root races." I asked my son's teacher whether these subjects were taught in the classroom. She assured me that though the teachers studied Steiner, only Steiner's teaching methods were used in the classroom, and Steiner's philosophy wasn't taught to the children. I learned later that this is a standard disclaimer, and it is far from the truth. I should have known better, but I was so in love with the façade of the school that I looked the other way.

Over the year and a half my son was in the school, I became increasingly disturbed about three things:

1. Weird science. In a chemistry lesson, the teacher burned different substances and the students drew and described the qualities of the flames, smoke, and ash. No mention was made of oxidation or, for that matter, any chemistry at all. In a lesson on the physics of light, they were taught that Newton was wrong about color and Goethe was right. White light is a unity and cannot be divided into the colors of the spectrum; the colors are merely an artifact of the prism. I thought perhaps these mistakes were due to the ignorance of particular teachers, but when I obtained Waldorf curriculum guides, I discovered that the inadequate and erroneous science was part of the Waldorf system.

2. Racism. I was shocked to pick up a Steiner book for sale at the school and read: "If the blonds and blue-eyed people die out, the human race will become increasingly dense if men do not arrive at a form of intelligence that is independent of blondness" (Steiner, 1981, p. 86). Why would a school in San Francisco in 1988 be promoting 1920s German racism? They would, I thought, have to be some kind of cult to be so out of touch with reality.
3. Quack medicine. An "Anthroposophical physician" gave a lecture to the parents on "Anthroposophical medicine." It was classic quackery, claiming to be scientific but ignoring science in favor of cult beliefs, namely, Steiner's seemingly authoritative pronouncements. For example, Anthroposophical medicine doesn't believe in germ theory, teaching instead that the real causes of infectious diseases are karmic or spiritual, and that the presence of microorganisms is only a symptom.

I started speaking up at meetings and lectures about these problems. I requested a meeting with the College of Teachers, a committee of senior teachers that ran the school. They were "too busy." Instead, a committee of three teachers was delegated to give me an ultimatum: "You don't have to believe what we believe, but if you are going to talk about your disagreements with the other parents, you will have to leave." We left.

It was all a very strange experience for me, and I decided to express my concerns to the other parents at the school by writing a couple of articles and distributing them to the school address list. I wanted to be sure of what I was talking about, so I bought some Steiner books, did research in the library, and attended more Anthroposophical lectures. As I studied, I realized that the field was wide and deep, and what was really needed was a book looking at it from outside.

For years I studied Anthroposophy and Waldorf, accumulating a large library of books and periodicals. Just when I was at the point of telling myself that I shouldn't do research forever, that it was time to get it down on paper, something new happened. Waldorf education started to move into public schools. A Waldorf school opened in the public school system in Milwaukee in 1991. Soon after, the charter school movement started up, and Waldorf charters started opening. My studies took on urgency. I felt obligated to use what I knew to oppose the use of public funds for this religious system that was violating the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment because no one knew what they were really about.

Then the Internet appeared and changed everything. I was kicked out of the official Waldorf discussion list for being critical and bringing up embarrassing topics. Not one to be silenced, I started an alternative list called Waldorf-Critics. I co-wrote an article about Waldorf with Judy Daar that was published in the Secular Humanist magazine *Free Inquiry* (Dugan & Daar, 1994). I began to organize a "Waldorf Critics Association." At the same time, Debra Snell had experienced a similar conflict with a Waldorf charter school in Nevada City, California, and she had begun to organize "Parents for Legal and Non-Sectarian Schools" to close the school that she had helped found. We joined forces, and PLANS, People for Legal and Nonsectarian Schools, was incorporated in 1997. PLANS operates a popular web site, a public email discussion list, "Waldorf-Critics," and a private email support list, "Waldorf-Survivors-Only." In 1998, PLANS filed a federal lawsuit against two Northern California school districts that operate a Waldorf magnet school and a Waldorf charter school, alleging violation of the Establishment Clause.

## The History of Anthroposophy

Anthroposophy is a cult-like religious sect following the teachings of Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925). There is a thorough account of Steiner's life, first as a leader of Theosophy and then as the head of his own sect, in Peter Washington's entertaining *Madame Blavatsky's Baboon: A History of the Mystics, Mediums, and Misfits Who Brought Spiritualism to America* (1995). Washington also covers the other popular gurus of the early 20th century, Besant, Ouspensky, Gurdjieff, Krishnamurti, and more. I recommend it highly. Steiner was appointed head of the German section of Theosophy by Annie Besant in 1902. He was a charismatic leader and the sect thrived. Around 1912 Charles Leadbeater, at Theosophy's center in India, became enamored of a beautiful Indian boy. He convinced the other Theosophical leaders that the boy, Krishnamurti, was a reincarnation of Christ. Steiner couldn't go along with that. He'd already integrated Christ into his cosmological system, and Krishnamurti wasn't part of that system. Years later, when he grew up, Krishnamurti repudiated his role in Theosophy and became a spiritual teacher in his own right.

Steiner split with Theosophy, forming his own group, which he called Anthroposophy. He was a charismatic leader, and most of the German section came with him, forming an instant cult. Later he claimed to have been teaching Anthroposophy all along, and Anthroposophical presses went so far as to change "Theosophy" to "Anthroposophy" in some of his earlier books.

Anthroposophy cobbles together a hodge-podge of spiritual traditions, claiming to teach comprehensive truths which are only partially found in other religions. At its foundation are the concepts of reincarnation and polytheism, which derive from Hinduism. Steiner was something of a fundamentalist Platonist, saying that the real world was all illusion, that objects are reflections of eternal essences in the spiritual world. He also espoused Plato's political philosophy and may well have imagined himself as the philosopher-king. From the ancient Persian religion Zoroastrianism he took dual gods of light and dark. He identified the light god as Lucifer, and created his own trinity of Lucifer, Ahriman (the dark god), and a Gnostic conception of Christ, usually referred to as "The Christ Spirit," who dwelt in the body of Jesus for only three years.

As if this weren't enough, Steiner stirred it all together with a liberal dose of European occult traditions: Cabbalism, numerology, Rosicrucianism and Masonry, and spiced it with vegetarianism and the pseudosciences of astrology, herbalism, and homeopathy. Steiner claimed to make "exact scientific observations" in the spiritual world, so nothing that he said could be discussed substantially by his followers without questioning the foundations of the faith.

## Anthroposophy Today

A pamphlet of the Anthroposophical Society in America (1993) quotes Steiner's statement of the purpose of the society given in 1923: "an association of people who would foster the life of the soul, both in the individual and in human society, on the basis of a true knowledge of the spiritual world." This reveals the religious nature of Anthroposophy. "The life of the soul" is generally considered to be a religious matter, as is "the spiritual world." His assertion of "true knowledge" marks Anthroposophy as a sect; it implies that other paths are not true.

Many common references identify Anthroposophy as a religious movement. Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines it as "a 20th century religious system growing out of theosophy and centering on human development." (<http://www.m-w.com/cgi-bin/dictionary>, 12/1/02) The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy calls it "The Christian

and occultist movement associated with Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) stressing the cultivation of spiritual nature and the way to gain spiritual awareness of a higher world" (Oxford, 1994, p. 75). *Encyclopedia Britannica's* article on Steiner defines Anthroposophy as "a movement based on the notion that there is a spiritual world comprehensible to pure thought but accessible only to the highest faculties of mental knowledge" (<http://www.britannica.com>, 12/1/02).

More than any other sect of occultism, except perhaps the Shriners, Anthroposophists apply themselves to activities in the outside world. The pamphlet lists the activities of "Anthroposophy at Work" as Waldorf education, adult education, healing dance, medical practice, elder care, biodynamic agriculture, the arts, banking and financial consulting, health and hygiene, publishing, a formal church called Christian Community, and the Anthroposophical Society itself.

These activities are usually referred to in Anthroposophical jargon as "initiatives." This author observes that they are claimed as Anthroposophical activities when it is desired to glorify Anthroposophy, but denied and called independent free associations when outsiders question their connection to problematic Anthroposophical doctrines. They are wholly carried out under Anthroposophical direction, ultimately taking guidance from divisions of the Anthroposophical headquarters (the Goetheanum) in Dornach, Switzerland. Each activity will, of course, have its own local non-profit corporation.

