

## IN THIS SECTION:

The California Institute for Integral Studies (CIIS) helps give San Francisco a justified reputation for advanced, global thinking. President emeritus Robert McDermott and four graduate students share how welcoming it is for anthroposophy.

Our Gallery wanted to join the “selfie” craze. We felt that as long as oil paints and etchings were involved, that might be ok.

Waldorf history teacher Paul Gerlach wanted to talk with his colleagues about the importance of history teaching—both for Waldorf schools and for the future of humanity. We are invited to listen in.

ASA General Secretary and educator Torin Finser is a popular author, blending the everyday with the esoteric so matter-of-factly that we wanted to share something.

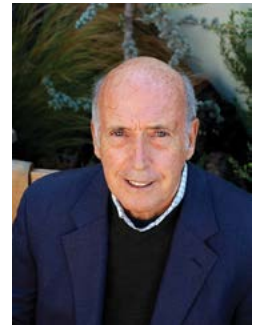
Max DeArmon—another CIIS grad student!—is deeply involved in social activism and film-making. He thinks Waldorf schooling is a great preparation for that.

Mary Evelyn Tucker is a notable activist in the academic world. She succinctly unfolds why Pope Francis’ ecological stance is important.

# Spirituality Affirmed by CIIS

by Robert McDermott

As a distinguished teacher and university administrator and a noted leader of the anthroposophical movement in America, Robert McDermott is uniquely qualified to talk about anthroposophy’s challenge in being received in the academic world. And when he suggests that the California Institute of Integral Studies is welcoming to anthroposophy, he can invite young graduate students to give evidence, as four do here. — Editor



If Rudolf Steiner were alive today and applying for a position in a philosophy department, his resume would show that from age 21 to 28 he was the editor of the national edition of Goethe’s eight volumes on natural science, for about five years he taught courses in social science at night school for returning adults, and he was the author of two books on epistemology and ethics. Yet I suspect that he would not be appointed, nor even granted an interview at any university in the United States—except at the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS), a university that explicitly affirms a pluralism of spiritual world views and practices.

Founded by Dr. Haridas Chaudhuri, a professor of Indian and Western philosophy, and a spiritual teacher in the tradition of Sri Aurobindo, CIIS adheres to seven ideals, three of which affirm the integration of the spiritual with the intellectual:

- The integration of body-mind-spirit. It values the emotional, spiritual, intellectual, creative, somatic, and social dimensions of human potentiality.
- The study and practice of multiple spiritual traditions and to their expression and embodiment throughout all areas and activities of the Institute community.
- Many learning modalities and ways of knowing—intuition, body-knowledge, creative expression, intellect, and spiritual insight.

Along with varieties of Buddhism, Hinduism, meditation practices, Earth-based spirituality, and Jungian archetypal cosmology, anthroposophy is thriving at CIIS.

Fully accredited since 1981, CIIS has 1500 students and four schools: School of Professions Psychology and Health, School of Consciousness and Transformation, School of Undergraduate Studies (which offers a bachelor of arts completion), and as of July 1, 2015, a fourth school, the

American College of Traditional Chinese Medicine (ACTCM). Each of these four schools, and each program in these schools, has a slightly different relationship to whatever counts as spiritual.

In general, the contemporary mantra, “spiritual not religious,” is the norm. I am aware of at least a half dozen students in these schools with a strong connection to anthroposophy or Waldorf education, or both.

I have invited three students with such a connection to write a brief account of the ways that they have integrated in their academic study their anthroposophical world view or practice.

Most of the students with a connection to anthroposophy are attracted to the program in Philosophy, Cosmology, and Consciousness (PCC), founded in 1994 by Richard Tarnas (author of *Passion of the Western Mind* and *Cosmos and Psyche*). Students enroll in this program, which offers both masters and doctoral degrees, in order to study Jungian topics with Richard Tarnas and Sean Kelly, inspiring cosmology courses offered by Brian Swimme (see *Journey of the Uni-*



versity that Brian co-wrote with Mary Evelyn Tucker and narrated), integral ecologies studies with Sean Kelly, and the relationship among ecology, spirituality, and religion with Elizabeth Allison. Anyone interested in comparative spiritual philosophies studies with me. Most students study with all five of these core faculty.

Except for someone born into a family of anthroposophists, most anthroposophists have very few family members or friends who read Rudolf Steiner and exhibit an interest in anthroposophy. But as I acknowledge in the preface to my new book, *Steiner and Kindred Spirits* (SteinerBooks 2015), three of my four colleagues have co-taught with me courses substantially devoted to Steiner and anthroposophy. Brian Swimme and I have taught a course on Steiner and Teilhard de Chardin and I have taught many courses on Steiner and anthroposophy both on my own and with Rick Tarnas and Sean Kelly. I have also served on committees for students in PCC and in other departments whose dissertations prominently include Steiner.

