



Faculty of Arts and Education
Education

Bo Dahlin

The Waldorf School – Cultivating Humanity?

A report from an evaluation of Waldorf schools in Sweden

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Karlstad in June, 2007

Bo Dahlin

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1. Introduction

Purpose and research questions

This report summarises and further develops an evaluation project dealing with Waldorf education and Swedish Waldorf schools. The evaluation was carried out at Karlstad University on behalf of The Kempe-Carlgren Fund Foundation during the period 2002 – 2005. The purpose was to highlight questions of interest to the general public, for the school authorities and for the Waldorf schools themselves. The main aim of the evaluation was to compare the relationship between Waldorf schools and municipal schools with reference to three areas: 1) the knowledge attained by pupils; 2) the relationship to society, and 3) teacher training. This aim was further defined in the following six research questions, which formed the basis of the empirical study:

- 1) What percentage of former Waldorf pupils go on to higher education and how do they manage their studies?
- 2) Do Waldorf schools contribute to increased segregation or to greater understanding between different social groups?
- 3) Are Waldorf pupils encouraged to develop social and other human skills necessary to be active citizens in a democratic society?
- 4) What results do Waldorf pupils attain in national tests, compared with pupils in municipal schools?
- 5) Do Waldorf schools need a specially “tailored” teacher education or can it be a part of the state teacher education programme?
- 6) How do Waldorf schools cater for children with learning difficulties?

These six questions have been explored empirically and the results have been published in six work reports (Dahlin, Andersson & Langmann, 2003; Dahlin, Andersson & Langmann, 2004a; Dahlin, Langmann & Andersson, 2004b; Dahlin, Langmann & Andersson, 2005; Langmann, Andersson & Dahlin, 2005; and Liljeroth, Naeser & Dahlin, 2006). The reports contain fairly extensive accounts of empirical data based on questionnaires and interviews with Waldorf teachers, pupils and parents.

One purpose of this report is to make an internationally accessible presentation of the evaluation. In this first chapter there is a description of how the Waldorf schools that participated in the project were chosen, the methods of investigation that were used and a brief discussion of the reliability of the results. In chapter 2 the central results of the empirical investigations are presented. In the chapter 3 and 4 these results are related to a wider educational and social philosophical context.

The sample of Waldorf schools

When the investigation was carried out, Sweden had a total of 41 Waldorf schools, 13 of which had classes up to year 12. A selection of 11 schools, spread throughout the entire country, was made from these thirteen schools - from Umeå in the north to Lund in the south. When choosing the schools attention was paid to the geographical location (city/country as well as county) and to the possibility of getting a large enough sample of children who had completed year 12. The chosen schools were first contacted by letter and then by telephone. The teachers at the schools decided together whether they wished to participate and informed us of their decision. One of the schools did not wish to participate in the investigation, with reference to “their present situation”. This school was replaced by another one.

Four of the schools were in the Stockholm/Järna area. The reason for this was that these schools had a relatively large number of pupils and thus ensured that the investigated group was sufficiently comprehensive. Most of the pupils in the sample studied were from school years 9 and 12 (upper secondary grade III),¹ except for the part that deals with former Waldorf pupils (Dahlin, Andersson & Langmann, 2003); and the part that deals with how Waldorf schools meet the needs of children with learning difficulties (Liljeroth, Naeser & Dahlin, 2006). The latter study is based on interviews with a small

¹ At the time of this investigation the Swedish comprehensive school consisted of “school years 1 – 9” and children entered the first year aged 6 or 7 (in 1997 the possibility of a “flexible school start” was established, giving parents the right to send their children to comprehensive school at the age of 6). There is also a voluntary “school year 0”, which belongs to the pre-school and is used for school preparation. Most children go through this year before entering comprehensive school.

group of pupils from different grades. The investigation into Waldorf schools and the question of segregation (Dahlin, Andersson & Langmann, 2004a) was based on questionnaires to the parents of pupils in school years 9 and 12. Consequently the response group is different in each part of the investigation. Furthermore, the question of civic-moral skills for active citizenship (Dahlin, Langmann & Andersson, 2004b) and that of the results on national tests (Dahlin, Langmann & Andersson, 2005), are based on comparisons with results from samples of municipal schools. In the work reports referred to above, more detailed descriptions of the sampling procedures for each part-study are given.

Methods of investigation

The methods of investigation have, for the most part, been determined by the general purpose of the evaluation, which was to give an overview of Waldorf schools in relation to municipal schools. This meant that questionnaires to relatively large groups of pupils and parents were the most suitable way to collect data. However, the questionnaires have in some cases been supplemented with interviews in order to obtain a more substantial picture of thoughts, conceptions and values underlying the responses. Participant observations have also been used in studying how Waldorf schools approach children with learning difficulties.

The advantage of questionnaires is that they can give a general overview of a field. The disadvantage is that this view is also an abstract one. The differences between Waldorf and municipal schools would perhaps have been shown in a more concrete way if we had done more extensive field studies and interviews. Such methods of data collection are, however, very time-consuming and the results are difficult to generalise owing to their concrete and context-bound character. On the basis of the project's purpose and the scope of the research questions, it was decided that questionnaires were the most suitable method, if complemented with interviews and in one case with observations. If it is the case that there are important differences between the "educational processes" of Waldorf schools and municipal schools then these differences should also be evident in the results of these processes, that is, in answers to survey questions.

Our comparisons between municipal pupils and Waldorf pupils are therefore mainly based on surveys or tests made previously, or on-going parallel, in the municipal schools by The Swedish National Agency for Education.

Reliability

Specific questions concerning the reliability of the results of the six part-studies are discussed in each of the six work reports that were published in the project and that are summarised below in chapter 2. Besides the general difficulties that always characterise questionnaires and interviews (misunderstanding of the questions, influence of the interviewer, etc), there is, in this investigation, a greater overall risk that the respondents promote everything that gives a positive impression of Waldorf schools and/or diminish anything that paints a negative picture. They may do this because they are more or less conscious that Waldorf schools in various respects will be compared with municipal schools. This is probably true in the case of teachers and parents and also the *former* Waldorf pupils. Those pupils still at school are perhaps less likely to show such “solidarity” with their school, but the tendency could also be present among them. On the other hand *there are* critical opinions in the data material, especially amongst parents and ex-pupils, and these have also been focussed on in the reports. Also, children and young people today seldom attempt to hide the fact that they are not satisfied with something and this is probably just as much the case among Waldorf pupils as among municipal pupils.² Therefore, it is an open question whether a wish to be shown in a positive light has indeed influenced our Waldorf school results. It must of course also be noted that the fact that there are only a few negative and critical opinions in the material is quite natural, since those who have a mainly negative experience of Waldorf education would not stay in that school system.

It must also be added that each Waldorf school, just like each municipal school, is unique and that the picture that emerges from our results therefore has a general and abstract

² In the data for the third work report (Dahlin, Langmann & Andersson, 2004b), there was a comparatively greater part of responses from the Waldorf pupils expressing both contempt and frustration over the questions in the questionnaire. Apparently, these pupils did not make any effort to give a positive impression; rather the opposite.

character. The individual schools always deviate more or less from such general “statistical” pictures.

2. A Summary of the Empirical Studies

Report 1: Waldorf pupils in higher education

The main purpose of this part-study was to investigate the proportion of pupils that go on to higher education, what type of education they choose and how they feel they are managing their studies. Data were collected via a questionnaire which was sent out to 871 pupils who left a Waldorf school in school year 12 between 1995 and 2001. The response rate was relatively good; 68%. In order to acquire a more nuanced picture of the answers, in depth interviews were conducted with ten persons.

Waldorf pupils waited longer before going on to higher education

The investigation showed that a relatively large proportion, 58%, of the ex-Waldorf students went on to university or college *sooner or later*. How large this proportion is compared with former municipal upper secondary school pupils depends on with which upper secondary school programme one compares. One problem is that there is no municipal upper secondary school programme that completely corresponds to the Waldorf school years 10 – 12. (Waldorf education is based on a 12 year school attendance with united classes.) If one compares with *all* the municipal upper secondary school programmes taken together, the frequency of transfer from Waldorf schools is on average 11% higher, if the comparison is made three years after graduating from upper secondary school. (With frequency of transfer we mean the percentage of a certain year's upper secondary school students that have embarked upon college or university studies.) If we compare instead with the municipal upper secondary school programmes *preparing for higher studies*, the Waldorf school frequency of transfer is on average 15% lower, within three years after the upper secondary school exam.

A general pattern seems to be that more Waldorf pupils take a break before going on to higher education. They choose alternative activities directly after upper secondary school, e.g. work, travel or courses at folk high schools. This was also evident in that many of the

42% who were not students when the investigation was carried out said that they intended to go on to higher education in the future.³

The importance of parents' education

A constantly recurring question in sociological studies of education is the correlation between parents' level of education and engagement in higher education. Many studies show that people with highly educated parents are over-represented among students at universities and colleges. Moreover, other studies show that independent schools generally have a greater portion of well-educated parents. The latter also applies to Waldorf schools.

As noted above, one problem when comparing Waldorf schools with municipal schools is that the latter consist of several programmes, of which some are preparing for further studies and others are vocationally oriented. The curriculum of Waldorf schools' higher classes has both theoretical and practical-aesthetic contents, which makes it a kind of "mixed programme" with both study and vocational features.

In comparison with municipal high schools as a whole there were no percentage differences in the frequency of transfer for pupils with *highly-educated* parents. The differences between different age groups seem, however, to be greater in Waldorf schools (see Tables 1 – 3). If we instead compare with programmes preparing for higher education the differences are greater, especially for the younger students. For individuals born in 1976 there are only 9% more from a municipal school who went on to further study, but for those born in 1980/81 there are almost 30% more.

In the group of pupils with parents who are *not* highly educated the differences in Tables 1 and 2 are greater than in the former case - if we compare Waldorf with the whole of the municipal upper secondary school. In this group there are comparatively more Waldorf pupils who go on to higher education. However, in Table 3, which describes the younger

³ A recently reported study of Waldorf pupils in the USA and Canada (Baldwin, Gerwin & Mitchell, 2005) showed that over 20% of the North American pupils do a similar pause in their studies before they start college. The percentage was especially high among the Canadian pupils: 48%.

pupils, there is almost no difference. If you compare with the programmes preparing for further studies the difference increases gradually from the older to the younger respondent group. In the latter group there are over 30% more from municipal schools that proceed to higher education. It is difficult to know what has caused these differences between age groups.

Finally if we compare the differences *within the respective school form* between pupils with well-educated and less well-educated parents and keep to upper secondary schools as a whole,⁴ we can see that this difference is less in Waldorf schools. In the municipal upper secondary school it is constant at around 30%. In Waldorf schools there is certainly a marked increase over time, from 5 to 20%, but it is still 10% less among the younger respondent group (Table 3).