## Waldorf Schools

In 1919 Emil Molt, an admirer of Rudolf Steiner, asked Steiner to set up a school for the children of the workers of the Stuttgart Waldorf-Astoria cigarette factory that Molt managed. The school also served the children of Steiner's devotees, but, then as now, the great majority of the students were from outside Anthroposophy. The school was progressive for its time; boys and girls were taught together, there were no separate tracks for work- and college-bound students, and art was integrated into the curriculum. The school was successful, and Anthroposophists founded more, first in Germany, then in England and the United States. In the United States they are called Waldorf schools; in Europe Steiner schools or Free Schools. Steiner died in 1925.

Germany outlawed Anthroposophy in the second year of the Nazi period. In the author's opinion, this wasn't because Anthroposophic philosophy was incompatible with National Socialism; rather it was because Anthroposophists promoted a rival political system, Steiner's "threefold social order." According to education scholar Achim Leschinsky, The Waldorf schools were harassed by local authorities. The schools fired all their Jewish teachers, formed an association, and presented themselves to the government as supporting National Socialism while they continued to do things their own way. They were controversial in the Nazi party, but they survived for six years because of support from leading Nazis, most notably from Deputy Fuehrer Rudolf Hess. Nazi education official Alfred Baeumler argued that the Waldorf schools should be studied as a good example of a system of indoctrination. After Hess flew to Scotland, Hitler cracked down on occultists and the remaining schools were closed. (Leschinsky, 1983, p. 26). After the war the Waldorf movement continued to grow, and today there are over 500 schools worldwide, including at least 140 in North America (AWSNA, 2003).

In school brochures, Waldorf schools state that their purpose is to educate "the whole child," "head, heart, and hands," or "mind, heart, and will." They often quote Steiner: "Our highest endeavor must be to develop free human beings, who are themselves able to impart purpose and direction to their lives." These aspirations

aren't unique to Waldorf; did you ever see a school brochure that said they educate only part of the child?

Publications for insiders reveal other intentions: the advancement of Steiner's "threefold social order" and missionary activity for Anthroposophy. During World War I, Steiner promoted his plan to reorganize society. He sent tracts to world leaders, but none bought his vague plan to divide society into three independent spheres, spiritual, economic, and rights. Disappointed, he told his followers that humanity's opportunity to take up the threefold social order had passed, and the best that he could do would be to found a school to prepare souls who would meet up again when they were reincarnated in the sixth post-Atlantean epoch. A publication of AWSNA, the trademark holder of "Waldorf" in North America, describes their motives:

[I]t is important to bring out a point which is not often clearly realized. The spiritual life forces of a Waldorf school are twofold; or, we could also say, there are two motives for its existence. On the one hand, it is the starting-point for a renewal of education based on a spiritual knowledge of the whole man (the teacher's vocation as such). On the other hand, and at the same time, it is the working model for a social community, it is an institution of the free life of spirit. Remember that the Waldorf School was founded in 1919 as part of the larger movement towards a threefold social order after World War I. When this large-scale effort to renew the social order, nourished as it was by Rudolf Steiner's impulse, found itself thwarted, the Waldorf School itself remained, as a sort of "living relic" after the storm, but also as a seed bearing in itself the potential for the renewal of social life in our times. The school—with its various examples of cooperation among different segments of its community and with inhering self-determination as a faculty-run institution, since 1919—has been a full-working model for an organization rooted in the free life of spirit; and as such it stands as a continuing impulse to re-awaken awareness of the threefold social order and put it into practice. (Leist, 1987, p. 13)

Anthroposophy doesn't proselytize directly; belief in karma and reincarnation leads Anthroposophists to believe that people who are destined for Anthroposophy will ask about it when they encounter it. Waldorf parents who show interest in Steiner are invited to join "study groups" that read and discuss Steiner. Often this leads to Waldorf teacher training.

As we have seen so many times, the school becomes a parent's first introduction to anthroposophy, and this is happening in our greater community, as more people become interested in participating in festivals and attending study groups. (Leopold, 2001)

Waldorf brochures will claim that the school is based on child development. What isn't explained is that Steiner's theory of child development differs radically from other theories (see Steiner, 1960). Steiner's child development theory is based on what he calls an understanding of the "true nature of man." Reincarnation and karma are essential tenets of this doctrine. Humans have four interpenetrating bodies that incarnate in stages. The physical body is born at birth. The "etheric body" is born at age seven, signified by the change of teeth. The "astral body" is born at age fourteen (numerology dictates seven-year periods), and the "I," the eternal part of the human that is reborn forever, is born at age 21. The web site of the Pedagogical Section of the Goetheanum, headquarters of Anthroposophy, describes what the child is ready for in each period, with reference to Steiner's three-system physiology:

Let us now take a closer look at specific ages. To that end let us consider Rudolf Steiner's discovery of three functional systems in the human being: Our motor activity happens in what can be called our metabolic/limb system. Every movement is a bodily expression of will. Our rhythmic system – breathing and circulation – is a bodily expression of experience and feeling. Fear, joy, pain, etc., affect the breath and pulse. Our nerve-sense aspect, the actual consciousness pole, which is centered in the region of the head (the brain), corresponds to the activity of knowing. A person is healthy only when these three systems work together and form a whole. Anyone can experience the benefit of taking a walk after doing strenuous computer work, which uses only the head. When we are digesting our lunch, we have to overcome a fair amount of resistance to do concentrated thinking. A person is healthy when none of these systems suppresses the others for too long.

We can relate these three systems to three phases of childhood development. Before the change of teeth the child lives chiefly in motor activity, as a being of emotion and will. During this phase its sense activity, speaking and thinking are all connected with its movement and are therefore linked to the body to a considerable degree. We can observe this in the four year-old child. When it sees or hears something, it immediately has the urge to convert what it has perceived into its own movement. This is how it learns to speak; this is how it begins to play. One cannot picture a child before the change of teeth that would wait for a meal with crossed arms. Perception causes direct will activity in the limbs. Inner and outer movement still belong entirely together.

With the change of teeth the child's inner being begins to separate itself from its outer movement. Its own inner place of experience develops and its rhythmic system emancipates itself from its limb system. In this stage of life the harmonious 1:4 relationship between pulse and breath falls into place.

With puberty finally, thinking begins to become independent. The human being awakens to critical judgment. Simultaneously the voice deepens, the limbs become heavy, the young person has arrived on the earth, as it were, and is seeking its individual personality. (Goetheanum, 2002)

The consequence of this theory is what critics term an "infantilizing" educational plan. In recent years research has shown that children who don't master reading in the primary grades are often left behind for the rest of their lives (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998, p. 21). This has led to "pre-reading" activity being common in kindergarten. Today children entering first grade are expected to recognize letters and numbers, be able to read simple words, and count. Waldorf is vehemently opposed to what they call "pushing" children "too early." Everyone would agree with that, but what is "too early"? Kindergartners in Waldorf are not only not taught letters and numbers, but many teachers make efforts to protect them from being exposed to print at all. Stories are told to them, not read. Parents have even been advised that questions about road signs and words on packages should be deflected, as too-early intellectual activity will damage the children (Ercolano, 2001).

Waldorf students learn letters in first grade, and basic reading in second and third grades. This is in accordance with Steiner, who said that in the best of all possible worlds, reading would be delayed until after puberty, but compromises had to be made with the demands of society. Since standardized testing is frowned upon, and slower students are expected to catch up in their own good time, children who still can't read in fifth or sixth grade are not uncommon in Waldorf.

Steiner said over and over that children's health later in life would be damaged if they were intellectually stimulated too early. Consequently, reasoning, the linking of cause and effect, is avoided till sixth or seventh grade. Science lessons, which begin in fourth grade, consist only of observations. No theories are taught until later. But it is impossible to teach science without theory, so what is really happening is that by being protected from the "materialism" of modern thought, the pupils are left open to accept the magical world view expressed in the mythology in which they are immersed, that nature spirits and gods are behind the illusions that appear to be the physical universe. Whether this system is actually successful in turning out many Anthroposophists, however, is doubtful; sophisticated kids laugh at the more "anthropop" teachers behind their backs. Waldorf schools may convert more parents than children to Anthroposophy.

