

Integral Teacher Education at CIIS

by Robert McDermott

This essay on the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS) and the companion essay on Waldorf education by Liz Beaven together present a vision for the creation of one or more programs in Integral Teacher Education at CIIS, an accredited undergraduate and graduate university in San Francisco. As I wrote in the dedication of my book, *Steiner and Kindred Spirits* (2015), CIIS is “a university dedicated to integrating the intellectual and academic with a variety of spiritual teachings and practices” (xi). It is worth noting that chapter 9, “Education,” in this book places Steiner’s educational philosophy in a wider context, addressing the relative merits of John Dewey’s, Maria Montessori’s, and Steiner’s approaches to education. In the same spirit, the emerging proposal for a CIIS program (or programs) could be called education inspired by “Steiner and Kindred Spirits,” *i.e.*, an approach to education based on an anthroposophical understanding of human development, the child, curriculum, and pedagogy situated within a larger intellectual context.

CIIS was founded in San Francisco in 1968 by Dr. Haridas Chaudhuri, a disciple of Sri Aurobindo, the pre-eminent spiritual teacher of 20th-century India. Like Sri Aurobindo, Haridas Chaudhuri based his spiritual philosophy on the yogas of the Bhagavad Gita: spiritual knowledge, love, selfless action—approximately the same triple discipline—thinking, feeling, and willing—recommended by Rudolf Steiner. This triple discipline and approach meets a contemporary need, demonstrated by growth in CIIS enrollment. When I was appointed president in 1990, CIIS had 300 students in two schools. By the time I transitioned from president to faculty in 1999 CIIS enrolled 800 students in three schools. Currently it has 1500 students attending four schools: Consciousness and Transformation, Professional Psychology and Health, Undergraduate Studies, and American College of Traditional Chinese Medicine.

CIIS has a long relationship to Steiner’s work and a deep affinity with his social ideals. While teaching in the Philosophy, Cosmology, and Consciousness (PCC) program for the past fifteen years I have taught anthroposophy in many courses, including *Karma and Biography; Death and Beyond; Steiner and Teilhard; Modern Esotericism; Krishna, Buddha, and Christ; Aurobindo, Teilhard, and Steiner*. In a recent issue of *being human*, five CIIS

graduate students described the close positive relationship between their CIIS education and their involvement with anthroposophy or Waldorf education, or both. Throughout its history, CIIS has attracted many Waldorf alumni. These and other students have been heard to refer to CIIS as “Waldorf for Adults.”

Due to a close alignment of the ideals of Waldorf principles of education and CIIS’s mission statement, the leadership of CIIS is seriously interested in creating a program in teacher education. The CIIS mission statement could serve as a mission statement that fulfills this intention:

California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS) is an accredited university of higher education that strives to embody spirit, intellect, and wisdom in service to individuals, communities, and the Earth. CIIS expands the boundaries of traditional degree programs with interdisciplinary, cross-cultural, and applied studies in psychology, philosophy, religion, cultural anthropology, transformative learning and leadership, integrative health, and the arts. Offering a personal learning environment and supportive community, CIIS provides an extraordinary education for people committed to transforming themselves and the world.

Similarly, an integral approach to education would want to affirm the following Seven CIIS Commitments:

1. Practices integral approaches to learning and research.
2. Affirms spirituality.
3. Commits to diversity and inclusion.
4. Fosters multiple ways of learning and teaching.
5. Advocates sustainability and Social Justice.
6. Supports community.
7. Strives for integral and innovative leadership.

The CIIS faculty and administration recognize the importance of a spiritually-based approach to education as a foundation for the type of individual and social transformation that Rudolf Steiner recommended. In the face of equity and access issues, new demands imposed by the Common Core, changing workplace demands, and a national teacher shortage, there is an urgent need for innovative, enlivened, and effective approaches to K-12 education. A San Francisco university known for the quality of its holistic academic programs, and fully ac-

credited since 1981, CIIS believes that one solution for social transformation lies in preparing teachers to bring a new paradigm to the diverse modern classroom through integral teacher education.

In recent months, Liz Beaven has served as a link between CIIS and many leaders of the Waldorf school movement. Inspired by the shared ideals of CIIS and Waldorf, the senior administration of CIIS has appointed Liz to explore ways to create an integral approach to modern education, including the image of the human being that Rudolf Steiner placed at the core of Waldorf education. As a former class teacher and administrator of the Sacramento Waldorf School (1991-2012), president of Rudolf Steiner College (2014-15), current president of the Board of the Alliance for Public Waldorf Education, as well as a close observer of the CIIS culture, Liz is making progress researching the feasibility of at least one, and perhaps several, programs in Integral Teacher Education.