Table 1. Individuals born in 1976 who at the age of 21 had begun a higher education course; related to high school programme and the home level of education. Per cent of resp parental level of education

	Waldorf schools	All programmes	Study prep. programmes	Vocational programmes
At least one parent with higher education degree	60	53	69	19
No parent with higher education	55	23	52	9
<i>Per cent difference</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>10</i>

Table 2. Individuals born in 1977 who at the age of 21 had begun a higher education course; related to high school programme and the home level of education. Per cent of resp parental level of education

	Waldorf schools	All programmes	Study prep. programmes	Vocational programmes
At least one parent with higher education degree	52	51	70	20
No parent with higher education	45	22	53	9
<i>Per cent difference</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>11</i>

⁴ Perhaps this comparison is both the simplest and the most adequate, since the Waldorf school aims to prepare for both higher education and vocational training and probably has pupils with both intentions.

Table 3. Individuals born in 1980/81 who at the age of 21 had begun a higher education course; related to high school programme and the home level of education. Per cent of resp parental level of education.

	Waldorf schools	All programmes	Study prep. programmes	Vocational programmes
At least one parent with higher education degree	44	52	73	31
No parent with higher education	24	22	57	13
<i>Per cent difference</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>18</i>

Waldorf pupils applied for different types of higher educational programmes and had a somewhat deeper approach to their studies

Students with a Waldorf background were to be found in every possible type of higher education programme. For example, some were training to be doctors, engineers, economists, lawyers, teachers or artists. An exceedingly small group applied to anthroposophical vocational training courses.

The investigation included a Swedish version of Biggs' Study Process Questionnaire (Watkins & Dahlin, 1997). This test distinguishes three styles of study: deep approach, surface approach and achievement approach. Former Waldorf pupils generally seemed to have a somewhat different study approach compared to other students. Table 4 below compares the results of former Waldorf pupils on the three test scales with measurements from the investigation which formed the basis of Watkin's & Dahlin's (1997) trial of a Swedish version of the test. The former Waldorf pupils were a little less instrumental and used more of a deeper approach to their studies, that is, they studied more from personal interest in the subject than from a wish to improve their opportunities in the labour market. They were also less concerned about examinations and did not use mechanical reproductive learning techniques ("learning by rote") as much as other students. The average differences are not so great in absolute figures but they show a consistent pattern and were statistically significant (t -test gave $p < 0.01$ for deep- and surface approaches).

Table 4. Mean value and standard deviation of the three study styles amongst former Waldorf pupils, and a comparative group of university students.

Study style	Former Waldorf (N=271)	Former municipal (N=477)
Deep approach	3.4/0.6	3.1/0.6
Surface approach	2.4/0.6	2.7/0.6
Achievement approach	2.7/0.6	2.6/0.5

Waldorf pupils felt good and did well in their higher education environments

Generally the students with a Waldorf background felt good to be in a university environment. They thought their studies were both stimulating and interesting. Students in the area of natural sciences experienced their studies as somewhat more interesting and felt better than students in the areas of the humanities and social sciences.

Almost all students felt their study demands were at a sufficiently high level and thought they managed them well. About one third of them thought that they managed better than their fellow students.

Most of the students considered that their Waldorf education had made a positive contribution to their ability to manage higher education. The Waldorf pedagogical methods were thought to have contributed to self-confidence and the ability independently to gather, process and critically review information. Above all they thought that the constant and recurring independent way of working (with their self-produced text books), had given them the skills and self-confidence for both independent thinking and the production of written presentations, essays or “papers” in higher studies. To be sure, there were some respondents who had experienced deficiencies in their knowledge of some subjects when they compared themselves with their fellow students. The important thing, however, was that almost all of them thought they had developed a fruitful relationship towards learning and knowledge.

Only a very small number, 6%, thought that their background in a Waldorf school was a disadvantage in their higher studies. At the same time none of them said that they had had problems managing the demands made on them. Critical viewpoints that a few students

brought up were: that Waldorf teachers sometimes lacked knowledge in their subject areas, that there was resistance to using computers, that they (the pupils) had not developed the same skills in using text books as students in municipal schools, and that as a Waldorf pupil you were “stuck” with the same class teacher and the same classmates for the first eight years of school.⁵

All in all, however, the results of the study indicate that almost 60% of pupils who spent the whole or a greater part of their schooling at a Waldorf school sooner or later go on to higher education where they choose a wide variety of studies. It is possible that the parents’ level of education does not affect them as much in their choice of further studies as it does pupils in municipal schools. Waldorf pupils also wait longer before starting higher education, in favour of other activities directly after leaving upper secondary school. During their period of study they experience their studies as both interesting and stimulating and most of them think they manage the demands made on them well or better than their fellow students. Waldorf education is thought to have contributed to good self-confidence, ability to handle independent studies and fruitful relations to learning and knowledge.

Report 2: Waldorf schools and the question of segregation

The purpose of this part-study was to investigate how far Waldorf schools contribute to segregation or to greater understanding between different sections of the population. If parents of children in Waldorf schools seem to create a sub-culture in the community, with specific ideas, values and life-styles, then the opportunities for children with different types of social and cultural backgrounds to meet in a common “school for all” are undermined. This is the main aspect of what The Swedish National Agency for Education considers to be segregation in the school system.

⁵ The idea of having the same class teacher from grade 1 to 8 is currently under debate within the Waldorf school movement; see Helsper, Ullrich, Stelmaszyk *et. al.* (2007) for an interesting empirical study of this issue. It must also be pointed out that Waldorf pupils do not meet one and only one teacher during these eight years, even though the class teacher teaches most of the subjects.

In order to investigate the social and cultural homogeneity of “Waldorf parents”, a questionnaire was sent out to those parents in the participating schools whose children were either in school year 9 or 12. They comprised a group of 851 parents. Both parents were asked to fill in an individual questionnaire, independently of each other. Besides general background questions about income, education and family relationships, the questionnaire included questions about the parents’ ideas and attitudes to certain social, political and philosophical or world view questions. Included in the questionnaire were a number of items from a comprehensive survey of Swedish social, political and ideological opinions, which was carried out at Uppsala University at the end of the 1990’s, see Bråkenhielm (2001). Thereby it was possible to compare the standpoint of Waldorf parents in certain questions with how “Swedes in general” answered the same questions. In these comparisons, consideration has been given to the level of education of the respondents, since this factor turned out to play an important role in how people replied in the Bråkenhielm study.

The response rate in this part-study was 60%, in spite of “reminding letters” being sent out once. It is difficult to know how representative the responses are to the general population of Waldorf parents. When considering the results of this investigation one must take into account that Waldorf parents may have felt singled out as a group when they responded to the questionnaire. This could be one reason for the relatively low response rate. It could also have affected the responses of those who answered.

Waldorf parents were well-educated but only a minority were high salaried

The results implied that Waldorf parents were well-educated since as many as 80% of the respondents had some kind of post-secondary education. About half of them had some form of post secondary vocational exam and around 30% had an academic degree. In Sweden at this time (2003) about 20% of the population in the ages 35 – 54 years had an academic degree and about the same percentage had a post secondary education (Statistics Sweden, 2005, p 15). Thus, the level of education among Waldorf parents seems to be higher than among the population in general.

The parents were asked about their family's monthly income, in order to gain a picture of which social group they belonged to from an economic point of view. For almost 40% of the respondents the *family* had a monthly income of less than 30 000 SEK before tax (approximately 3000 EURO). Only 18% had a *joint* income of 50 000 SEK (5000 EURO) or more. The average monthly income per capita in Sweden at this time was 24 000 SEK (2 400 EURO). Therefore, only a minority of the parents had an income above the national average.

Waldorf parents had predominantly red-green political sympathies

Waldorf parents' political sympathies lay mainly with the Green Party (approx 40%) and the Left Wing Party (approx 30%). Sympathies with the Left Party were most common among the highly educated parents, while sympathies with the Green Party were most common among parents who had no higher education qualifications. The internal non-response rate on this question was, however, relatively large (13%).

Waldorf parents were native speakers of Swedish

Almost 90% of the respondents said their native language was Swedish. Among those parents who replied that they had another language as their mother tongue, there was a dominance of European languages, for instance German, Finnish, Danish and Norwegian.

Waldorf parents said they had chosen the school based on their knowledge of Waldorf education

The most common reason for choosing to place a child in a Waldorf school was a belief in the Waldorf teaching methods. Over 70% of Waldorf parents gave this reason. However, only a very small number of these parents (7%) had themselves attended a Waldorf school.

Waldorf parents often embraced a spiritual or religious philosophy of life

The majority of Waldorf parents had adopted some form of spiritual or religious life view and disassociated themselves from atheism and materialism. Approximately 40% replied that they embraced a Christian outlook on life and 40% that they embraced an

anthroposophical world view. However, the percentages varied quite widely between schools. Waldorf parents thought even more than Swedish people in general (who had an equivalent level of education) that people do not consist only of body and matter and that the basic nature of human beings is good and unselfish. Among the Waldorf parents it seemed that the level of education was less important for the way of answering these questions, compared to Swedish people in general.

Waldorf parents based their social standpoint on fellow feeling and solidarity with the disadvantaged

Waldorf parents tended more than Swedish people in general to have a view of society characterised by fellow feeling, humanism and solidarity with the disadvantaged. They thought, for example, to a lesser extent than Swedish people in general, that stricter measures against criminals or death penalty was necessary in today's society. or that a life in poverty depends on laziness or lack of individual will-power. Waldorf parents, more than others, disassociated themselves from competitiveness and egoistic individualism. They thought, to a lesser extent than Swedish people in general, that free competition, or that talented or industrious people getting a better life than others, were suitable ways to a better society. Table 5 below shows some of the results of this investigation (the figures for "Swedish people in general" come from Bråkenhielm (2001)).

The table also shows what role the level of education plays for these standpoints. In three of the eight questions the level of education plays a decisive role for Swedish people in general ($p < .01$) but not for Waldorf parents. Only in one question was the difference between Waldorf parents and Swedish people in general not statistically significant and that was the question about working "black" and tax evasion.

In the Swedish population as a whole, the level of education was important in four out of eight questions, among the Waldorf parents this was the case for only one of the questions, the one concerning "stricter measures against criminals". However, the tendencies were the same in both groups. People with higher education qualifications tended on the whole to express more "humane" values, that is, they more often took a

stand *against* issues such as stricter measures against criminals, death penalty, competitiveness and social inequality.

Table 5. Standpoints in different social questions and the importance of level of education. Per cent and p-value for chi2-analysis. HE = higher education qualification.