Teachers are supposed to start with a first-grade class, and stay with the class all the way through elementary and middle grades, through the eighth grade. This makes the Waldorf experience extremely variable, depending on the talents of the teacher. Since there is no standardized testing, and teachers are hired more on their ability to represent Anthroposophical devotion than their teaching ability, two successive classes graduating from the same school may have very different levels of competency.

Waldorf is very concerned with rhythm, and the schedule of the school day is carefully crafted. After a rigidly controlled circle ritual and prayer (students *do not* share news from home or discuss world events), two hours of morning "prime time" is given to the "main lesson." Main lessons are of one subject, taught in a block of several weeks' length. A history block might be followed by a block on geometry, followed by a block on botany, and so on. There are no textbooks. The teacher draws elaborate illustrations and writes text on the chalkboard, and the student makes a "lesson book" for each block by copying from the board.

After the main lesson, special subjects are rotated in a more conventional way, like math drills or foreign language classes twice a week. The special subjects include some very strange Anthroposophical exercises taught by specialty teachers. A great deal of time is spent doing strictly prescribed wet-on-wet watercolor painting. This is intended to be a spiritual exercise in which the students contact the spiritual world through color. The use of lines is forbidden in the early grades, except for "form drawing," which consists of repetitive exercises that are purported to be therapeutic. All Waldorf students take eurythmy, a ritual dance that Steiner invented, claiming it was a new art form that carried on the ancient Greek temple dance tradition. It is more of a code than an art form. It consists of a prescribed vocabulary of gestures that symbolize speech sounds, musical intervals, the signs of the zodiac, and the planets. Parents can be very impressed when they see flowing gowns and graceful arm-waving reminiscent of Isadora Duncan, but the impression is only superficial. The world of dance takes no interest in the Steiner cult's "new art form."

The environment of Waldorf schools is unique. The architecture, following Steiner's designs for the Goetheanum buildings, avoids right angles and rounds corners. Where an existing building is used, interiors are draped to soften the lines, and natural light is used as much as possible. Classrooms are noticeably less "busy" than any other school; only a few selected pieces of student art are displayed, perhaps a few pieces of art relating to the current lesson block or theme of the year, and a "nature table" (really an altar) that is redecorated for each season. Classroom walls are painted in pastel colors that Steiner prescribed for each grade, with a special transparent color technique called "lazuring." The effect is peaceful and artistic.

Waldorf schools usually develop by founding a kindergarten first, then when enough support has been organized, a first grade. New classes will be added year by year as the first grade moves up. The standard Waldorf school has a kindergarten and eight grades. High schools are rare because they are more expensive. Very successful schools found high schools after years of being a full elementary school. Schools are monitored and licensed by national Waldorf school associations. In the United States the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA) licenses use of the Waldorf and Steiner trademarks. In turn, the associations are coordinated by the Pedagogical Section of the Goetheanum in Switzerland. There are no general Waldorf colleges. Specialized institutions include teacher training colleges, art and eurythmy schools, and post-graduate medical schools.

Waldorf schools have a strict dress code, and students are not allowed to bring anything from home, especially toys, books, or popular music. The schools want to change the lifestyles of their students' families to conform to Anthroposophical ideals. Stricter schools will insist that parents sign an agreement to eliminate television and recorded music from their homes. Teachers request that children not be enrolled in any after-school activities like dance or sports so that the influence of the school won't be diluted by popular culture. Parents are advised (or ordered, depending on the teacher) to put children to bed early and not to expose them to any stimulation before school. Some teachers inspect their students' homes; parents joke with each other about hiding the TV and plastic toys. Because of this complex of restrictions, Waldorf families, trying to do their best for their children, tend to become isolated, socializing only with other Waldorf families.

You will have to take over children for their education and instruction—children who will have received already (as you must remember) the education, or mis-education given them by their parents. Indeed our intentions will only be fully accomplished when we, as humanity, will have reached the stage where parents, too, will understand that special tasks are set for mankind today. (Steiner,,p. 16)

## The Waldorf Teacher

Waldorf teachers are different from teachers in any other variety of educational theory. It is expected that they will participate in a group spiritual life. "What is unique in these schools is the inner path of the teacher" wrote artist and Waldorf teacher Mary Richards. "The teacher's personal path is to enter into a consciousness of the human being and universe and to enter into teaching as a practice of this consciousness. A community is thus created among the teachers by the fact that they are students together and are connected through a meditative life" (Richards, 1980, p. 16).

Norman Davidson, Director of Teacher Training at Sunbridge College, the principal Waldorf teacher training program on the East Coast, explained:

What we are offering is really a personal transformative experience. The student studies the world and human life fundamentally from an Anthroposophical point of view. He or she learns to experience things from a spiritual-scientific approach. At the same time, he or she is given the opportunities for artistic and practical activity that help effect an inner spiritual development. (Koetsch, 1996, p. 37)

The teacher training colleges are more like religious seminaries than teaching colleges. A letterhead from Rudolf Steiner College, the largest West Coast school, describes it as "A Center for Anthroposophical Endeavors."

The full-time teacher training program is a two-year course. The first year, called the "Foundation Year," is a survey of Anthroposophy, and is also offered to anyone interested in learning more about Steiner's philosophy. A reading list for Foundation Year students reveals the nature of the curriculum. Note that almost every book is by Steiner; those few that aren't by Steiner are by other Anthroposophical authors, with the exception of *Parzival*.

[RUDOLF STEINER COLLEGE]

FOUNDATION YEAR BOOK LIST 1993-94. The following books will be read and discussed during the year. You will need to have your own copy of the books marked \*. The rest, and others the faculty will suggest, may be purchased or borrowed from the library.

Psych 101 The Nature of the Human Being: Microcosm/Macrocosm

Rudolf Steiner, *Theosophy*\*  
Rudolf Steiner, *Calendar of the Soul*\*  
Rudolf Steiner, *The Younger Generation*

Lit 100 Parsifal

W. von Eschenbach. *Parzival* (Mustard and Passage translation)\*  
René Querido, *The Mystery of the Holy Grail: A Modern Path of Initiation*\*  
Steven Roboz, ed., *The Holy Grail*  
Rudolf Steiner, *The Search for the Holy Grail*

SS 101 Biography, Life Cycles and the Meaning of Existence

Bernard Lievegoed, *Phases*\*  
Beredene Jocelyn. *Citizens of the Cosmos*  
Gisela and George O'Neil, *The Human Life*

SS 104 The Festivals

Rudolf Steiner. *The Cycle of the Year as a Breathing Process*  
Rudolf Steiner, *The Festivals and Their Meaning*  
Rudolf Steiner. *The Four Seasons and the Archangels*

Hist 102 Rudolf Steiner: His Life and Work

Rudolf Steiner. *The Course of My Life*  
Robert A. McDermott. Ed. *The Essential Steiner*  
Stewart Easton, *Man and World in the Light of Anthroposophy*  
Stewart Easton, *Rudolf Steiner: Herald of a Modern Consciousness*

Hist 103 Evolution of Consciousness through Art

Gottfried Richter, *Art and Human Consciousness*\*

Psych 100 Knowledge of the Higher Worlds

Rudolf Steiner, *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and its Attainment*\*  
Rudolf Steiner, *Foundation Stone*\*

F.W. Zeylemans, *The Foundation Stone*

Phil 103 World Evolution and Spiritual Development

Rudolf Steiner, *Occult Science*\*

Rudolf Steiner, *The Spiritual Hierarchies*\*

Lit 160 English and American Literature

An anthology of readings is provided for the class.

Phil 102 Christology

Rudolf Steiner, *Spiritual Guidance of Man*\*

Rudolf Steiner, *Christianity as Mystical Fact*

Phil 100 Philosophy of Freedom

Rudolf Steiner. *Philosophy of Freedom*\*

FA 100 Eurythmy

Rudolf Steiner, *A Lecture on Eurythmy*

Rudolf Steiner, *An Introduction to Eurythmy*

Marjorie Spock, *Eurythmy*

Ed 100 Introduction to Waldorf Education

Rudolf Steiner, *Kingdom of Childhood*\*

Rudolf Steiner, *Education of the Child in the Light of Spiritual Science*\*

Hist 110 America in the Light of Spiritual Science

An anthology of readings is provided for the class.