Here are three reasons why John Beck and I thought readers of *being human* might want to know about this comfortable relationship between anthroposophy and CIIS. Considering the aggressively secular posture of higher education in the United States it must be counted as good news that there is at least one university that is unabashedly affirmative of spiritual world views and disciplines, including anthroposophy. It is important for faculty and students at other universities to be able to point to a university with a history of the successful integration of academic and spiritual learning. Second, students of anthroposophy should know where research has been generated, and often published, on anthroposophical ideas and practices embedded in standard academic fields including philosophy, psychology, social sciences, and arts. Third, it seems to me important for anthroposophists to know that there is a university where they can earn a bachelors, masters, or doctoral degree without having to leave at the door their commitment to anthroposophy.

A student of anthroposophy in an institution that includes many spiritual teachings and traditions will want to be able to explain the ways in which anthroposophy is spiritual. Even the Waldorf approach to education and

biodynamic agriculture, perhaps the two best ways to introduce and defend anthroposophy, do not immediately reveal their spiritual content. Waldorf is good for children and BD is good for food but how are they spiritual? As Steiner explained repeatedly and brilliantly, the opposite of spiritual is materialism—not material, which is positive, but a view of matter which denies spirit. Waldorf and BD are spiritual precisely because they go beyond the material in both directions: they affirm both interior depth (or deep interior) and transcendent height (the spiritual influence of the cosmos). A third way would be length: both Waldorf and BD take account of the evolutionary past and distant future with respect to child development and the nurturance of Earth.

With the students of Hinduism Steiner affirms the reality and efficacy of Krishna and the Bhagavad Gita, with the Buddhists he affirms the enduring compassion of Buddha. More, much more, Steiner vividly depicts the ways that Christ and Sophia reconcile the immanent and transcendent, as well as spirit and mater. There would seem to be no spiritual text, teaching, or tradition with which anthroposophy can't be shown to be in positive relation. Anthroposophy affirms all realities and denies only the limits to reality placed by ideological materialism and religious fundamentalism.

Perhaps the most positive contribution of CIIS to spirituality (and contribution of spirituality to CIIS) is in its pervasive willingness to explore and share diverse spiritual world views and practices. Most classes and faculty meetings begin with meditation or a spiritual reading. Spiritual perspectives and

ways of knowing appear in lectures, class discussion, and written work. Tolerance is not total: a faculty meeting might begin with a reading in Sanskrit of the names of the Divine Mother but has never begun with a reading of the litany of the mother of Jesus closely associated with the Catholic Church. The reason for this preference is obvious: CIIS in general does not approve of a religious institution that is dogmatic, exclusivist, or harshly judgmental, especially concerning sexual morality. Its favorite spiritual teacher appears to be His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Thanks to *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis is emerging as a religious leader who, as is often said, is doing all that he can to move an allegedly unmovable institution. More

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important, what both the Dalai Lama and Pope Francis exhibit is a combination of wisdom and compassion: wisdom in knowing realities higher and deeper than matter and compassion in serving all such realities including matter. At CIIS this combination of wisdom and compassion counts as the home base of spirituality.

Robert McDermott is President Emeritus of the California Institute for Integral Studies in San Francisco, as well as Chair, Philosophy and Religion, and Program Director, Philosophy, Cosmology, & Consciousness. He has served on and chaired the boards of a number of anthroposophical initiatives and served on the General Council of the Anthroposophical Society in America.

## Entanglements of Freedom

by David Steinrueck

I have always been someone to question and cross the normative lines of the world. In an early incident in my life, walking down a flight of stairs (instead of up, as my mother wanted me to), I shouted, “But I *am* going up!” What is “up” anyways? As we learned from Kafka’s Red Peter in *A Report to an Academy*, the fibers of the universe are experienced and enacted in fundamentally different ways, folding into the unique agency of every individual being. It is this unique burst of personhood

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that is welcomed and celebrated in the Waldorf education. In this way, rather than inundating and shaping the student with certain information, the gifts of each child are respected and integrated into the classroom community. In my Waldorf education, I was able to explore my own experience of the world and learn the skills to critically question normative cultural practices. And this is, in fact, the real philosophy of freedom: the freedom to trust oneself and adventure outside of the narrow self-regenerating economic, political, and cultural traditions

(held together by *reason*). The PCC program has enabled me to continue this line of critical inquiry and self-development on the graduate level surrounded by a supportive community of fellow adventurers.