Statement	Waldorf parents			Swedish people in general		
	No HE	HE	p	No HE	HE	p
We need a firmer approach to criminals						
<i>Agree entirely/ partly</i>	38	22	< .01**	83	70	< .01**
<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	27	31		11	15	
<i>Disagree partly/ completely</i>	35	47		6	14	
I have no objection to video cameras in public places if they help to reduce crime						
<i>Agree entirely/ partly</i>	57	46	> .05	84	78	> .05
<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	16	26		8	9	
<i>Disagree partly/ completely</i>	27	28		7	12	
Some crimes deserve to be punished with the death penalty						
<i>Agree entirely/ partly</i>	5	3	> .05	44	27	< .01**
<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	7	5		15	11	
<i>Disagree partly/ completely</i>	88	92		40	60	
The best way to improve society is to encourage free competition						
<i>Agree entirely/ partly</i>						
<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	20	13	> .05	44	38	< .01**
<i>Disagree partly/ completely</i>	33	26		39	31	
	47	61		16	30	
A good society is characterised by the fact that no one is excluded						
<i>Agree entirely/ partly</i>	89	88	> .05	71	72	> .05
<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	5	10		17	17	
<i>Disagree partly/ completely</i>	6	2		11	11	
I prefer a society where everyone is equally well-off even if this means a high level of taxation						
<i>Agree entirely/ partly</i>	65	74	> .05	38	43	> .05
<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	25	14		26	20	
<i>Disagree partly/ completely</i>	10	12		35	36	
I prefer a society where a talented and industrious person is better off than average						
<i>Agree entirely/ partly</i>	18	19	> .05	43	45	> .05
<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	36	29		31	23	
<i>Disagree partly/ completely</i>	46	52		25	32	
I do not consider working "black" and avoiding tax as criminal behaviour						
<i>Agree entirely/ partly</i>	9	5	> .05	16	10	< .01**
<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	30	25		26	14	
<i>Disagree partly/ completely</i>	61	70		57	76	

Waldorf parents a relatively homogenous group

On the whole the results indicate that Waldorf parents in Sweden is a relatively homogenous group, although in some respects there are differences when we compare the groups of parents at different Waldorf schools. Waldorf parents are well-educated but less well salaried; they have Swedish as their native language and work in social or caring professions. Their political leanings are mainly in the red-green area. Many of them have adopted some form of spiritual or religious philosophy and disassociate themselves from atheism and materialism. They seem to have a view of society characterised by fellow feeling and solidarity with the disadvantaged and they disagree with competitiveness and egoistic individualism. Besides, their views on social and philosophical questions were less dependent on their level of education, compared to Swedish people in general. This may be a consequence of being led to a greater extent by an inner value compass, which is not so much influenced by the external environment. Finally it can be noted that most parents had chosen their children's school based on their knowledge of Waldorf education and that only a very few of them (7%) had themselves attended a Waldorf school.

The question of segregation

The purpose of this part-study was to determine to what extent Waldorf schools contribute to increased segregation or greater understanding between different groups of the population, through the parents' social and cultural backgrounds. The idea was that if parents of children in Waldorf schools turn out to belong to a sub-culture of society with specific notions and values, there is a certain risk that they form an enclave which is isolated from the rest of society. If segregation in the school system means that children from families with different social and cultural backgrounds are prevented from meeting and getting to know each other at school, then we can agree that Waldorf schools contribute to a certain social and cultural segregation.

However, here we must distinguish the factual, empirical meaning of segregation from the ethical valuation of that meaning. Not only are the aims of Waldorf education universal solidarity and openness to foreign cultures, but these aims *are achieved* to a great extent. This can be seen from the results of report 3 which follows below. It seems then as if the answer to the question of whether Waldorf schools contribute to segregation or to greater

understanding is that they do both: they contribute to segregation *and* to greater understanding between social and cultural groups. This illustrates the importance of distinguishing between the negative valuations that the term segregation implies, as opposed to its factual, empirical meaning. It is not self-evident that the Waldorf parents' "cultural homogeneity" shall be thought of as negative. The term segregation can be misleading in this context. Today it is often used to portray independent schools in a bad light.

Report 3: Waldorf schools and civic-moral competence

The aim of the third part-study was to investigate how far Waldorf pupils develop the values and social competence necessary to become active members of a democratic and multi-cultural society. Since this is a far-reaching and complex question, only certain aspects of the problem have been selected for study within the frame of the project. The chosen aspects have, to a large extent, been decided upon by the material for comparison and instruments of measurement available from earlier empirical studies with similar questions.

The first comparative study: civic-moral competence

In order to compare Waldorf pupils' ability to take a standpoint on complex social and moral questions with that of pupils in municipal schools, a questionnaire was used that had been devised for a sub-project in the national evaluation carried out by The Swedish National Agency for Education in 1998. This sub-project dealt with "the civic-moral aspect" of Social Studies, and aimed to examine pupils' abilities to:

- 1) *identify* and *explain* current social and moral problems,
- 2) *propose solutions* for these problems and
- 3) *give reasons* for their proposals.

In order to investigate these abilities, defined as central aspects of "civic-moral competence", a response-based evaluation model was used that focussed the pupils own more or less creative solutions to the problems presented. The evaluation instrument was

formed as a questionnaire and consisted of two tasks that dealt with current social and moral problems. There was a picture with each task that related to the problem. The picture was deliberately ambiguous, so that the pupils were able to make their own interpretations of the problems, and to pose their own questions around them.

The first task, called “The Växjö Task”, was related to the problem of hostility towards immigrants. The picture had been published in one of the Swedish evening papers, and showed a demonstration of Neo-Nazi youths in Växjö, at which an elderly lady was physically attacking a demonstrating “skinhead” by hitting him over the head with her umbrella. The caption under the picture said “She hounded out the Neo-Nazis”. The task was intended to highlight two general moral problems: a) the dilemma of democracy and b) are some forms of violence justifiable? The explicit questions the pupils were given for this task dealt mainly with:

- Describing what was happening in the picture
- Explaining what had led up to the event in the picture
- Deciding whether the picture evoked questions concerning right and wrong and if so which questions
- Suggesting solutions to the problem, if they thought something was unfair
- Giving reasons for the solutions they had suggested

The second task, “The Foetus Task”, was connected to an issue that is more and more common as the result of the development of biotechnology. The picture showed a foetus in the womb. It could be perceived as “an innocent foetus in its mother’s tummy”, that is, it was not value-neutral. The caption said:

A group of researchers at Huddinge Hospital outside Stockholm applied in spring 1997 for permission to do medical experiments on a living foetus in the womb. This would however only be performed on fetuses that were to be aborted.

This task was also intended to highlight two moral dilemmas: a) where is the limit for experiment and research “for the benefit of humanity” and b) the advantages and risks of biotechnology. The open questions were the same as those for the previous task with the

exception of the first question, where the pupils were encouraged to describe what the researchers wanted permission to do.

Besides these two problem-solving tasks the questionnaire contained a number of complementary questions with answers on a 5-graded scale. The purpose of these was, for example, to gather data on how the pupils reacted to the evaluation tasks, how much effort they employed in answering the tasks and to what extent the teaching in school had dealt with the problems in the tasks. There were also a number of questions about the pupils' thoughts around ethics and morals, as well as a test for the degree of self-appreciation (Rosenberg, 1989).

The questionnaire was sent out during the spring of 2003 to the Social Studies teachers in school years 9 and 12 at the 11 participating Waldorf schools. The teachers were asked to administer the questionnaire collection themselves, but the pupils were given sealable envelopes in which to put their questionnaires after answering them. The response rate was 77%, corresponding to 325 pupils. The comparison group from the 1998 evaluation by The Swedish National Agency for Education comprised 407 pupils in school years 9 and upper secondary grade III from a total of 19 municipal schools.

More Waldorf pupils thought the subject Social Studies was interesting and good. The comparison showed that Waldorf pupils in school year 12 to a greater extent than municipal school pupils in the same year thought that the teaching in Social Studies lessons were good and interesting. Moreover, a larger share of Waldorf pupils in that school year thought they were competent at the Social Studies subjects, compared to the pupils in municipal schools.

Waldorf pupils felt a greater responsibility for social and moral issues. Waldorf pupils in both school years also felt to a greater extent responsible for social and moral issues, compared to the pupils in municipal schools. More Waldorf pupils felt a responsibility for the future moral development of society and felt that they were responsible as adults to do something about the problems described in the evaluation tasks.

Waldorf pupils thought to a greater extent that the evaluation tasks were important, interesting and easy to understand. Most of the pupils in both school years thought that the tasks were generally rather difficult to *respond* to. This is no doubt connected to the complexity of the problems posed in the tasks. At the same time the Waldorf pupils to a greater extent thought that the tasks were important, interesting and easy to understand, compared to the municipal pupils.

Waldorf pupils' involvement in social and moral issues increased with their age. When comparing the two school years it was evident that the section of Waldorf pupils who thought the tasks were important, interesting and easy to understand increased considerably between school years 9 and 12. Among the pupils in the municipal schools however, the difference between the school years was only marginal (see Table 6 below). The opinions about Social Studies were also more positive amongst the Waldorf pupils, while it actually became increasingly negative among the pupils in municipal schools. Besides, involvement in moral issues seemed to increase with age among Waldorf pupils, but was rather constant among the pupils in municipal schools. In all these aspects the section of “positive” Waldorf pupils tended to be greater as early as school year 9.

Table 6. Comparison of the section of positive answers to a number of questions from The Swedish National Agency for Education's national evaluation in 1998. Per cent within resp school year and school form. (W9 = Waldorf school year 9 etc; M9 =municipal school year 9 etc; Δ% = per cent difference).

Question	W9	W12	Δ %	M9	M12	Δ %
Think the tasks were easy to understand	15	26	+11	13	13	0
Think the tasks were important	34	58	+24	25	22	-3
Think the tasks were interesting	23	41	+18	12	16	+4
Think I'm good at Social Studies	31	39	+8	35	19	-16
Think Social Studies is interesting	45	66	+21	44	36	-8
Think the school's teaching of Social Studies is good	27	50	+23	46	22	-24
Feel adult responsibility for task subject	22	33	+11	15	16	+1
Feel responsible for moral development of society	24	35	+11	17	17	0
Discuss moral issues at home	14	20	+6	15	10	-5

Since this was not a longitudinal study, we can not definitely say that Waldorf pupils generally develop in this way between school years 9 and 12. The results, however, indicates the possibility of such a development. This would mean that Waldorf pupils to a

greater extent experience a positive development in the areas of interest in social and moral issues. This could be an important area for further research.

Waldorf pupils were more inclined to refer to love, fellow feeling and civil courage. When comparing the pupils' answers to the two problem solving activities the Waldorf pupils, to a somewhat greater extent than the municipal students, were inclined to refer to moral qualities like love, fellow feeling, solidarity and courage to stand up for what you think is right. They seemed also to be characterised by greater thoughtfulness, greater confidence in inherent human goodness and less trust in recruiting more policemen or that stricter laws can solve moral problems at a social level. The Waldorf pupils stressed instead individual responsibility.