Psych 102 Karma and Reincarnation

Rudolf Steiner, *Manifestations of Karma*\*

Rudolf Steiner, *Reincarnation and Karma*\*

Rudolf Steiner, *Karmic Relationships*, Volumes 1-8

René Querido, *Questions and Answers on Reincarnation and Karma*\*

I can't help noticing the conventional designations of the courses. "History 102" is the life and work of Rudolf Steiner. "Psych 102" is about karma and reincarnation. These course numbers would look good on a transcript, as long as the actual course titles were omitted.

The second year of teacher training addresses education, but students are required to have taken the Foundation Year first, or to demonstrate that they have equivalent indoctrination in Anthroposophy. An instruction sheet from Rudolf Steiner College adds requirements to the Teacher Training Application form. Perhaps these requirements were considered to be sensitive, and the college did not want to publish them to strangers on the application form that is sent out "cold."

For students who have not completed the Foundation Year program at Rudolf Steiner College or another comparable study center, in addition to the procedures listed on the Teacher Training application form, the following are also required:

1. A statement from yourself concerning your relationship to Anthroposophy.

This amounts to a religious test for entry to the teacher training year.

2. A letter of recommendation from a senior person in the anthroposophical community who knows you well and could comment on you in the light of your relationship to Anthroposophy.

Applicants aren't asked for a recommendation from, say, an employer or professor concerning their suitability for teacher training, but from an Anthroposophist. One might expect this priority of Anthroposophy over educational values to be reflected in the Waldorf schools these teachers-to-be will be charged with creating.

3. A paper giving an overview of the knowledge you have gained from a study of the following books by Rudolf Steiner:

*Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and its Attainment*  
*Occult Science*  
*Theosophy*  
*Philosophy of Freedom (Philosophy of Spiritual Activity)*  
*Christianity as Mystical Fact*

4. Evidence of some work in Eurythmy in the form of a letter describing the extent and quality of what you have done and with whom.

5. Letters describing the extent and quality of your past work in painting, music or other artistic fields. It is of particular interest if this artistic work has been based on anthroposophical thought.

6. A statement outlining your experiences participating in celebration of seasonal festivals and your study of the spiritual foundation of those festivals.

These questions are all about Anthroposophy. The reading list for the second year continues in the same vein. Again, almost all the books not written by Steiner are from Anthroposophic presses:

[Rudolf Steiner College]

Teacher Education Program Book List 1993-94

Students should read for the first day of class:

-three excerpts from lectures by Rudolf Steiner sent with summer information packet

-the first lecture of *Study of Man*

-the first lecture of Rudolf Steiner's *Three Lectures on the Curriculum*

Required reading for the basic education courses include:

Rudolf Steiner, *Study of Man*

Rudolf Steiner, *Practical Advice for Teachers*

Rudolf Steiner, *Discussions with Teachers*

Rudolf Steiner, *Waldorf Education for Adolescence*

Rudolf Steiner, *Balance in Teaching*

Rudolf Steiner, *Love and Its Meaning in the World*  
Rudolf Steiner, *The Work of the Angels in Man's Astral Body*  
Rudolf Steiner, *The Education of the Child*  
C. von Heydebrand, *The Curriculum*  
E.A. Karl Stockmeyer, *Rudolf Steiner's Curriculum for Waldorf Schools*

Early Childhood Education students will also need:

Rudolf Steiner, *Understanding Young Children*  
Karl König, *The First Three Years of the Child*  
Freya Jaffke, *Toymaking with Children*

It is assumed that anyone going into teaching work in the Waldorf schools will have a copy of each of the following and be familiar with the contents:

Rudolf Steiner, *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment*  
Rudolf Steiner, *Theosophy*  
Rudolf Steiner, *Occult Science*  
Rudolf Steiner, *Philosophy of Freedom*  
Rudolf Steiner, *Christianity as Mystical Fact*  
Rudolf Steiner, *The Spiritual Guidance of Man*  
Rudolf Steiner, *The Younger Generation*  
Rudolf Steiner, *Kingdom of Childhood*

In addition, the following are strongly recommended as very useful references:

Rudolf Steiner, *The Festivals and Their Meaning*  
Rudolf Steiner, *The Cycle of the Year as a Breathing Process*  
Rudolf Steiner, *Man as Symphony of the Creative Word*  
Rudolf Steiner, *The Poetry and Meaning of Fairy Tales*  
*Grimm's Fairy Tales* (Pantheon Edition)  
Padraic Collum, *Children of Odin*  
H. Baravalle, *Teaching Mathematics in the Waldorf School Plan*  
D. Harrer, *Mathematics for Elementary Grades*  
H. Niederhauser, *Form Drawing*  
R. Kutzli, *Creative Form Drawing*, Vol. 1 and Vol. 2  
Roy Wilkinson, *Man and Animal*  
René Querido, *Man's Responsibility for the Earth*  
J. Sterit, *And There Was Light*  
D. Harrer, *Chapters From Ancient History*  
D. Harrer, *Roman Lives*  
C. Lindenberg, *Teaching History*  
B. Zahlingen, *Plays for Puppets and Marionettes*  
Nancy Foster, ed., *Let Us Form a Ring: An Acorn Hill Anthology*  
Seasonal story and song books from Wynstones Kindergarten: *Summer, Autumn, Winter, Spring, Gateways, and Spindrift*

Waldorf promoters have argued that there are special summer courses for public Waldorf school teachers that don't include Anthroposophic content. A public school teacher who took one of those programs reported to me that there was a whole section of the Rudolf Steiner College library that was "off limits" to the trainees! That's rather strange behavior for a teacher training college.

The argument is specious for two reasons. First, a public Waldorf school ("Waldorf Method" or "Waldorf-inspired") will be likely to hire teachers who have had the full Waldorf training program; certified Waldorf teachers are more desirable than partly-trained teachers; indeed, some public Waldorf schools advertise that their teachers have both Waldorf and State certifications. Second, the "sanitized" courses actually contain a lot of Anthroposophy, i.e., things that only Anthroposophists believe. One example will have to suffice for this presentation. Teachers who took the public school teachers program at Rudolf Steiner College in the summer of 1996 gave the author this handout:

The mood of the fairy tale, even in a quite superficial sense, is truly the means to prepare human souls, such as they are today, for the experience of what can shine into them from higher, supersensible worlds. The simple fairy tale, approaching modestly with no pretension of copying everyday reality but leaping grandly over all its laws, provides a preparation in human souls for once more accepting the divine, spiritual worlds. Rudolf Steiner 1911 [sic]

Understanding this sheds quite a different light on what Waldorf teachers are up to when fairy tales are the primary literature (recited by the teacher, not read) in kindergarten and first grade.

What's remarkable about the Waldorf teacher training is what's missing. Waldorf teachers don't study any of the other educational theorists in more than a cursory fashion. They aren't given any training in core academic subjects at all. They don't study classroom management. In Waldorf, devotion to Anthroposophy is all. Everything else is supposed to take care of itself—somehow.

### **Concealing Anthroposophy: Prayer and Ritual**

Waldorf schools use various denials and subterfuges to conceal Anthroposophy. Here's a particularly interesting one from the parent handbook of a publicly-funded Waldorf school:

A prominent aspect of the Novato Charter School's educational community is a nature-based philosophy. As parents, educators, and administrators of this community, we believe that humans have a connection with all life forms on our planet, and with the universe that sustains us. We believe that nature serves as a common ground for all cultures. Observation and acknowledgement of our natural environment allows us to more fully celebrate our likeness, appreciate our differences, and come together as one in learning about ourselves and the world around us. (Blue Oak Charter School, 1998, p. 8)

The high-sounding idealistic language covers the crucial issue, which is, just what is a "nature-based philosophy"? Perhaps they're talking about a world view, the business of religions. The handbook states further:

"The Earth, the universe, and the natural elements are acknowledged and celebrated in a variety of ways..." (ibid.)