CIIS views expansion into teacher education as an inspired extension of its mission, values, and vision in support of the current and projected growth of a wide range of schools founded on the principles of Waldorf education. It plans to offer programs that can contribute to meeting a range of urgent needs. CIIS has the structure to support a new program inspired by the effective principles of integral and Waldorf education, and will be designed to address the challenges facing today's children, teachers, and schools. Liz has discovered ample evidence of interest in these programs in the San Francisco Bay area, as well as nationally and internationally. A research and design phase of this exciting new initiative will continue through the coming academic year, 2016-17. It is already clear that this is the ideal time for CIIS to appoint a distinguished leader of Waldorf education able to join the ideals of Wal-

dorf education to the intellectual-spiritual ideals of CIIS.

The research and design phase will determine the final structure of programs, based on the identified needs of schools and prospective teachers. Working closely with the CIIS administration and faculty, Liz Beaven is currently completing the initial design work that has included extensive conversations with educators and a comprehensive review of the literature of existing programs in Waldorf, Montessori, and "mainstream" MEd degrees and certificates. Part of this initial work includes the exploration of options for California State Teacher Credentialing, considered important for providing options for employment for future teachers, for widening the spread of this approach to education, and for providing access to an enriched education for a wide range of children.

The following programs are being considered for implementation: Masters of Education; graduate certification in integral education; Bachelor of Arts Completion courses; public workshops for educators. All evidence suggests that CIIS would be an ideal incubator for a program, or programs, in integral education inspired by the principles of Waldorf education and including the perspectives and academic resources of a pluralistic, inclusive undergraduate and graduate university. This new educational paradigm will promote a thorough understanding of child development based largely on an anthroposophical understanding of child development, and will support teachers in their effort to bring renewed creativity, mindfulness, and joy to the classroom.

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Towards an Integrated Approach to Teaching

By Elizabeth Beaven

Waldorf educators are eagerly anticipating the 100th anniversary of the founding of the first Waldorf school in Stuttgart, Germany, which first opened its doors in September 1919. Plans are underway for celebrations of a school movement that has grown from that first school to global proportions. The extent of this growth was demonstrated by the recent World Teachers' Conference in Dornach, Switzerland. There, in a kaleidoscope of languages and cultures, over 850 individuals united by their

work in Waldorf education formed a living demonstration of the remarkable fruits of Steiner's call for a new art of education, one that can positively effect social transformation and renewal.

With the founding of our oldest school, the New York Rudolf Steiner School, the impulse of Waldorf education made its way to North America in 1928. From that time until the early 1990's Waldorf education on this continent grew quietly as a movement of independent schools. This

slow growth, made possible by the work of many devoted individuals, allowed Waldorf education to generate a distinctive culture and a rich body of practice and research.

This slow growth began to shift in 1991 with the opening of the Milwaukee Urban Waldorf School, a public “specialty” school developed out of a social justice desire to offer quality education to underserved inner city children. Since then, the Waldorf educational impulse has spread to public education, largely through the mechanism of charter schools. This spread has occasioned much debate and discussion, and has arguably led to healthy and necessary research and opportunities for continued growth. Questions have abounded: how, exactly, is “Waldorf” to be defined? What is essential in this definition? Why is such definition necessary? How can the integrity of the Waldorf “brand” be protected, ensuring that the essentials continue to thrive? Is Waldorf education even possible in a public school setting? How do we ensure quality in our schools? How do we resolve the tension between the demands, compromises, and opportunities resulting from independence in education (one form of freedom) and the social justice need for access for many to an enlivened education (another form of freedom)?

These and similar questions are being addressed in a number of ways. The Pedagogical Section Council worked to define the “core principles” of Waldorf education—that essential core that makes Waldorf, Waldorf. Their work has led the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA) and the Alliance for Public Waldorf Education (APWE)¹ to work to define their own iterations of core principles from the perspective of their schools or institutes in an effort to clarify similarities and differences, with the ultimate goal of strengthening our work, insuring quality and integrity, and allowing Waldorf education to flourish in service of children and of our future.

At this time there exists a broad and expanding spectrum of schools working from Steiner’s indications (which include a developmental framework, a “true knowledge of the nature of the human being,” the imperative of the arts, and the need for integrated connections). This educational impulse is finding new and varied forms in response to a range of conditions. Worldwide and on this continent, there is an expansion into diverse

cultures, emerging needs, and varied school structures. These encouraging innovations appear to be aligned with Steiner’s original intent of a creative, constantly renewing, pedagogical approach. Viewed from the perspective of this widening spectrum, the old divide of “independent/private” and “public” schools no longer fully reflects a new reality.