Waldorf pupils suggested to a greater extent solutions based on stopping or limiting Nazi and racist ideologies. Since Nazism and racism are topical social phenomena we investigated to what extent the pupils disassociated themselves from these ideologies. It was found that the majority of pupils in both school forms disassociated themselves from Nazism and racism. The group of pupils that suggested anti-Nazi and anti-racist solutions, that is, solutions that aimed to counteract or stop Nazism and racism, were however much greater among Waldorf pupils.

Waldorf pupils had more positive self esteem. Research into moral development has shown that persistent and committed moral conduct is often connected with positive self esteem. In order to investigate whether there was a similar connection between positive self esteem and civic-moral competence, as this is defined in the investigation, Rosenberg's self-esteem test was included in the questionnaire. The test showed that Waldorf pupils in general were higher in their self-esteem, that is, they had a more positive self image compared to the pupils in municipal schools. However, strong and unambiguous correlations between self-esteem and civic-moral competence could not be observed in this investigation.

More blank, sarcastic and "destructive" answers among Waldorf pupils. The incidence of blank, sarcastic or "destructive" responses was considerably greater among the Waldorf pupils.

By destructive response we mean a response that deliberately avoids answering the questions and as a consequence cannot be used for the purpose of the investigation. Besides this there were several critical comments on the two tasks in the questionnaire as well as on the investigation as a whole in the responses of the Waldorf pupils. Behind these answers there may be a certain distrust of, or rebellious attitude to, established societal or political institutions.

The second comparative study: attitudes to and opinions of the school, the teachers and the parents

Parts of national school evaluation in 2003, carried out by The Swedish National Agency for Education, were also used in order to gain a wider picture of the extent to which Waldorf pupils develop the values attitudes necessary to be active citizens in a democratic and multi-cultural society. This was aimed only at pupils in school year 9. The evaluation, in the form of a questionnaire with bound response alternatives, focussed chiefly on the *attitudes* of the pupils. Therefore it cannot be said to measure the pupils' *ability* to take a stand on social and moral issues, to the same extent as the questionnaire from 1998. The comparison shall therefore be seen as a complement to the former investigation. From The Swedish National Agency for Education's questionnaire a selection of questions concerning the pupils' social and moral experience and attitudes was made. Also included were questions about the pupils' attitudes to and opinion of the school, the teachers and the parents.

The questionnaire was sent out to nine of the 11 participating Waldorf schools during the spring of 2003. The number responding to that issue was 196 pupils. The Swedish National Agency for Education sent out 6788 questionnaires in total to the municipal schools. The number responding was 5941 pupils. There were no great differences between the two respondent groups with regard to gender distribution or distribution between city/country. However, there were differences in the social background of the pupils and this has been taken into consideration in the comparison.

Waldorf teachers were seen to attach greater importance in their teaching to human dignity, equality and the environment. The comparison showed that Waldorf pupils to a greater extent than those

in municipal schools thought that their teachers attached importance to the human dignity of all people, equality between the sexes, care of the environment and disassociation from bullying in their teaching. They also found to a greater extent that the teachers attached importance to cooperation and that the pupils with the greatest learning difficulties received the most help, see Tables 7 and 8.

Table 7. "Schools have many important tasks. Some of them are listed in this question. How many of your teachers attach importance to the following in their teaching?" W = Waldorf pupils; M = pupils in municipal schools. Per cent of resp school form.

Task	All teachers		Most teachers		Some teachers		No teachers		p
	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	
<i>To respect all human dignity equally</i>	50	28	41	56	8	14	1	2	<.01**
<i>To react against bullying and other behaviour that causes suffering</i>	44	28	42	48	12	21	2	3	<.01**
<i>To treat boys and girls as equals</i>	51	28	32	44	14	23	3	5	<.01**
<i>To care for and protect the environment we live in</i>	45	18	42	47	13	31	0	4	<.01**
<i>To learn to take a stand in questions of rights and injustices</i>	27	23	47	50	24	24	2	3	>.05

Waldorf pupils experienced bullying or unfair treatment to a lesser extent compared to the municipal pupils. They also experienced to a greater extent that the teacher or another grown-up quickly intervened if a pupil was being bullied.

Table 8. "Schools have many important tasks. Some of them are listed in this question. How many of your teachers attach importance to the following in their teaching?" W = Waldorf pupils; M = pupils in municipal schools. Per cent of each school form

Task	All teachers		Most teachers		Some teachers		No teachers		p
	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	
<i>That we cooperate and help each other</i>	37	26	48	51	14	20	1	3	<.05*
<i>That those who have most learning difficulties get most help</i>	29	20	44	47	26	28	1	5	<.01**
<i>That we live satisfied with ourselves and have good self-confidence</i>	37	23	38	42	22	27	3	8	<.01**

Waldorf pupils had more tolerant attitudes to deviant groups in society. Waldorf pupils had generally more open and tolerant attitudes to homosexual pupils and pupils with learning

difficulties, compared to the pupils in municipal schools. They also had more open and tolerant attitudes both towards immigrants and extremist religious and political groups. Only with regard to criminals and Nazis/racists/skinheads was the relationship between the two respondent groups the opposite, that is, Waldorf pupils showed a less tolerant attitude, compared to the pupils in municipal schools. The differences are shown in Tables 9 and 10.

Table 9. A comparison between Waldorf pupils' and municipal pupils' answers to the question "How would you feel about having these groups as neighbours?" with consideration taken of the number of books in the home. Per cent.

How would you feel about these neighbours...		No. of books in the home			
		50-500 books		More than 500 books	
		W	M	W	M
<i>Immigrants</i>	<i>Wouldn't want them</i>	5	25	0	19
<i>Homosexuals</i>	<i>Wouldn't want them</i>	6	28	2	21
<i>Extremist left wing</i>	<i>Wouldn't want them</i>	20	42	13	41
<i>Muslim fundamentalists</i>	<i>Wouldn't want them</i>	30	48	21	50
<i>Extremist right wing</i>	<i>Wouldn't want them</i>	50	80	49	81
<i>Jehovah's Witnesses</i>	<i>Wouldn't want them</i>	47	54	42	53

Table 10. A comparison between Waldorf pupils' and the municipal school pupils' answers to the question "How would you feel about having these groups of people as neighbours?" with consideration taken of the number of books in the home. Per cent.

How would you feel about these neighbours ...		No. of books in the home			
		50-500 books		More than 500 books	
		W	M	W	M
<i>People with AIDS</i>	<i>Wouldn't want them</i>	17	29	3	25
<i>Mentally ill</i>	<i>Wouldn't want them</i>	48	70	45	65
<i>Drug abusers</i>	<i>Wouldn't want them</i>	56	76	57	75
<i>People with a criminal record</i>	<i>Wouldn't want them</i>	57	47	62	41
<i>Racists/Nazis/skinheads</i>	<i>Wouldn't want them</i>	89	77	89	78

In these comparisons consideration has been taken to the background variable "number of books at home", as an indication of the family's cultural capital (cf. Bourdieu, 2001) and usually correlates strongly with the level of education and socio-economic standard. Besides attitudes to Jehovah's Witnesses and to racists/Nazis/skinheads all differences were statistically significant ($p < .05$).

Less variation between girls' and boys' attitudes in Waldorf schools. Although the girls in general had more open and tolerant attitudes than the boys in both respondent groups, the

differences between the sexes in these respects was considerably less among the Waldorf pupils, see Table 11 below. Among the pupils in municipal schools all the differences were statistically significant: among Waldorf pupils most of the differences were non-significant.

Table 11. A comparison between the answers of girls and boys to the question “How would you feel about having these groups of people as neighbours” in Waldorf schools and municipal schools. Per cent and p-value from chi2-test.

How would you feel about having these groups as neighbours?		Waldorf pupils			Pupils in municipal schools		
		Girls	Boys	P	Girls	Boys	p
<i>Immigrants</i>	<i>Wouldn't want them</i>	1	6	>.05	14	33	<.01**
<i>Homosexuals</i>	<i>Wouldn't want them</i>	1	9	<.05*	10	44	<.01**
<i>Extremist left wing</i>	<i>Wouldn't want them</i>	14	21	>.05	26	58	<.01**
<i>Muslim fundamentalists</i>	<i>Wouldn't want them</i>	26	29	>.05	36	61	<.01**
<i>Extremist right wing</i>	<i>Wouldn't want them</i>	38	64	<.01**	83	78	<.01**
<i>Jehovah's Witnesses</i>	<i>Wouldn't want them</i>	41	51	>.05	43	66	<.01**
<i>People with AIDS</i>	<i>Wouldn't want them</i>	9	17	>.05	16	42	<.01**
<i>Mentally ill</i>	<i>Wouldn't want them</i>	42	54	>.05	64	75	<.01**
<i>Drug abusers</i>	<i>Wouldn't want them</i>	56	58	>.05	73	79	<.01**
<i>People with a criminal record</i>	<i>Wouldn't want them</i>	58	60	>.05	40	52	<.01**
<i>Racists/Nazis/skinheads</i>	<i>Wouldn't want them</i>	87	91	>.05	80	74	<.01**

Conclusions

The purpose with the two questionnaire studies was to investigate to what extent Waldorf pupils develop the values and social skills necessary to become active citizens in a democratic and multi-cultural society. The results of the first comparative study point to the fact that Waldorf pupils, if you follow them up to the last year of upper secondary school, achieve the Swedish national curriculum goal of fostering democratic values to a somewhat greater extent compared to the pupils in municipal schools. This conclusion is further supported by results from the other comparative study, which showed that Waldorf pupils in school year 9 to a greater extent experienced their teachers giving weight to the schools’ fundamental democratic values. Furthermore, the Waldorf pupils themselves had more open and tolerant attitudes towards “deviant” groups in society – apart from criminals, Nazis and racists, from whom they on the contrary actively disassociated themselves.

One of the Swedish schools' main tasks, according to the national curriculum, is to promote the pupils' development towards responsible people, people who actively participate in and develop society. Our results show that Waldorf schools to a great extent seem to foster active, responsible and democratic citizens. This is naturally a result of both the Waldorf schools special teaching methods and also the Waldorf pupils' specific social and cultural background in the form of parents' values and social involvement. Which of these two factors plays the most important role is hard to say, but the schools' teaching methods are certainly not unimportant. This is shown by Solhaug (2007), who reports a Norwegian study comparing Waldorf and municipal schools at the upper secondary level. In this study, the Waldorf pupils scored significantly higher on tolerance and social engagement, as well as on interest in social issues and participation in future non-parliamentary political activity. The municipal pupils, on the other hand, scored higher on factual knowledge and on participation in future parliamentary elections. An analysis of regression showed that the home background of the pupils accounted for most of the statistical variance. However, the analysis also proved that the schools themselves *had* a small, but statistically significant influence on the results.