In Waldorf schools, "the elements" are earth, air, fire and water. These ancient "elements" are illusions concealing the activity of "elemental spirits," respectively, gnomes, sylphs, salamanders, and undines. "Acknowledging" and "celebrating" are acts of worship. We're not talking about ecological science here. The writer is trying to appeal to New Age spirituality, popular in Marin County where the school is located. I think it's good for a Waldorf school to appeal to New Agers, they are its

obvious constituency, but Novato Charter School is a public school! A grace before meals is suggested:

Earth who gives to us this food, sun who makes it ripe and good, sun above, earth below, our loving thanks to you we show. (ibid.)

This prayer is by Christian Morgenstern, a friend of Rudolf Steiner, and is used in Waldorf schools worldwide. Thanks can only be given to a person or a deity. Here the earth and the sun are personified, as is done in a nature-worshipping religion. In Anthroposophy The Christ Spirit is a "sun being."

Who should kindergartners thank for their snack? It would be appropriate in a public school to thank the teacher who gave them the food, the grocer who made it available, the trucker who brought it to the market, the farm workers who picked it, and the farmer who grew it. If they did that, they would be learning real gratitude, not a religious relationship to cosmic bodies.

Waldorf students pray at the opening of every school day. This tradition continues in public Waldorf schools, despite the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. Back in 1919 Steiner knew that praying would be problematic, even in private schools, and told his teachers to cover it up:

A teacher: Would it be a good thing to let the children speak a kind of morning prayer?

Dr. Steiner: That is something that can be done. I had also had it in mind. I will say something about it tomorrow. We will also talk about a prayer. But there is just one thing I should like to ask you. You know, with these things the outer form is of the utmost importance. Never call the verse a "prayer" but a "school opening verse". Do see to it that people do not hear the expression "prayer" used by a teacher. This will go a long way towards overcoming the prejudice that this is an anthroposophical school.

The biggest mistakes we make are with words. People will not get out of the habit of using words that are detrimental to us. (Steiner, 1986, p. 45)

Below is an eyewitness report of a traditional opening ritual for the lower grades. The wording of the prayer will be slightly different in different schools because they are translations of Steiner's original in German:

Clock time registers 8:50. Miss Bronte [2nd grade teacher] sweeps to the back of the room to turn off the lights and then she says, "Let's have a golden tone this morning. Who has never done this?" A few students raise their hands. Miss Bronte chooses Ariana to ring the golden tone. With great enthusiasm and anticipation, acting as though she has never done this before, Miss Bronte holds the xylophone for Ariana, who with a flick of the wrist creates the golden tone. The class listens quietly in the darkened room.

Next, Miss Bronte strikes a match against the grey rock on the nature table. In unison the class says, "Candle, candle, burning bright, thank you for your loving light." The students stand and cross their arms in front of their chests and recite a verse by Rodolf Steiner that I am told is the one verse said, with some variation, in every Waldorf classroom between first and fourth grades:

The sun, with loving light,  
Makes bright for me each day.  
The soul, with spirit power,  
Gives strength unto my limbs.

In sunlight, shining clear,  
I reverence, O God,  
The strength of humankind  
Which thou so graciously  
Has planted in my soul,  
That I with all my might  
May love to work and learn  
From thee come light and strength  
To thee rise love and thanks.

Students recite the words clearly. Next, with accompanying hand movements, students sing another song. Then they snuff the candle with great attention and ritual. (Uhrmacher, 1991, pp. 108-109)

In the first public Waldorf school in Milwaukee the wording was changed to make it seem less religious:

The Sun with loving light  
Makes bright for me each day  
The light within myself  
Gives strength unto my limbs  
In sunlight, shining clear  
I reverence the strength and power of humankind  
That lives in you and me,  
That I with all my might,  
May love to work and learn.  
To me comes strength and light,  
From me rise love and thanks. (McDermott, 1995, p. 38)

This is still a prayer despite the removal of "God." "Love and thanks" are due to some person or deity; the object seems obvious, the sun. In Anthroposophy, the Christ Spirit is a "sun being." It requires no great stretch to construe this prayer as being directed to Steiner's version of Christ.

In Northern California, a public school teacher who had taken Waldorf teacher training got permission from his school board to present "a simple, multi-cultural study of stories from six world religions." In a Waldorf journal that he apparently figured his public school colleagues wouldn't see, the teacher bragged to his Anthroposophical colleagues about how he managed to stage a full-fledged Anthroposophical ritual in his public school classroom:

On the last day before vacation, I led the children in a Winter Solstice Celebration. The room was cleared, except for a red covered table arranged with a wreath of evergreen branches and mistletoe. A few sprigs of holly, with its red berries, completed the circle which surrounded an angel holding a lighted candle. A few crystals and some winter animals complemented the arrangement. The children each had a candle and we spiraled into the center, each lighting our candle. All the while we sang a simple solstice song that goes, "Down with Darkness, Up with Light." The simplicity and magic of the moment was very moving and powerful. Winter Solstice, with its obvious astronomical importance, is the easiest aspect of the Christmas season to emphasize in a public school. So, for a brief moment, we all felt like ancient Druids worshipping the sun. This celebration ended what was for this public school teacher a very special month. (Peterson, 1995, p. 22)

## Concealing Anthroposophy: Cult Science

Beyond the explicit content of prayers and rituals, Anthroposophy is present implicitly in many Waldorf lessons. “[I]n the great tableau of the main lessons from Class 1 to 12, you teach the child/student in clear, separate terms, about all possible spiritual matters. The curriculum is indeed, in a veiled way of course, Anthroposophy” (Whitehead, 1993, p. 27). Anthroposophical influence is most obvious in Waldorf science teaching, which ranges from odd to bizarre. My son David was taught, in seventh-grade physics at the San Francisco Waldorf School, that Newton was wrong, and Goethe was right about color. The following example is from the lesson book of a high school senior in the flagship school associated with the West Coast teachers college:

Newton continued to elaborate on his Theory of Colors. He determined that specific colors came about because all the other colors were absorbed. For example, a blue shirt, is determined as blue because the shirt has absorbed every other color, and has emitted (reflected) only that blue. Though his theory has been proven incorrect, it is essential to learn about many of Newton’s theories in order for us to better understand the scientific frame of mind. . . . Just one of the many aspects of Newtonian physics that we have adopted is Newton’s Particular (particles) Theory of Light. (Charren, 1988, npn.)

This is totally backwards, yet there are no corrections by the teacher. Newton’s theory of why a blue shirt appears blue has not been proven incorrect; it is as valid today as it ever was. Newton’s theory of light particles was rejected by later science, and it didn’t have any influence on the development of today’s quantum theory. It is quite incorrect to say that it “has been adopted.”

Another place that Waldorf science differs radically from the rest of the world is in physiology. Anthroposophy has its own physiology. Steiner taught that the heart does not pump blood, blood moves itself. “Naturally, people began to think that the heart is really a pump that mechanically pumps the blood through the body, because they no longer knew that our inner fluids have their own life and therefore move on their own. They never dreamed that the heart is only a sense organ that checks on the circulation of the fluids in its own way.” (Steiner, 1985, p. 112) I, along with another PLANS board member, had the bizarre experience of hearing public school teachers defend this doctrine to the Twin Ridges school board in Nevada County, California. They sincerely believed what their Waldorf mentors had told them, namely, that this was cutting-edge science and the subject of current university research. To prevent parent revolts, this doctrine is usually skirted in Waldorf classes. The lesson block on circulation will be taught in an ambiguous way without mentioning the pumping function of the heart.

The following is from a seventh or eighth grade lesson book that was proudly put on display at the San Francisco Waldorf School.

Name: Laurel

Organic Chemistry Test

[Teacher’s note] Excellent comprehension of the material, Laurel

I. Short Answer

1. Describe the nature of sugar in relationship to the four elements of nature. Use examples from our experiments to illustrate.

Sugar is always found in liquid form in NATURE. Sugar has a very strong relationship to fire as we saw in our experiment (the nature of sugar). We saw how when we placed some sugar into a crucible, it burst into flame (highly combustible after advancing [to] its middle form a caramel -like substance). It also has an affinity to air (as we saw from the smoke that arose) and water because we saw that it was highly soluble. Not very strong relationship to earth.