At its core, the PCC program is a place to explore knowledge. Although this may seem like the bare minimum requirement for any graduate program (or any level of schooling for that matter), the ability to fully explore

the ontological and epistemological conditions of the universe in higher education is exceedingly rare. As we are seeing in universities around the world, non-STEM related fields [science, technology, engineering, mathematics]—those not driven by clear, objective outcome goals—have been devalued, underfunded, and phased out. By offering a contingent, open-ended learning environment, PCC has provided me with a structure to push the boundaries of knowledge; the philosophical works that we engage with do not provide answers, but, instead, act as sign posts along the endlessly shifting trails of the universe. The friendships that I have developed with professors and colleagues are, likewise, built on a foundation of radical inquiry and openness to unfamiliar territory and experience. This learning environment has allowed me to use deeply transdisciplinary methods of inquiry to explore the subjects I am most passionate about: the interactions between subjectivity, politics, and the Earth. In the Philosophy, Cosmology, and Consciousness program, I have found a place to go “up” in whatever direction I choose, supported by a rigorous community of learners.

David Steinrueck was in Waldorf through 8th grade; he is an MA student at CIIS.

## From Waldorf to CIIS: Knowing Imagination

by Becca Tarnas

Why do Waldorf students learn to knit? Why are we introduced to the letter M through the story of a double-peaked mountain, or to V through a tale told in a steep valley? Why are numbers split by Prince Divide, but increased rapidly by Princess Multiply and her little companion butterfly named Of? Why is each classroom wall painted in the ascending order of the rainbow’s spectrum?

As a child in a Waldorf School, the reasoning behind the lessons we engaged in—whether of craftworks and art, bodily expression and poetic movement, of color, sound, and story—were not usually explained to us. In Rudolf Steiner’s pedagogy, the importance lies as much in *how* a subject is taught as it does in *what* is taught. Waldorf Schools create not only a unique curriculum, but a unique environment, an atmosphere that one inhales on

a day to day basis. If one word could be chosen to capture what such an environment nurtures and develops, it is the capacity of the child's imagination. If the portal of imagination is allowed to remain open, if it is nourished and kept safe, strengthened and tested through adolescence to maturity, then the reasons behind the teaching of every form of creative practice—from material arts, to etheric movement, from astral knowledge, to personal wisdom—become apparent on their own.

While the spiritual science of anthroposophy is not explicitly taught to Waldorf students, except sometimes as an optional course to graduating high school seniors, the place within the student's soul in which spiritual science can come to be understood is nurtured through the long arc of the curriculum. When the time comes to leave the imaginative womb of Waldorf education, questions regarding the *why* of Steiner's methods may come forth.

As a graduate student whose childhood was shaped by Steiner's educational approach, I found that the Philosophy, Cosmology, and Consciousness program at CIIS felt like a mature extension of my Waldorf schooling. Here I was invited not only to continue to keep the doorway to the imaginal open wide, unlike at many other universities and graduate institutions, but I could also begin to explore the reasons behind the form of education that shaped me. Not only is Steiner directly taught in PCC, but many of the graduate program's other courses can engage with questions initially brought forth by some of my high school and even grade school classes. A continuity of ideas flows between these forms of education, which I feel stems not only from a recognition of the body, soul, and spirit as channels of knowledge and wisdom, but also a profound respect for the power of the imaginative vision.

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Becca Tarnas ([beccatarnas.com](http://beccatarnas.com)) attended Waldorf pre-school through high school. She received her M.A. in Philosophy, Cosmology & Consciousness and is now a CIIS doctoral student in Ecology, Spirituality, & Religion, writing a dissertation on Jung and Tolkien.

## An Anthroposophist Goes to CIIS

by Jeremy Strawn

I came to the Philosophy, Cosmology, and Consciousness program deeply inspired by anthroposophy. This started for me fourteen years prior, when I lived my twenty-first year on a biodynamic farm. I liken this to com-

ing home, as I felt I had found the synthesis of spiritual perception and practical, Earth-healing work I had been seeking. As I continued to delve deeper in my relationship to anthroposophy, the world became ever more suffused with warmth, love, and meaning, growing in contrast to the modern scientific view of things. In an attempt to plumb the depths of the philosophical underpinnings of this division, I returned to academia, and earned a B.S. in Biology, all the while striving to understand Steiner's epistemology and a Goethean way of science (and continuing to farm). Following this, I was four years a Waldorf high school science and math teacher, which occasioned even further explorations into questions of science and the relationship of human consciousness to the natural/spiritual world.