Another investigation worth mentioning here is that of Mitchell & Gerwin (2007), who made a follow up study of former Waldorf students in North America. They found that many of these people saw their Waldorf schooling as important for their awareness of social issues and their striving to live balanced lives in a hectic society.

Report 4: Proficiency in Swedish, English and Mathematics and attitudes to the teaching

The focus of the fourth part-study was a comparison between the results of Waldorf pupils and pupils in municipal schools on the national tests in Swedish, English and Mathematics for school year 9. In order to get a wider perspective on these results a survey was also made of 1) the pupils' general experience of their school, 2) the pupils' experience of the teaching of these three subjects and 3) the Waldorf teachers' opinions of how these national tests fit into the curriculum of Waldorf schools.

The questions about pupils' general experience of their school and the teaching were dealt with by letting the pupils in nine of the 11 participating Waldorf schools answer parts of the questionnaire included in The Swedish National Agency for Education's national evaluation in 2003 (NE03; not to be confused with the above mentioned national tests). A selection of questions, in the form of a questionnaire, was sent out during the spring of 2003 to the class teachers, who were asked to administer the collection of questionnaires themselves. As in the previous study, sealable envelopes were provided for the pupils. The number of Waldorf pupils that responded was 196. The comparative group from The Swedish National Agency for Education evaluation consisted of 5941 pupils from the municipal schools school year 9. (These disproportionate sample sizes correspond to the large difference between the populations.) With respect to gender division and the number of schools in country places/cities there were no great differences between the two groups. However, the groups differed concerning the pupils' social background, and this has been taken into consideration in the comparison.

The question of Waldorf teachers' opinion of the national tests was investigated through taped interviews with altogether 22 Waldorf teachers (7 - 8 in the three respective subjects) at the nine Waldorf schools that participated in this part-study.

The comparison between the results of the national tests in school year 9 was based on data from Statistics Sweden (SCB). From and including the spring term 2003 the national tests for that school year were compulsory for all schools, including independent schools, and the results were registered by SCB. In total test results were collected from over 1000 municipal schools in 276 municipalities, which corresponded to 93 248 pupils. Among Sweden's 27 Waldorf schools that during the school year 2003/04 included year 9, test results were collected from 26 schools in 22 municipalities, which corresponded to 509 pupils.

After eliminating the municipal pupils who were studying Swedish as a second language, and those who went to schools that were not situated in one of the 22 municipalities where tests were reported from a Waldorf school, as well as those pupils – both in Waldorf schools and in the municipal schools where there was no information about the

parents' level of education, the comparative groups consisted of 21 208 municipal pupils and 493 Waldorf pupils.

With regard to gender, ethnic background and the number of schools in country districts/cities, there were very small differences between the two respondent groups. However, the groups differed when it came to the pupils' social background. Therefore the pupils in each population were divided into two sub-groups: Group 1 consisted of pupils with at least one parent who had post upper secondary education and Group 2 of pupils with no parent who had such an education.

First below is an account of the results from the comparison between Waldorf schools and the municipal schools concerning the questions from The Swedish National Agency for Education national evaluation (NE03). This is followed by an account of the results of the national tests. Finally, the Waldorf teachers' opinions of the tests are presented.

Waldorf pupils were more active in different associations

In general, neither the Waldorf pupils nor pupils from the municipal schools were particularly active in different types of associations (Table 12 below). There were, however, a few statistically significant differences: Waldorf pupils were active in political or student union work and also within interest groups to a greater extent. They were also more active when it came to culture, 31% of them participated in such meetings/activities at least once a week compared with 17% of the pupils in municipal schools. With respect to sports associations both groups were equally active: 37-45 % practised a sport at least once a week.

Table 12. Pupils participation in association activities: W = Waldorf pupils, M= pupils in municipal schools. Per cent of respective pupil group and p-value from chi2-test.

Association	Every day		Every week		Every month		Every year		Never		p
	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	K	W	M	
<i>Party political or student union</i>	1	1	6	3	7	4	6	4	80	88	<.01**
<i>Specific interest groups</i>	2	1	5	4	8	4	10	6	75	85	<.01**
<i>Sports association</i>	8	15	29	30	6	4	8	8	49	43	>.05
<i>Culture association</i>	2	2	29	15	6	3	10	6	53	74	<.01**

Waldorf pupils in general enjoyed school more

The comparison showed that Waldorf pupils were happy with their teachers and with the schoolwork to a greater extent than pupils in municipal schools. They were also more satisfied with their school environment. Waldorf pupils thought more carefully about what they ate and less often skipped breakfast at home. If they skipped their school lunch, they nevertheless ate less sweets and hamburgers.

Waldorf pupils had more positive attitudes to their schoolwork

Waldorf pupils agreed to a greater extent than pupils in municipal schools that what they learned at school was useful for the future. They felt to a higher degree that the pace of study and the demands of the school were sufficiently challenging and that they were able to manage their studies. They experienced more often than pupils in municipal schools that the weaker pupils received the support they needed and that the teachers made sure that they learned the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic. These results can be seen in Tables 13 – 16 below.

Table 13. “The things I learn in school will be useful in later life.” Per cent of respective pupil group and p-value from chi2-test.

“The things I learn ...”	Waldorf pupils	Pupils in municipal schools	p
<i>I agree completely</i>	51	40	<.05*
<i>I quite agree</i>	41	50	
<i>I disagree</i>	6	8	
<i>I completely disagree</i>	2	2	

Table 14. “How much do you think your school has considered your abilities?” Per cent of respective pupil group and p-value from chi2-test.

“My school has demanded...”	Waldorf pupils	Pupils in municipal schools	p
<i>Much more than I was capable of</i>	2	6	<.01**
<i>A little more than I was capable of</i>	11	23	
<i>Exactly what I could manage</i>	69	59	
<i>Rather too little from me</i>	15	9	
<i>Far too little from me</i>	3	3	

Table 15. “If you have problems keeping up with the lessons – how does your school deal with this?” Per cent of respective pupil group and p-value from chi2-test.

“If you have problems keeping up with the lessons...”	Waldorf pupils	Pupils in municipal schools	p
You have to manage on your own. The school doesn't seem to care much about pupils with learning difficulties	2	9	<.01**
A few individual pupils get some extra help	12	32	
Many of the pupils with learning difficulties get help from the school	43	42	
The school supports and helps all pupils with learning difficulties	43	17	

Table 16. “How far do the teachers at your school ensure that all pupils can read, write and calculate well enough to manage their lives?” Per cent of respective pupil group and p-value from chi2-test.

“How far do the teachers ...”	Waldorf pupils	Pupils in municipal schools	p
<i>Hardly any teachers care</i>	0.5	3	<.01**
<i>A few individual teachers care</i>	4.5	16	
<i>A lot of the teachers care</i>	23	34	
<i>Most of the teachers care</i>	72	47	

On the other hand Waldorf pupils felt to a lesser extent than pupils in municipal schools that the things they learnt corresponded to their own interests. This however does not seem to have affected their experience of the teaching itself to any great extent. A greater number of Waldorf pupils thought that during the lessons they were able to think and work in their own way and that they had been encouraged to share their knowledge and experiences with each other.

Waldorf pupils worked less with school subjects for the sole purpose of passing tests

Generally both Waldorf pupils and those in municipal schools thought that it was interesting and important to work with the subjects Swedish, English and Mathematics. However, pupils in municipal schools were more inclined to work with the subjects only for a test. In Swedish and English their motivation also to a greater extent was based on the usefulness for future studies, compared to Waldorf pupils, see Table 17 below.

Table 17. Pupils' answers to general attitude questions on Swedish, English and Mathematics. W = Waldorf pupils, M = Pupils in municipal schools. Per cent of respective pupil group and p-value from chi2-test.

Here are some questions on English, Mathematics and Swedish ...	I partly or completely agree		I partly or completely disagree		p
	W	M	W	M	
English is interesting	91	89	9	11	>.05
Mathematics is interesting	64	60	36	40	>.05
Swedish is interesting	84	77	16	23	>.05
I think it is important to be good at English	99	98	1	2	>.05
I think it is important to be good at Mathematics	94	93	6	7	>.05
I think it is important to be good at Swedish	97	94	3	5	>.05
I work with English only to pass the tests	12	24	88	76	<.01**
I work with Mathematics only to pass the tests	31	44	69	56	<.01**
I work with Swedish only to pass the tests	15	33	85	67	<.01**
I will need a knowledge of English in order to manage my further studies	91	92	9	8	<.01**
I will need a knowledge of Mathematics in order to manage my further studies	84	87	16	13	>.05
I will need a knowledge of Swedish in order to manage my further studies	88	92	12	8	<.05*
A knowledge of English is useful because I intend to work with it in the future	83	82	17	18	>.05
A knowledge of Mathematics is useful because I intend to work with it in the future	54	67	46	33	<.01**
A knowledge of Swedish is useful because I intend to work with it in the future	70	77	30	23	<.05*
English is difficult	33	38	67	62	>.05
Mathematics is difficult	48	67	52	33	<.01**
Swedish is difficult	22	35	78	65	<.01**

Waldorf pupils less often thought the subject Swedish was difficult

Waldorf pupils tended also to a lesser extent experience Swedish as a difficult subject and didn't have the same resistance to writing as the pupils in municipal schools (cf. Table 17 above). However, Waldorf pupils experienced to a lesser extent than pupils in municipal schools that the subject Swedish was integrated with other subjects in the school. They also said to a lesser extent that they read literature in school.

The study environment was experienced as calmer and more pleasant in Waldorf schools

In general there seemed to be a calmer and more concentrated working atmosphere during lessons in Waldorf schools, particularly during the Mathematics lessons. Waldorf pupils to a greater extent also experienced a pleasant and positive atmosphere in Swedish and Mathematics, compared to pupils in the municipal schools.

Waldorf pupils expressed greater insecurity over managing concrete tasks

In spite of the Waldorf pupils' generally positive experience of the teaching of the three subjects, they felt less able to manage different concrete tasks or problem situations that were connected to them, such as writing a letter to a newspaper, or understanding a timetable or booking a hotel in English.

Waldorf pupils had a more positive attitude towards Mathematics

Waldorf pupils thought to a lesser extent than pupils in municipal schools that Mathematics was difficult (above, Table 17). They also to a greater extent said that they did not give up when they were given a difficult mathematical problem (below, Table 18). Furthermore, Waldorf pupils more often seem to have discussed together and worked with projects in Mathematics. In English, however, this was more common in municipal schools. This can be seen in Tables 18 and 19 below, the latter also includes the subject Swedish. In Table 19 the response alternatives "Sometimes" and "Seldom" have been deleted for the sake of clarity (therefore the per cent totals are not 100).