[Teacher's note] Perfect!

Parents might feel proud that their elementary school student had a class in organic chemistry. On the face of it, it sounds advanced. Who'd imagine the class would be about "the four elements"?

## Denial

In the private Waldorf schools, it's always been necessary to appeal to mainstream parents. There aren't enough Anthroposophists to support the schools, so the majority of the students will be from "outside" the group. From the beginning, the schools have taken care to conceal and deny the Anthroposophical content of the education. In a brochure given to parents in San Francisco, where my son attended, and also used by some other schools, there is only one mention of Anthroposophy. Board of Directors member John Bloom wrote:

Anthroposophy informs the education, the curriculum, and the teacher training. It is the basis for the school's values, priorities, and organization. However, it is not taught in the school. (Bloom, 1991, p. 2)

Let's deconstruct this a bit. If A is "the basis for" B, then we can say that B is based on A. But when A "informs" B, what is that relationship? It's an intentionally vague statement. It must mean that at least some of the content of B comes from A. Expanding Bloom's statement, then:

The school's values are based on Anthroposophy.  
The school's priorities are based on Anthroposophy.  
The school's organization is based on Anthroposophy.  
Some of the teacher training is Anthroposophy  
Some of the curriculum is Anthroposophy  
Some of the education is Anthroposophy  
Anthroposophy is not taught in the school.

At which point a loud clang of cognitive dissonance should sound. Regarding the aspect of church-state separation, would a public school be acceptable if it stated:

The school's values are based on Catholicism.  
The school's priorities are based on Catholicism.  
The school's organization is based on Catholicism.  
Some of the teacher training is Catholicism  
Some of the curriculum is Catholicism  
Some of the education is Catholicism  
Catholicism is not taught in the school.

Indeed, a “Catholic Method” or “Catholic-inspired” public district school or public charter school describing itself thus would simply not be believed. Anthroposophy is getting away with it because people don't know what it is.

## A Racial Theory of History

Madame Blavatsky, drawing from Hindu traditions about events of history being predestined to occur in cycles, defined an elaborate system of wheels within wheels. In Theosophy's cosmology, seven Planetary Conditions (Mantavaras) each contain seven Life Kingdoms; each Life Kingdom contains seven Global States; each Global State contains seven Root-Races; and each Root-Race contains seven Sub-Races. Sub-Race periods are 2160 years long, 1/12 of the astronomical period of the precession of the equinoxes, called the Platonic Year. Anthroposophy's Sub-Race periods are therefore “Platonic Months.”

According to Theosophy and Anthroposophy, the present time is in the “Earth” Planetary Condition, the “Mineral” Life Kingdom, the “Physical-Etheric” Global State, the “Aryan” Root-Race, and the “Aryan” Sub-Race. Why are the smaller time periods called “races”? Because, according to divine plan, humanity, which has always been present throughout cosmic history, is supposed to evolve through higher and higher racial forms. According to the plan, the races whose evolutionary tasks are done are supposed to die out. The actions of evil deities flawed the plan, however, and so “left behind” races still exist. Steiner taught:

We are within the great Root Race of humanity, which has peopled the earth, since the land on which we now live rose up out of the inundations of the ocean. Ever since the Atlantean Race began slowly to disappear, the great Aryan Race has been the dominant one on earth. If we contemplate ourselves, we here in Europe are thus the fifth Sub-Race of the great Aryan Root Race. The first Sub-Race lived in the distant past in Ancient India. And the present-day Indians are descendants of that first Sub-Race, whose spiritual life is still extant in the ancient Indian Vedas. The Vedas are indeed only echoes of the ancient culture of the Rishis. At that time there was of course no writing yet — there was only tradition. Then came the second, third and fourth Sub-Races. The fourth Sub-Race adopted Christianity. Then, halfway through the Middle Ages, we see that the fifth Sub-Race formed itself, to which we and the neighboring nations belong. (Steiner, 1985a, p. 220)

This mythology, of the Aryan race originating in Atlantis, migrating to Asia and then west to Europe, provided what was claimed to be a scientific foundation for racism and anti-Semitism in Steiner's time. The mythology can be traced from its origin in Blavatsky to Steiner and the Ariosophists, like List and Lanz in the next generation, and on to its tragic finale with Nazi theorist Rosenberg and the Holocaust (Goodrick-Clarke, 1992, Rosenberg, 1993). It's difficult to believe that there are still people studying and promulgating this pseudo-historical theory today; they'd have to be Neo-Nazis or wearing cult blinders. There are neo-Nazis in Europe who follow Steiner (Staudenmaier, date unknown), but the overwhelming majority of Anthroposophical publications reject Naziism while at the same time defending a racial theory that formed part of the philosophical foundation of Naziism (e.g. Kerkvliet, 2000). The examples that follow are all from Anthroposophic presses.

Jewry as such has long since outlived its time; it has no more justification within the modern life of peoples, and the fact that it continues to exist is a mistake of world history whose consequences are unavoidable. We do not mean the forms of the Jewish religion alone, but above all the spirit of Jewry, the Jewish way of thinking. (Steiner, 1971, p. 152)

These blacks in Africa characteristically suck in, absorb, all light and all heat from the cosmos. And, humans being humans, this light and this heat from the cosmos cannot pass through the entire body. It does not flow through the entire body, but it stops at the skin. In this way, the complexion itself becomes black. Consequently, a black in Africa is a human who absorbs and assimilates as much light and heat from the cosmos as possible. As he does this, the forces of the cosmos work throughout that human. Everywhere, he absorbs light and heat, really everywhere. He assimilates them within himself. There really must be something which helps him in this assimilation. That something is mainly the cerebellum. This is why a Negro has an especially well developed cerebellum. This is linked to the spinal marrow; and they can assimilate all light and heat which a human contains. As a consequence, especially the aspects which pertain to the body and to metabolism are strongly developed in a Negro. He has a strong sexual urge *as people call it*, strong instincts. And as, with him, all which comes from the sun *light and heat* really is at the skin's surface, all of his metabolism works as if the sun itself is boiling in his inside. This causes his passions. Within a Negro, cooking is going on all the time; and the cerebellum kindles the fire. ... And we, Europeans, we poor Europeans, we have the thinking life, which resides in the head. ... Therefore, Europe has always been the starting point of everything which develops the human entity in such a way that at the same time a relationship with the outside world arises. ...

When Negroes go to the west, they cannot absorb as much light and heat any more as they were used to in their Africa. ... That is why they turn copper red, they become Indians. That is because they are forced to reflect a part of the light and heat. They turn shiny copper red. They cannot keep up this copper red shining. That is why the Indians die out in the West, they die because of their own nature which does not get enough light and heat, they die because of the earthly factor. ...

Really, it is the whites who develop the human factor within themselves. Therefore they have to rely on themselves. When whites do emigrate, they partly take on the characteristics of other areas, but they die more as individuals than as a race. The white race is the race of the future, the race that is working creatively with the spirit. (Steiner, 1980, p. 67)

White humankind is still on the path of absorbing the spirit deeper and deeper into its own essence. Yellow humankind is on the path of conserving the era when the spirit will be kept away from the body, when the spirit will only be sought outside of the human-physical organization. But the result will have to be that the transition from the fifth cultural epoch to the sixth cultural epoch cannot happen in any other way than as a violent battle of white humankind against colored humankind in myriad areas. And that which precedes these battles between white and colored humankind will occupy world history until the completion of the great battles between white and colored humankind. Future events are frequently reflected in prior events. You see, we stand before something colossal that—when we understand it through spiritual science—we will in the future be able to recognize as a necessary occurrence. (Steiner, 1974, p. 38)

What relevance does this early-20th-century racism have to Waldorf schools today, especially to public Waldorf schools? There are three reasons to be concerned: First, teachers study racist texts for their training, and consequently, racist materials will always be present in the schools. Second, the Theosophical theory of history is the

framework for the history curriculum. And third, teachers may use racial criteria for treating students and teachers differently. Consider the following consequences:

1. Much of the Steiner material that Waldorf teachers must study is from lectures in which Steiner free-associated from topic to topic. Discussions of his racial theory are scattered throughout his books. Some of the books that are required reading for Waldorf teacher training include racist material, for example, *Knowledge of Higher Worlds*, *Theosophy*, and *Conferences with Teachers*. In any Waldorf school, public or private, these books, and many more, will be used for reference by the teachers.
2. The Waldorf curriculum was designed by Steiner in a "spiral" plan that cycles the students repeatedly, with increasing detail, through what Steiner called the "evolution of consciousness," the development of the mythical Aryan race over time. The first cycle is the first and second grades. In the first grade, fairy tales are used. These contain, according to Steiner, the unwritten ancient wisdom of the Aryan race. In the second grade, the lives of saints are studied, bringing the students into the Christian era.