Along the way, there grew in me a passion for projective geometry. In the course of my time studying and teaching this lawfully imaginative form of geometry, it became increasingly clear that this was an amazingly rich landscape, but few, and nearly none outside anthroposophical circles, had access to it. This then was the focus that brought me to the PCC program at CIIS, to see how projective geometry, and more generally, anthroposophical science, could be integrated into the larger, more global project of consciousness transformation in which we find ourselves today.

Here, I discovered both an academic environment in which to hone my geometric and philosophical ideas in a broader context, and a vibrant community of individuals "seeking the same goal." Becoming familiar with the visions of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Sri Aurobindo, and most profoundly of all, Jean Gebser, my perspective, previously monochromatically influenced either directly or indirectly by Steiner, took on all-new dimensions. Akin to triangulating a location by sighting it from more than one vantage point, adopting the perspective of others with similar visions as Steiner brought me to see facets that he, being one man living in a particular cultural and historical context, could not convey. But, dedicated as I am to an anthroposophical path, this also served to clarify my location on this path, and to affirm my intention of fostering a greater awareness and practice of projective geometry.

For me, this was one of the greatest benefits of embarking on the PCC journey, and engaging with this diverse, compassionate, scholarly community. It expanded

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my horizons beyond anthroposophical circles, and simultaneously crystallized a vision of projective geometry as a path of epistemological inquiry, etheric perception, and ultimately, a practical means of cultivating a kind of holistic, ecological, or integral thinking well suited to transforming our modern scientific materialism into a spiritual science.

Jeremy Strawn is a Philosophy, Cosmology, & Consciousness program alumnus. He taught Waldorf high school for four years and was BD farmer. He led a workshop at the 2014 Fall Conference of the Anthroposophical Society in America.

## The Influence of Steiner on My Philosophical Development

by Matthew D. Segall

I began studying philosophy during my senior year of high school. Alan Watts, Carl Jung, and Friedrich Nietzsche were my initial guides. Their application of deep metaphysical ideas to everyday human life resonated with the feeling I'd carried since childhood that more was going on here on earth than most of the "adults" in charge

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seemed to let on. I entered college excited to pursue such ideas further, but was quickly disillusioned by the state of academic philosophy. My professors did little to encourage wonder or the love of wisdom. Instead, they instructed me on the correct usage of logical fallacies and on the proper materialistic interpretation of various scientific theories. Philosophy was discussed as though it was nothing but a value-neutral exercise in linguistic clarification with little connection to the mystery of being human.

For the rest of my time as an undergraduate, I continued my journey into genuine philosophy outside of class by following a trail of clues through old books written by heretical mystics and intellectual misfits. I eventually stumbled upon and was intrigued by the works of Rudolf Steiner. He seemed to have something insightful to say about almost everything! I was initially overwhelmed by the sheer

volume of his output and had no idea where to start. It was not until enrolling in the Philosophy, Cosmology, and Consciousness program at the California Institute of Integral Studies that I was able to openly study, discuss, and apply his ideas within the context of an academic community of fellow wisdom seekers. The unique combination of the intellectual and the spiritual at CIIS allowed me to reintegrate what I had been forced to disintegrate during my time at a normal university.

My dissertation topic, because it takes esoteric knowledge of higher worlds seriously, would almost certainly be impossible in any other philosophy graduate program. The working title is *Etheric Imagination in Process Philosophy: Toward a Physics of the World-Soul*. One of the core commitments underlying my thesis linking the etheric formative forces of nature and the process philosophical imagination is that human consciousness is deeply interwoven with and a participant in the creative evolution of the cosmos. For materialists who believe consciousness is an epiphenomenal accident with no efficacious connection to reality, and for creationists who believe each human soul is independently created at birth and enjoys a destiny entirely separate from that of the physical universe, I expect my arguments will ring hollow. While I hope my research will help in some small way to shift the popular culture away from the false dichotomy of these dueling fundamentalisms, I recognize that there are limits to what verbal argument can accomplish.

Steiner's influence on the formation of my dissertation topic should be clear to anthroposophists. More than anything else, Steiner has taught me the necessity of intuitive thinking in philosophy. The dynamic unity of subject and object, or consciousness and cosmos, cannot be shown at second hand by way of logical disputation, but must be directly experienced as the product of one's own free inner activity. Reading Steiner, especially his book translated into English as *Intuitive Thinking as a Spiritual Path*, has helped forge my identity, not just as a human being, but as a member of a wider cosmic community of beings.

Matt Segall ([msegall@ciis.edu](mailto:msegall@ciis.edu)) is Executive Assistant to the Academic Vice President of CIIS. He began to study the writings of Rudolf Steiner after coming to CIIS. Well known from Footnotes2Plato blog, he is now a doctoral student, writing a dissertation on Schelling, Whitehead, and Steiner.