Table 18. Specific attitude questions about Mathematics. W = Waldorf pupils M = Pupils in municipal schools Per cent of respective pupil group and p-value from chi2-test

Here are some questions on Mathematics ...	I partly or completely agree		I partly or completely disagree		p
	W	M	W	M	
I usually give up on difficult mathematical problems	21	34	79	66	<.01**
I could have been better at Mathematics if I had tried harder	57	65	43	35	<.01**
I have had to learn a lot in Mathematics that I find unnecessary	33	51	67	49	<.01**

Table 19. Pupils' opinions about the teaching methods in English, Swedish and Mathematics. EN = English, SW = Swedish, MA = Mathematics. W = Waldorf pupils, M = pupils in municipal schools Per cent of respective pupil group and p-value from chi2-test

Think back on the teaching you have had over the last three years. How often have you worked in the ways described here?	Every lesson/Most lessons		Never/Very seldom		p
	W	M	W	M	
EN: The teacher talks and asks questions, individual pupils answer	22	32	2	3	<.05*
SW: The teacher talks and asks questions, individual pupils answer	25	25	1	3	>.05
MA: The teacher talks and asks questions, individual pupils answer	24	22	5	9	>.05
EN: The teacher and the pupils discuss together	16	22	5	6	>.05
SW: The teacher and the pupils discuss together	24	26	2	3	>.05
MA: The teacher and the pupils discuss together	20	12	6	16	<.01**
EN: The pupils work in groups	16	11	3	7	<.01**
SW: The pupils work in groups	5	10	4	7	>.05
MA: The pupils work in groups	12	6	13	36	<.01**
EN: The pupils work individually	40	46	2	1	>.05
SW: The pupils work individually	30	42	1	1	<.05*
MA: The pupils work individually	73	83	0	1	<.01**
EN: The pupils carry out extensive tasks or projects	1	7	25	20	<.01**
SW: The pupils carry out extensive tasks or projects	5	10	5	9	<.05*
MA: The pupils carry out extensive tasks or projects	1	4	38	64	<.01**

Marginal differences in the achievements on national tests in school year 9

Comparisons of the test results for the three subjects Swedish, English and Mathematics and their different part-tests are recorded in Tables 20 – 26 below. In the national test in Swedish there were no differences in the number of pupils who did not achieve a “Pass”. However, those pupils in Waldorf schools with no highly educated parents, in the tables named Group 2 more often achieved higher grades than the corresponding group in the municipal schools (Group 1 consisted of pupils who had at least one parent with higher education qualification). However, the comparatively greater non-response rate among Waldorf pupils in group 2 means the results are uncertain. The larger non-response rate originated both here and in the other tests from those pupils that for various reasons did not take the test. This means that there are test responses from their classmates, unlike from the group “test response missing”, where test responses are missing from the whole class, or even the whole school. The group “did not take the test” probably a certain extent consists of pupils who for various reasons did not wish to participate in the test.

The comparison showed also that the gender differences in the test results in Swedish were not as great in Waldorf schools as in the municipal schools, see Tables 27 – 29. Here the difference in non-response rates was only marginally greater in the Waldorf schools, which makes the result more reliable.

In the part-tests in English that dealt with *oral* and *written* ability respectively, there was no difference in the number of pupils that did not achieve a Pass. In the part that dealt with *receptive* ability there was, however, a group of Waldorf pupils that did not Pass. Also in the tests in English the parents’ level of education seems to mean less for the children’s grades in Waldorf schools than it does in the municipal schools. But a comparatively greater non-response rate among the Waldorf pupils in Group 2 again creates uncertainty in the results.

In the Mathematics test also, the number of Waldorf pupils who did not achieve a Pass was somewhat greater compared to pupils in municipal schools. On the other hand there was a somewhat larger group of Waldorf pupils in Group 2 who achieved the highest grade, compared to the same group in the municipal schools.

Table 20. Test grades achieved on the Swedish test, Section A (reading comprehension). Comparison between Waldorf pupils and pupils in municipal schools. Per cent of each pupil group and school form. 100% = that part of N for which there were test responses.

Grades	Group 1*		Group 2*	
	Waldorf	Municipal	Waldorf	Municipal
<i>Pass</i>	32	36	40	54
<i>Pass with Merit</i>	46	46	40	30
<i>Pass with Distinction</i>	17	15	9	4
<i>Fail</i>	5	3	11	12
Total	100	100	100	100
Did not take the test (% of N)	5	2	10	4
Test response missing (% of N)	9	10	11	11

* Group 1=pupils with at least one parent with higher education; Group 2=pupils with no parent with higher education

Table 21. Test grades achieved on the Swedish test, Section B (oral comprehension). Comparison between Waldorf pupils and pupils in municipal schools. Per cent of each pupil group and school form. 100% = that part of N for which there were test responses.

Grades	Group 1*		Group 2*	
	Waldorf	Municipal	Waldorf	Municipal
<i>Pass</i>	33	31	43	54
<i>Pass with Merit</i>	51	48	44	35
<i>Pass with Distinction</i>	16	20	10	7
<i>Fail</i>	0	1	3	4
Total	100	100	100	100
Did not take the test (% of N)	8	4	17	7
Test response missing (% of N)	9	10	11	11

* Group 1=pupils with at least one parent with higher education; Group 2=pupils with no parent with higher education

Table 22 Test grades achieved on the Swedish test, Section C (writing task). Comparison between Waldorf pupils and pupils in municipal schools. Per cent of each pupil group and school form. 100% = that part of N for which there were test responses.

Grades	Group 1*		Group 2*	
	Waldorf	Municipal	Waldorf	Municipal
<i>Pass</i>	31	38	45	60
<i>Pass with Merit</i>	46	45	41	29
<i>Pass with Distinction</i>	20	15	10	5
<i>Fail</i>	3	2	4	6
Total	100	100	100	100
Did not take the test (% of N)	6	2	12	5
Test response missing (% of N)	9	10	11	11

* Group 1=pupils with at least one parent with higher education; Group 2=pupils with no parent with higher education

Table 23. Test grades achieved on the English test, Section A (Speaking). Comparison between Waldorf pupils and pupils in municipal schools.. Per cent of each pupil group and school form. 100% = that part of N for which there were test responses.

Grades	Group 1*		Group 2*	
	Waldorf	Municipal	Waldorf	Municipal
<i>Pass</i>	33	27	53	49
<i>Pass with Merit</i>	46	47	30	37
<i>Pass with Distinction</i>	19	25	14	10
<i>Fail</i>	2	1	3	4
Total	100	100	100	100
Did not take the test (% of N)	5	4	17	7
Test response missing (% of N)	8	9	12	14

* Group 1=pupils with at least one parent with higher education; Group 2=pupils with no parent with higher education

Table 24. Test grades achieved on the English test, Section B (Receptive understanding). Comparison between Waldorf pupils and pupils in municipal schools.. Per cent of each pupil group and school form. 100% = that part of N for which there were test responses.

Grades	Group 1*		Group 2*	
	Waldorf	Municipal	Waldorf	Municipal
<i>Pass</i>	23	15	33	33
<i>Pass with Merit</i>	46	43	39	43
<i>Pass with Distinction</i>	26	40	15	17
<i>Fail</i>	5	2	13	7
Total	100	100	100	100
Did not take the test (% of N)	4	3	11	6
Test response missing (% of N)	8	9	12	14

* Group 1=pupils with at least one parent with higher education; Group 2=pupils with no parent with higher education

Table 25. Test grades achieved on the English test, Section C (Writing). Comparison between Waldorf pupils and pupils in municipal schools.. Per cent of each pupil group and school form. 100% = that part of N for which there were test responses.

Grades	Group 1*		Group 2*	
	Waldorf	Municipal	Waldorf	Municipal
<i>Pass</i>	41	32	50	52
<i>Pass with Merit</i>	38	44	32	34
<i>Pass with Distinction</i>	18	23	12	8
<i>Fail</i>	2	2	6	6
Total	100	100	100	100
Did not take the test (% of N)	8	3	17	6
Test response missing (% of N)	8	9	12	14

* Group 1=pupils with at least one parent with higher education; Group 2=pupils with no parent with higher education

Table 26. Test grades achieved on the Mathematics text, all sections . Comparison between Waldorf pupils and pupils in municipal schools. Per cent of each pupil group and school form. 100% = that part of N for which there were test responses.

Grades	Group 1*		Group 2*	
	Waldorf	Municipal	Waldorf	Municipal
<i>Pass</i>	40	40	53	61
<i>Pass with Merit</i>	37	39	24	24
<i>Pass with Distinction</i>	18	18	10	6
<i>Fail</i>	5	3	13	9
Total	100	100	100	100
Did not take the test (% of N)	33	43	39	44
Test response missing (% of N)				

* Group 1=pupils with at least one parent with higher education; Group 2= pupils with no parent with higher education

Table 27. Test grades achieved on the Swedish test, Section A (Reading comprehension). Comparison between girls and boys. Per cent of each school form. 100% = that part of N for which there were test responses.

Grades	Waldorf pupils		Municipal pupils	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
<i>Pass</i>	31	38	36	52
<i>Pass with Merit</i>	45	43	44	33
<i>Pass with Distinction</i>	20	10	15	6
<i>Fail</i>	4	9	5	9
Total	100	100	100	100
Did not take the test (%of N)	5	7	3	3

Table 28. Test grades achieved on the Swedish test, Section B (Oral test). Comparison between girls and boys. Per cent of each school form. 100% = that part of N for which there were test responses.

Grades	Waldorf pupils		Municipal pupils	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
<i>Pass</i>	33	38	32	50
<i>Pass with Merit</i>	50	49	47	37
<i>Pass with Distinction</i>	17	11	19	10
<i>Fail</i>	0	2	2	3
Total	100	100	100	100
Did not take the test (% of N)	9	10	5	6

Table 29. Test grades achieved on the Swedish test, Section C (Writing task). Comparison between girls and boys. Per cent of each school form 100% = that part of N for which there were test responses

Grades	Waldorf pupils		Municipal pupils	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
<i>Pass</i>	32	37	39	57
<i>Pass with Merit</i>	45	44	45	31
<i>Pass with Distinction</i>	21	14	14	6
<i>Fail</i>	2	5	2	6
Total	100	100	100	100
Did not take the test (% of N)	6	10	3	4

Waldorf teachers had both positive and negative views about the national tests

Interviews with Waldorf teachers gave concrete insights into their views of teaching and pupils' development. It is impossible to say what they thought in general about the tests. Some teachers thought that the views of knowledge and of the subject that the tests were based on did not agree with the basic principles of Waldorf education and teaching methods. It was also said that the tests could disturb the Waldorf educational process, or that the Waldorf curriculum, if adapted to the tests, would be undermined. Others thought it positive that Waldorf pupils could get a measure of their knowledge comparable to municipal school pupils, and/or that the tests measured things that everyone can relate to regardless of school form. However, a frequently recurring theme was that many pupils felt very nervous or stressed before the test day, indicating that they were not used to this kind of assessment of their learning. In this regard, it is worth quoting one Waldorf teacher who pointed out the following:

Time pressure – and they thought that they were rather silly, the questions. When they looked at a question they thought to themselves: “But these questions are too easy”. And they started looking for difficulties – “it must be more difficult than this”, and so they missed the point. “They surely can’t be asking such completely stupid questions; the answer is there in the text, why would they ask something so silly?” In a way they have been too thorough and made too high demands [on themselves] and thought that nobody could ask something so simple and straightforward. [...] We do not work with tasks with a time limit, finding things and being as fast as possible - we are more reflective in our work. I don’t think they have ever seen this type of test and so they were rather nonplussed.