The next cycle is the third and fourth grades. In this cycle the students are immersed in what Steiner taught were the holy books of what he defined as the two "cultural streams" of humanity, Jewish and Aryan. In the third grade they study Bible stories. In the Fourth grade they are immersed in Norse mythology, believed by Germans of Steiner's time to be the ancient scriptures of the Aryan race.

The third cycle is the fifth and sixth grades. In these grades the students are taken through the sequence of the sub-races of the Aryan root race. Here is how a group that proposed a Waldorf charter school to the school board in Chico, California, described this part of the curriculum:

The fifth grade language arts curriculum follows the development of human initiation and mythic consciousness from prehistoric times to the times of western history. This progression starts with Vedic India and the sense that all is illusion and needs to be renounced; the stories of ancient Persia deal with the polarities of light and darkness and the human responsibility for the earth. The ancient Babylonian, Chaldean and Egyptian myths present the beginning of human consciousness being anchored in external culture, physical existence and a declining knowledge of the spiritual worlds. In the ancient Greek myths, the roles of glorious heroes and their faults leads into historical biographies proper. (Blue Oak Charter School, 2000, p. 19)

This proposed public school curriculum is pure Anthroposophical theory. It's usually covered up better than this. What could they have been thinking when they wrote "human initiation and mythic consciousness"? Either the proposing committee was so immersed in Anthroposophy that they didn't realize that what they were writing was so revealing, or they figured the school board just wouldn't notice. The sequence of ancient India, Persia, Babylon/Chaldea/Egypt, Greece and Rome is straight from Theosophical root-race theory. The "development of consciousness," according to Anthroposophy, doesn't involve Africa, Asia, the Americas, or Oceania.

3. Waldorf teachers are trained to consider the past lives and racial backgrounds of their students. The director of teacher training at Rudolf Steiner College, the main West Coast Waldorf teacher training college, wrote:

In learning to understand a child, it is important to consider—in addition to hereditary factors, which include race, ethnic background, and the biological strands supplied by father and mother—what the soul has brought with it out of supersensible realms. If we deepen this line of thought, we shall take into account not only the prenatal “gesture,” but also the spiritual origins as they manifested themselves in previous incarnations. In other words, just as we have applied certain questions regarding our own spiritual origins, we should without jumping to quick conclusions also consider to which spiritual streams our students belonged. (Querido, 1995, p. 85)

When I asked teachers at my son's school about the racism that I found in books we sold at the school, their answer was that “some of Steiner is difficult.” Anthroposophists think that they can't be racists since they don't hate anybody. They don't realize that teaching racial stereotypes, and believing that different races have different “tasks” in human evolution, and ought to die out when those supposed tasks are done, is also racism.

Steiner taught that Africans represent a child-like stage of evolution. Consequently, Waldorf teachers may treat African-American children and teachers as though they have different potential than those of European ethnicity. One such incident is documented in a Waldorf supporter's article about racism in Waldorf:

A white mother of a successful biracial (African American and white) child loved her son's Waldorf school but had to work constantly against teachers who would tell her of the evolutionary limits of Black children. (McDermott, 1996, p. 4)

An African-American Waldorf teacher who was the first black teacher hired by the New York Steiner School is suing them for racial discrimination. The legal complaint is available at: <http://www.waldorfcritics.org/active/articles/charmainedcomp.pdf>.

### **Cult-Like Characteristics of Anthroposophy**

I describe Anthroposophy as a “cult-like religious sect.” In the U.S., the Waldorf teachers are the majority of the devotees. The major recruiting effort is towards the parents. Characteristics that make it cult-like include:

- Clinging to rejected knowledge (weird science)
- Teachers must commit to Anthroposophy for advancement to full status
- Secrecy: some core doctrinal material is not published, but only delivered orally. Revelation of “difficult” doctrine like the racial theory of history, and the role of Lucifer, is guarded.
- Exclusivity: only anthroposophic knowledge of man leads to right education
- Closed system: almost all publications are from the group's own presses and periodicals
- Jargon redefines common language so public statements can be deceptive without being “lies”, e.g. “child development.”
- Separation: “us vs. them”; frequent put-downs of the outside world as being “materialistic,” and public schools as being “damaging.”
- Criticism is suppressed: No critical dialogue means elaboration, but no development, of theory. All writers refer back to Steiner.

Due to space limitations, in this presentation I will only illustrate the first three points of my list.

## Clinging to Rejected Knowledge

In a book explaining the curriculum to parents, Cusick (1992) illustrates the correspondence of the parts of the plant to the alchemical processes as they might be presented in fifth grade botany. I've added the historic alchemical names in square brackets:

Flower: Centrifugal forces (expansion). Loosening and refining substances in scent. Optimal rarification and extension of substance (warmth process)  
[alchemical "sulfur"]

Leaf: Balance between above and below: watery substances and processes meet airy ones. In intake of water and transpiration, in uptake and elimination of gasses *above* and *below* tendencies meet (light process).  
[alchemical "mercury"]

Root: Centripetal forces (contraction). Consolidation of substance to the solid state. Consolidation of forms. Suctional, absorbtive forces (salt process).  
[alchemical "salt"]

It may be hard to believe, but this is quite possibly the content of a fifth-grade botany lesson. It's far from what anyone outside Anthroposophy would call science. Cusick (p. 29) illustrates "the temperaments" with a diagram credited to Steiner. A circle is divided into four pie-slices, labeled:

Melancholic: Attention not easily aroused but strong quality present

Choleric: The greatest amount of attention and strength most easily aroused

Sanguine: Attention easily aroused but little strength present

Phlegmatic: The least amount of attention and strength the least easily aroused

This is a revival of the medieval "four humors" theory of personality. Waldorf teachers are instructed to classify students according to "the temperaments."

Note that on this page Cusick simply talks about "the temperaments," with no qualification that the use of this theory today is exclusive to Anthroposophists. This is a rhetorical trick that is used over and over with Waldorf parents. An Anthroposophical concept such as "the temperaments," "the festivals," or "the elements" is introduced by being referred to as a fact. The parent simply doesn't have time to think through the implications of the purported fact, and is hooked into discussing the issue from an Anthroposophical perspective.

## Teachers Must Commit to Anthroposophy

In most Waldorf schools there are two classes of teachers. The senior teachers form a group called the "college of teachers" that runs the school. Junior teachers aren't invited to join the college until they are ready to commit themselves to Anthroposophy. Richards wrote (op. cit., p. 16):

A community is thus created among the teachers by the fact that they are students together and are connected through a meditative life. In almost every school, you will find some teachers who do not enter so fully into this consciousness, and they are met with flexibility. But the teachers who do commit themselves make up the "college of teachers," who, by and large, govern the school's affairs.

Thus it is only through passing a religious test that a Waldorf teacher can achieve full status, with a voice in the government of the school.

### **Secrecy: Guarded Knowledge**

There are many things in the Anthroposophical world-view that are too strange to be revealed unless the listeners have been properly prepared, i.e. sufficiently indoctrinated. For example, Waldorf teachers aren't likely to tell new parents anything about the role of Lucifer in Anthroposophy. Steiner taught that there is a trinity of spirits concerned with the evolution of humanity. The trinity is composed of two opposites and a harmonizing spirit. The opposites are Lucifer and Ahriman, taken from the dual gods of Zoroastrianism, the ancient Persian religion. They are gods of light and darkness in conflict with each other. Lucifer leads humanity to develop art, beauty, flexibility, and religious fervor. Ahriman promotes science, hardening, and rigidity. Both are necessary for evolution but either influence is evil in excess or at the wrong time. The two polar gods are balanced by the Christ Spirit, whose role is not to redeem humanity but to help it balance between the opposing tendencies.