No matter the form or location, effective education is profoundly influenced by the quality and capacities of teachers. This is especially relevant in Waldorf education, where teachers are charged with responsibility for pedagogical matters and are expected to continuously renew and reinvent their classroom approach based on the needs of their students and of the local conditions of the school (Tautz, p. 23). There is no comfortable prototype for a Waldorf school or for a Waldorf teacher: rather, there is an imperative of “taking hold of the living impulse of the Waldorf school in a concrete way and bringing it to realization.” (Tautz, p. 23). In remarks made to the original group of teachers before their intensive course of preparation, Steiner emphasized the social, transformative goal of Waldorf education: “From the Waldorf school there should go out a renewal of the whole educational system.” He emphasized the responsibility of the teachers in realizing this goal: “The success is in your hands.”

The first Waldorf school answered local conditions remarkably well and thus grew rapidly. Within six years there were at least six schools in four European countries. During these years, Steiner traveled extensively and gave a number of lectures in which he emphasized and refined his core pedagogical ideals. Reading these, one can sense a growing urgency to “develop an art of education that can lead us out of the social chaos into which we have fallen... [and] find a way to bring spirituality into human souls through education” (*Roots of Education*, p. 1)

Addressing the goals of Waldorf education, Steiner continued: “What we are examining is mainly concerned with matters of method and the practice of teaching. Men and women who adhere to anthroposophy feel—and rightly so—that the knowledge of the human being it provides can establish some truly practical principles for the way we teach children.” (*ibid*, p. 17) He continued: “Moreover, I would like to point out that the true aim and object of anthroposophic education is not to establish as many anthroposophic schools as possible. Naturally, some model schools are needed, where the methods are practiced in detail. There is a need crying out in our time for such schools. Our goal, however, is to enable every

¹ Through an agreement with the BUND, AWSNA is the steward of the terms “Waldorf,” “Rudolf Steiner,” and “Steiner” in educational contexts in North America. The APWE has an agreement to use the term “Public Waldorf”.

teacher to bring the fruits of anthroposophy to their work, no matter where they may be teaching or the nature of the subject matter. There is no intention of using anthroposophic pedagogy to start revolutions, even silent ones, in established institutions. Our task, instead, is to point to a way of teaching that springs from our anthroposophic knowledge of humankind.” (p. 18)

While acknowledging the danger of taking any one statement by Steiner as the basis on which to build an argument, these thought-provoking words are relevant to the context of contemporary education. Our schools in general face tremendous challenges, and our young people are confronting an uncertain future and a time of unprecedented change. Children everywhere would surely benefit from an approach to teaching that springs from the wisdom of an anthroposophic knowledge of the human being. A teacher is core to educational success; therefore, effective and conscious preparation of future teachers is essential—for all children.

Emphasis on the development of the individual teacher is possibly the most effective strategy for “taking hold of the living impulse of the Waldorf school in a concrete way” and allowing the impulse of Waldorf education to serve as a source of renewal “for the whole educational system,” Steiner’s stated goal. Preparation for this task includes a thorough knowledge of the true nature of the human being, a body of pedagogical information (Steiner’s “methods and practice of teaching”), and tools for an ongoing process of self-knowledge and reflection that will lead to creativity, renewal, and the ability to respond sensitively to the needs of a particular group of children. Such preparation leaves a teacher in freedom to practice enlivened teaching in any setting across the full spectrum of schools—from private Waldorf schools through varying iterations of charter schools and home schools through the vast array of “mainstream” public schools.

This focus on the individual teacher provides a new definition of education toward freedom; a teacher is free to adopt this approach and is free to practice it in any setting. Freedom can be understood not as the outer structures or conventions of schools, but rather as the ideals and practices alive within each individual. Parallel to this, the impulse of Waldorf education will be increasingly freed to take a more fully integrated role in educational renewal. The Waldorf impulse has much to contribute and can be enriched in turn by interaction with like-minded practitioners.

The recent World Teachers’ Conference sought to place Waldorf education in a broad context with an emphasis on social justice and the demands of the future. It spoke of collaboration, of finding our colleagues in the world, of re-thinking and re-imagining our work in anticipation of a new century of practice. In 1924, Steiner spoke with urgency about the need “to enable every teacher to bring the fruits of anthroposophy to their work, no matter where they may be teaching.” This need is surely even more urgent now. Meeting it will require ever-greater levels of engagement and collaboration with like-minded colleagues, dialogue, willingness to teach—and willingness to learn from others, in service of children and of the future.

References:

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Thoughts of the Dead

Unrealized ideas of the dead
blow like a wind through trees
beyond our bed,
sprinkle the night with aspirations
not our own,
and spice our love with the desire
of the disembodied.
They fertilize our sleep like worker bees,
their feet fluorescent
with the pollen of another place and time.
They perch
like birds on the wire edge of our waking
singing
subliminal songs until we rise
and set about
doing the work the dead can
no longer do.

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