Thus, the Waldorf pupils may sometimes, through lack of test experience, misunderstand the tests and make them more difficult than they actually are.

The interviews with teachers also painted a picture of the subject integration which characterises Waldorf education and how the teaching both in form and content often differs from that of the municipal schools.

Conclusions

The results show that Waldorf pupils experience their school time and education in the three basic subjects as positive, to a greater extent compared to the pupils in municipal schools. If non-response rates for the time being are ignored and we look only at the differences observed concerning the percentage of pupils who *didn't pass the tests*, then these differences seem to be rather marginal. The greatest differences (of 4 – 6%) are seen in Group 2 in the Mathematics test and in Section 2 of the English test, where many Waldorf pupils failed. On the other hand there are some tendencies that the percentage Waldorf pupils in Group 2 (with no parent who has a higher education qualification) were larger in the higher grades than the corresponding groups of pupils in municipal schools. This was particularly clear with regard to Swedish.

If we, on the other hand, speculate on the effects of the non-response rates (those pupils who did not take the test), it is perhaps reasonable to suppose that the percentage of pupils who did not get a Pass would have been larger in the Waldorf schools, if all pupils had participated. However, the differences would still have been marginal. The conclusion of our comparisons is therefore that the level of knowledge of Waldorf pupils in the three basic subjects in school year 9 is not dramatically different from that of pupils in municipal schools.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that in the test grades Pass and Pass with Merit the difference between the number of girls and boys is less in the Waldorf schools. Boys in Waldorf schools get better test results in general than boys in municipal schools. There seems to be an ever increasing “polarisation” between the sexes in this respect in the municipal school. We can also see that pupils in Group 2 in Waldorf schools do better on the Swedish tests (Tables 20 – 22). The sections of pupils with Pass with Merit or Pass with Distinction are larger in Waldorf schools, and the differences between Group 1 and

Group 2 are less. One might think that the pupils in Group 1, the dominant group in Waldorf schools, help up their fellows, so to speak. However, this is not the case in English and Mathematics.

When making these comparisons one should take into consideration the character of at least some parts of the national tests. As pointed out by some of the interviewed Waldorf teachers, it may be the case that they do not function well as instruments of measurement of the knowledge and skills that are developed by Waldorf pupils. Thus, one wonders how much Waldorf schools can adapt to knowledge measurements based on course plans formulated for municipal schools without undermining the basic principles of Waldorf education. And what happens then to educational freedom and the possibility of creating real educational alternatives? This question also highlights the difficulties in comparing results from qualitatively different educational processes.

Finally, when comparing municipal and Waldorf schools regarding any kind of knowledge acquisition, one should always consider the Waldorf schools' twelve year curriculum. The Swedish National Agency for Education has itself pointed this out in former evaluations (The Swedish National Agency for Education, 1995). Some subject areas are left in the Waldorf schools until school years 10 – 12, but dealt with earlier in the municipal schools. This means that knowledge measurement in the earlier school years can be seriously deceptive for Waldorf schools. Even if the national tests are not supposed to be decisive for the pupils' grades, they have, in reality, a great influence on them. The more common such knowledge tests become in schools, the more it is going to control both the teaching and the awarding of grades. This in turn means a standardisation of all schools and a threat towards genuine educational diversity.⁶

⁶ According to Forsberg and Wallin (2005) the national tests threaten also the municipal school. There is, they hold, "a risk that the teachers and the school staff see it as their task to administer the (control-)system instead of having a value-based relation to the pupils; the staff's professional activity thereby changes into a technocratic attitude" (p. 305; translated from Swedish).

Report 5: Waldorf teacher educators', program coordinators' and teacher students' experiences of the program Certificate of Education with a Waldorf profile

The purpose of the fifth part-study was to examine to what extent the state teacher training program could be designed so that it meets the specific demands that Waldorf schools have on their teachers. The investigation highlighted the relatively new state teacher training at the Stockholm Institute of Education (SIE) called *Certificate of Education with a Waldorf profile*. It was a four-year course and a qualification for teaching in municipal schools as well as Waldorf schools. The course was run in cooperation between SIE and the Rudolf Steiner College (RSC). The survey comprised three group interviews with representatives for RSC (2 – 4 people) and one group interview with representatives for SIE (2 people).⁷ In addition, group interviews were conducted with students at the mentioned Waldorf profile teacher training program (4 people), who were nearing the end of their training, as well as with 22 in-service Waldorf teachers from nine of the schools that were participating in the evaluation project. The latter interviews focussed on the question of what characterises a Waldorf teacher's professional competence.

A common feature of the group interviews with the representatives of RSC and SIE and the teacher students was the description of how the Waldorf teacher training program was a meeting of two “educational cultures”: the “Waldorf style” on the one hand and the “Institute of Education style” on the other. The Waldorf educational culture was characterised in the interviews by calmness, reflection, time for individual maturity, practical-artistic practice and a common pedagogical viewpoint, but also by a risk for dogmatism, one-sided thinking, stagnation and administrative disorder. SIE's pedagogical culture was, according to the interviews, distinguished by order, structure, objectivity (impartiality) and a diversity of pedagogical perspectives, but also by time pressure, a dissociated attitude which could be experienced as lack of interest or unengaging (the down-side of impartiality) and few or no practical-artistic features.

⁷ In January 2008, the Stockholm Institute of Education was assimilated by the Stockholm University and ceased to exist as an independent institution. Half a year later, this university decided to put an end to the Waldorf teacher program, with the motivation that it lacked a scientific basis.

The representatives of RSC were satisfied with the relatively large degree of freedom they had been given to design 130 of the 160 credit points themselves, representing just over 80% of the whole programme. They were also satisfied with being granted their demand for 80% student attendance and that the programme should stretch over four years. They experienced very positive communications with the representatives of SIE. The negative aspect of the cooperation was the constraint of running the course in separate modules, which all must be awarded grades, as well as other administrative routines that took time from the teaching.

The representatives for SIE were also generally satisfied with the cooperation, and positively surprised by the quality and level of ambition they had found in the Waldorf teacher training. But they were also somewhat concerned about the presumed lack of objectivity and scientific grounds for the Waldorf educational methods and also slightly sceptical to what they called the “semi-religious” feature. They thought that all holistic world views risk becoming dogmatic and exclusive of other perspectives. On the other hand they could see the positive aspects in the involvement and enthusiasm that were inspired by the holistic perspective of Waldorf education. They also saw the positive aspects of the esthetical and narrative elements of the teaching methods in Waldorf schools.

The Waldorf trainee teachers felt their course was a generally positive and rewarding experience. The meeting of the two teacher training traditions meant that the essence of Waldorf education became clearer to them than if this had constituted the only, taken for granted frame of reference. They also thought it was important for them to know the educational theories that form the basis of the regular teacher training courses. They felt it made it possible for them to understand and hold discussions with teachers in the municipal schools, which is important if Waldorf schools are not to be islands isolated from the rest of society.

With regard to Waldorf teachers’ specific professional competence, Waldorf teacher educators, Waldorf teacher students and professional Waldorf teachers all emphasised the anthroposophical understanding of the human being and human development as the

cornerstones of Waldorf education. Without insight into this field it was considered difficult to teach in a Waldorf school. One result of Waldorf education putting the human being “in the centre” is that the various school subjects are all seen as tools for supporting each child’s development towards autonomy and integrity. Waldorf teacher students in this context emphasised the central significance of the idea of *metamorphosis*, which one learns gradually to understand during the Waldorf teacher training. It is easy to associate child development with fixed stages of development or levels of mental maturity. In Waldorf schools education begins with the aim set on a future goal: the adult person as a *free individual*. However, this does not mean that the path of development is mapped out in advance for each child. As a Waldorf teacher it is therefore important to be open to those “swayings” which occur for every child between completely different expressions of personality and which can never be foreseen or predetermined. This open and sensitive attitude – which was seen as an aspect of the “artistic attitude” – is practised by the Waldorf teacher students during their training, for instance by means of practical-aesthetic exercises. That *being human* is the focal point in Waldorf schools means that the teacher’s personal development is also an important element both in the teacher training and in the professional work, to which many of the in-service Waldorf teachers testified.

The answer to the question of how the Waldorf teacher training program can fit into the framework of the state teacher training program at the time can, against the background of what came out in the interviews, be formulated in the following way: by giving a considerable amount of freedom for a teacher training programme with a Waldorf profile, the state teacher training programme *can* be given a design which meets the requirements that both the municipal elementary school and the Waldorf school set for their teachers. The relatively wide degrees of freedom are, however, essential for this to work.⁸

Since there are no binding legal rules or regulations establishing and upholding the frames for the Waldorf teacher training programme, the openness and personal goodwill of the representatives for the state teacher training are extremely important. In the long run

⁸ As this is written (December 2008) plans for reforming the state teacher education are out on hearing. The reforms suggested would make it more difficult to adopt a Waldorf teacher education program within the framework of the state teacher education.

however, this is hardly a satisfactory state of affairs for the Waldorf schools and their teacher training, since the frames given is to a large extent dependent on which people have leading positions in the state teacher training programme at any given time. The future Waldorf teacher training's frames and conditions must be settled in more binding legal forms.

Report 6: Waldorf schools' ways of helping children with learning difficulties

The sixth part-study aimed to investigate how Waldorf schools deal with pupils with learning difficulties or functional impairment. The more specific questions were which pupils were thought to have learning difficulties; how did the school meet these difficulties; and what were the problems teachers, pupils and parents experienced in this field.

The design of this study differed from part-studies 1 – 4 in that no data for comparison with municipal schools was readily at hand to be used. Instead a more explorative approach was decided upon. First, one Waldorf school was chosen for a case study. A research assistant participated in the weekly collegiums of teachers at this school and also interviewed some of them concerning their conceptions of learning difficulties: how they were defined or described and how they were understood from a Waldorf education point of view. In particular two so called support teachers were interviewed; that is, teachers with the special task to support individual children with learning difficulties. In addition, observations of lessons were carried out; as well as interviews with five children who were considered to have difficulties in reading, writing or mathematics. The parents of these children were also interviewed. Finally, three more Waldorf schools were contacted. These schools had existed for two decades or more and had developed special ways of working with these problems. Teachers representing these schools were interviewed about their points of view and their ways of working.