Popular Waldorf master teacher Eugene Schwartz put it this way in his *Waldorf Teacher's Survival Guide*:

Most of that which contributes to our work as teachers, preparation work, artistic work, even meditative work, is under the guardianship of Lucifer. We can become great teachers under his supervision, for he is responsible for much that has blossomed in the unfolding of civilization and culture in the past. However, if our goal is only to be a great teacher, if we look on everything else in the life of the school merely as a distraction from our pedagogical work, we are in danger of falling prey to Lucifer.

This is one of the reasons that Steiner wanted Waldorf teachers to assume responsibility for the administrative life of the school. Answering phone calls, writing memos and letters, etc.—all those activities that compel us to meet the outside world on its own terms—bring us into connection with Ahriman, who holds the secret of the future.

If, every day, we can do some administrative/office work as well as carry out our classroom responsibilities, we can go a long way towards balancing the activities of Lucifer and Ahriman. (Schwartz, 1992, p. 54)

This quotation stimulated an interesting denial when David Alsop, then the head of the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America, was interviewed on a Baltimore radio talk show:

Well, it's obviously problematic, um, ah, my feeling is that Eugene Schwartz has totally missed the boat here and the way that he has written this in his book, uh, is misleading and erroneous and causing a great deal of trouble. In our Waldorf schools, and as you know, there are over 650 of them around the world serving probably 100,000 students. I think you'd be hard pressed to find any parent in any Waldorf school and even any teacher in any Waldorf school say that they are under the guidance of Lucifer, and I cannot understand why Mr. Schwartz wrote this. I can't understand why PLANS is picking this one quote out of this very obscure book and running with it like this, but it is just flat out wrong. (WCBM, 1999)

That "very obscure book" is a popular publication of the main West Coast teacher training college, where Alsop has his office. A posting to the Waldorf-critics discussion list corroborated the relevance of Lucifer to Waldorf education:

Gosh, I was at a Waldorf PR meeting once, and all these gals there were saying how ridiculous it was that one parent had become offended when the faculty and staff did a "dance to Lucifer." The parent, like me, was Christian. I said, "Well, I would be upset by such a dance, too." And, they all stared at me, then said Lucifer is actually not Satan but the "light-bearer," see, and basically that the parent was unenlightened...Sincerely, Patti M. (M, 1999)

## Conclusion

Often, when "difficult" tenets of Anthroposophy are brought up in connection with either private or public Waldorf schools, the defense is made that Anthroposophy is not taught in the schools. They claim that only Steiner's teaching methods are used, and that they take what's good and discard the nonsense. I believe Waldorf without Anthroposophy might be possible, but it is so difficult that I would be surprised if it ever actually happened. Anthroposophy is so tightly interwoven into the Waldorf movement that removing it would leave little but a constellation of pedagogical techniques that, taken separately, aren't unique to Waldorf.

If there is such a thing as "Waldorf Method" or "New Waldorf" without Anthroposophy, where are the teaching handbooks and curriculum resources? Everything available comes from Anthroposophy. Where are the periodicals? All the periodicals are Anthroposophical. Where are the associations, conferences, and conference proceedings? They are all Anthroposophical. Where is the teacher training? It's all done by Anthroposophists. Everything in the Waldorf education movement comes from Anthroposophy.

In the United States this creates a legal problem if tax money is involved. Public funding of religious teacher training is illegal, but school districts send teachers to Rudolf Steiner College for Waldorf training. In hiring teachers, a publicly-funded Waldorf school can't discriminate against Anthroposophists; teachers with more Waldorf training should be more desirable, not avoided. But asking Waldorf-trained teachers to omit Anthroposophical beliefs is a paradox. Violations are inevitable. It is impossible for a school board to monitor religious content in a public Waldorf school. What could they do, have philosophy police monitoring the school? It's like having a "Catholic-inspired" charter school. Would that be allowed? Not likely.

People for Legal and Nonsectarian Schools, Inc. (PLANS) respects the right of Anthroposophy to exist and to carry on its many activities, and the right of parents to choose Waldorf education for their children. However, PLANS wants to inform the public about the cult-like nature of Anthroposophy, to give warning about Anthroposophy's deceptive practices, and to end violations of the Establishment Clause of the Constitution. PLANS is demanding that publicly-funded Waldorf schools be closed or converted to private schools. PLANS is suing two Northern California school districts for violation of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. The judge wrote:

. . . PLANS has presented evidence that SCUSD teachers received training in Anthroposophy and that Twin Ridges sought and employed teachers with Anthroposophical training. As observed by the Supreme Court, "[w]e cannot ignore the danger that a teacher under religious control and discipline poses to the separation of the religious from the purely secular aspects of precollege education." *Lemon*, 403 U.S. at 617. Additionally, as noted above, PLANS presents evidence that state funds are expended in implementing the Waldorf teaching method, and that the Waldorf education methodology is directed by, and grounded in, assumptions about learning and child development that can only be understood with reference to Anthroposophy. Assuming, for purposes

of this motion, that the Waldorf teaching method and Anthroposophy are in fact "inseparable in theory as practiced by defendants," state surveillance of the Waldorf education will be necessary to ensure that no trespass occurs. These "prophylactic contacts" may well result in excessive and enduring entanglement between church and state. See *Lemon*, 403 U.S. at 619.

As is the case with all similar analyses, it is clear that entanglement "is a question of kind and degree." *Lynch*, 465 U.S. at 684. Here, PLANS has raised a disputed issue of material fact concerning the degree of entanglement between church and state generated by the Waldorf teaching method.

### 3. California Constitution

Article XVI, section 5 of the California Constitution provides that "neither the Legislature, nor any...school district,...shall ever...pay from any public fund whatever, or grant anything to or in aid of any religious sect, church, creed, or sectarian purpose." Article IX, ¶8 of the California Constitution provides that no "sectarian or denominational doctrine [shall] be taught, or instruction thereon be permitted, directly or indirectly, in any of the common schools of this State."

As discussed above, PLANS has raised a genuine issue of material fact as to whether Anthroposophy is so fundamental to Waldorf education as to be inseparable from it, thereby making public funding of Waldorf education methods a direct and substantial (if unintentional) endorsement of religion, and fostering excessive entanglement between church and state. (Damrell, 1999, pp. 23-25)

This case is presently waiting for a decision from the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals on whether PLANS has standing, i.e. the right to sue on behalf of taxpayers.

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Waldorf education is a humanistic approach to pedagogy based on the educational philosophy of the Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner. Three broad stages in child development, each lasting approximately seven years. Transition to formal academic learning.Â Waldorf (Steiner) education is a humanistic approach to pedagogy based on the educational philosophy of the Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner, the founder of anthroposophy. The first Waldorf school was founded in 1919 in Stuttgart, Germany. At present there are 1,026 independent Waldorf schools, 2,000 kindergartens and 646 centers for special education, located in 60 countries. There are also Waldorf-based state schools, charter schools and academies, and homeschooling environments. Defenders of Waldorf schools tend to dismiss such narratives as irrelevancies â€” malicious and mean-spirited, or misinformed, or innocent remarks misconstrued by malicious and mean-spirited outsiders. Draw your own conclusions. For links to sites that praise Waldorf. and others that criticize Waldorf, see "Linksâ€œ. For a statement about the identity of individuals. quoted and paraphrased at Waldorf Watch, see "Trolls?" A word about the format, below. The Friends of Waldorf Education will be happy to assist you in making contact with organisations that fulfil these criteria. be prepared to work for 12 months in a full-time capacity. Shorter terms of service are not possible. be entirely open to living together with the residents and patients of an institution for curative therapy (children with disabilities), social therapy (adults with disabilities) or a home for the elderly. be eager for personal development and be ready to integrate yourself fully in a new culture and work environment.Â People of all nations are invited to apply for voluntary service in Germany sponsored by the Friends of Waldorf Education. Most volunteers (approx. 75 people) will begin their service in August/September.