Results

According to our experience, Waldorf schools did not differ greatly from municipal schools when deciding which pupils were in need of special support. The portion of

pupils who were seen to have learning difficulties varied between 10 and 30%, which corresponds to the portion in municipal schools. The variation between slight difficulties, such as problems with reading and writing, general anxiety, and serious functional impairment such as mental retardation and autism also corresponds to that in municipal schools.

However, traditional concepts and diagnoses did not seem to be used to a great extent by the Waldorf teachers. Terms like “tired of school” and “ready for school” were sometimes used, which are seldom used in today’s municipal schools. The teachers used mainly individual descriptions of needs and these were related to the anthroposophical views of the human being and child development. There was a clear opinion that learning difficulties are not static. The Waldorf teachers expected that pupils will develop and that difficulties will change with time. There was also a long-term perspective on children’s development.

The pupils interviewed were well aware of their individual difficulties but also of their possibility to learn to cope with them. Sometimes they were also conscious of the possibility of working towards eliminating them altogether. The pupils did not use medical diagnoses or medical concepts regarding their own difficulties. Instead, they talked about them in a concrete manner.

In all the schools contacted there was an organisation from the pre-school and the school start that focussed on pupils in need of special support. The investigation system was set up a little differently in each school. In all schools however, there was a qualified school doctor specially trained in anthroposophical medicine (on top of a regular medical education), a school nurse and one or more support teachers. They formed a decision-making team. The school doctor together with the class teacher had an important role in the planning of support measures. It is important in this context to point out that the creation of a social community in the class is very much emphasised during the first school year.

There were different ways to take care of pupils with difficulties. A pupil could be kept in the pre-school if s/he was considered “not ready for school” and thus benefit from a prolonged stay in pre-school. Then various support measures could be set up such as a personal assistant, smaller groups with support teachers, lesser demands when reporting individual work, and more individual solutions for difficult situations.

The Waldorf teachers considered cooperation with the parents to be of great importance. The pupils did not participate in planning for their support until the age of 11 or 12. Experience showed that if the pupils came to a Waldorf school after school year 5 or 6 it was more difficult to integrate them in the class. They were often lacking in self-confidence, they tended to create more conflicts and had a less compliant attitude to school than the other pupils.

There was among the teachers a clear, common platform based on the anthroposophical view of the human being and the system of knowledge that has developed from it. This is characterised by holistic thinking (the whole person goes to school); belief in the developmental possibilities of *all* human beings, and an awareness that each child has something to contribute to the class. The pupils were not thought of as starting with an individual *teacher* but rather as coming to *the school*. All pupils were therefore the responsibility of the whole school. All this contributed to an atmosphere of security, stability and continuity.

There seemed to be a certain “preventive structure” in Waldorf education, which also gave the foundation for dealing with pupils with learning difficulties. There was a great variety of supportive efforts. They were traditional and oriented to the subjects, for instance supporting groups in particular subjects, or more specific like *curative eurhythmics*, *therapeutic painting*, and the use of *handicraft* or *massage*. The schools had a long-term perspective and emphasised that the pupil should learn to function as a human being, to develop self-esteem, gain knowledge for life and be prepared to deal with real life situations. This broadened and deepened both the goals and the teaching content for the pupils with difficulties. There also seemed to be a relaxed and accepting attitude to the need for special support both among pupils and teachers.

The problems experienced in this field were for the Waldorf teachers rather much the same as for teachers in municipal schools. The way of dealing with the problems however, always lay with the teachers as a group and not with individual teachers. Some pupils moved to curative institutes or went back to a municipal school; however, this was a rather uncommon occurrence.

As for the parents, a variety of views and experiences were expressed in the interviews. The parents were generally positive to the kind and the degree of support that their children got, even though they sometimes did not quite see how a particular curative movement could really be of help. They appreciated the cooperation between the home and the class teacher or the support teacher. They also appreciated the ability of the teachers to create a common positive community feeling in the class, from which no child was excluded. On the other hand they sometimes experienced a lack of communication between the teachers so that things agreed upon were not carried out, or that an advice from an external psychologist was not really followed up. One parent was particularly critical because the teachers would not let her child use a tape recorder during lessons so that he could remember what the teacher had said, especially about home work. This mother still kept her child in the Waldorf school because she nevertheless preferred it to the municipal school, which she had also experienced.

Was there nothing negative?

The results summarised above are on the whole rather positive for the Waldorf schools. One negative aspect found in the investigation was that perhaps a somewhat smaller percentage of Waldorf pupils passed the national tests; another was the partly critical statements of parents to children with learning difficulties. But these things hardly affect the generally positive picture. Was there then nothing seriously negative in the Waldorf schools? Of course, no social organisation is perfect in every way, but *our* questions and instruments of measurement do not seem to have caught hold on any particularly problematic circumstances.

One thing can however be noted, even though it lies outside the questions of this evaluation: a certain lack of administrative order. It was, for example, often difficult to reach the persons responsible for helping us with our investigation, even though the school had agreed to participate. Sometimes a large number of questionnaires “got lost” and had to be printed again. This probably corresponds to certain deficiencies in the management and responsibility structure. A Waldorf school has, for reasons of principle, no head teacher. Instead there is a collegial management that includes everyone who works at the school. However, Rudolf Steiner himself encouraged a search for “republican forms of management”, which would seem to imply positions of temporary leadership and responsibility. The forms of management in Waldorf schools has recently been strongly criticised from within the Waldorf movement itself, in an article by Kaj Skagen (2004). According to Skagen, Waldorf teachers do not take Steiner’s ideas about leadership seriously enough. The absence of a formally responsible leader (Head Teacher) opens the way for informal leadership, intrigues, “nepotism” and internal conflicts. This in turn can lead to difficulties in communication with those parents who say they are dissatisfied with something in the school’s way of working. One then prefers that the “problem” parents remove their children from the school rather than considering their critical views in a constructive way.

The collegial management and democratic rule can also mean that a disproportionate amount of time and energy is spent on issues that in a more hierarchical decision-making system would be much quicker and simpler to resolve. Some of this can be seen in the participating schools’ handling of their participation in the project: it took some of them a very long time to answer our questions and requests.

The question of parental influence is another dilemma for the Waldorf schools. Since the pedagogical principles are so “all-embracing” and firmly anchored in a particular view of the human being and human development, every proposal for educational change must be carefully considered. Parents who choose to put their children in a Waldorf school must therefore be prepared to renounce much of the influence over how their children are taught. On the other hand this is of course unavoidable if the school shall be able to provide a genuine Waldorf education. The parents must however from the first moment

be informed about their limited influence in educational matters, so that there is no misunderstanding on this point at a later date, when it can be difficult to take their child out of the school. In this respect perhaps there are some faults on the part of the Waldorf schools, since they probably for economic reasons – like all schools – want to have as optimal a number of pupils as possible.

The Waldorf educational method puts great emphasis on the individual child's unique character and needs. The idea of individualisation is central, even though at the same time – and this deserves to be emphasised – the main lessons are always built on whole class teaching. We have also noted the comparatively high self-esteem among Waldorf pupils. But this strong emphasis on the individual and on self-confidence can sometimes go too far. In the investigation of the civic-moral competence we noted, for example, a larger proportion of “destructive” and other useless responses from the Waldorf schools. These answers suggest a kind of *singularity*, which could be a result of too strong a focus on the individual. Singularity leads in turn to the inability to compromise and to adapt. This is the negative side of too strong individualisation.

An overall problem is that which the representatives for The Stockholm Institute of Education pointed out (Langmann, Andersson & Dahlin, 2005), namely the closure and dogmatism which can easily follow from a well developed holistic world view, which contain answers to almost all conceivable questions. The advantage of a holistic world view is the inspiration and joy in working that it creates in those who adopt it, something that today's teachers are probably in great need of. But the disadvantage is the risk of sectarianism and dogmatic introversion. Rudolf Steiner was also well aware of this risk and so too are many of the leading personalities in the Anthroposophical Movement today, see for instance Barkved (2005).⁹ However, in our investigation we have not found any specific expression of this latent negative side of the Waldorf schools. All in all our investigation shows that Waldorf schools do well in comparison with municipal schools and when it comes to education for democratic citizenship they even show better results.

⁹ Frodo Barkved is the present leader of the Anthroposophical Society in Norway.

3. The Empirical Results in the Light of the Idea of *Menschenbildung*

In the previous chapter the results from a rather comprehensive investigation of Swedish Waldorf schools were summarised and compared with data from the municipal schools. The investigation showed that Waldorf pupils do not differ greatly from pupils in municipal schools when it comes to the achievement of the central learning goals. However, Waldorf pupils seem to undergo a more positive social development. In this chapter the results of the investigation are related to those aspects of Waldorf education which are based on the idea of *Menschenbildung*, as it was expressed by Johann G Herder, Wilhelm von Humboldt and other German thinkers of the early Romantic period.

Focus on the individual human being

Waldorf education is based on anthroposophy, which literally means human wisdom or wisdom about the human being. Rudolf Steiner (1861 – 1925) was the founder both of the Anthroposophical Society and of Waldorf education. It would take too long here to thoroughly explain the basic ideas in anthroposophy. There is plenty of literature on the subject, see e.g. Nobel (1996) for a detailed account of the relationship between anthroposophy and Waldorf education. The term itself, anthroposophy (from the Greek *antropos* = human and *sofia* = wisdom) points however to the central role that the *understanding of the human being* plays both in anthroposophical thinking and in its different practical activities. This is valid not least for Waldorf education, which was also clearly stated in our interviews with Waldorf teachers and Waldorf teacher educators.¹⁰ Waldorf

¹⁰ In a lecture to the first Waldorf parents in Stuttgart 1919 Steiner said:

Our new teachers also must carry another conviction in their hearts, namely, that from the time children enter school we may teach them only what the essence of humanity dictates. In this sense we want to found a unified school in the truest sense of the word. All we want to know in the growing child is the developing human. We want to learn from the nature of the developing child how children want to develop themselves as human beings, that is, how their nature, their essence should develop to become truly human. (Steiner, 1919a)

education can to some extent be seen as a development of Johann G Herder's (1794) ideas on the *education of the human being*. Herder talked about "Bildung der Menschheit" or "Beförderung der Humanität" and said that the human being is by nature a dynamic *becoming* rather than a static *being*.¹¹ To the pre-requisites for this continuous becoming belong "openness" and "incompleteness", which are the characteristics of humans as biological beings, in contrast to animals. While animals are born more or less "complete" for their species' specific ecological niche, the human being spends the whole of childhood and youth for developing the knowledge and skills necessary to live in the environment and culture in which she has been born. The human is a being who so to speak "creates herself". This idea has played an important role for a few biologists (for instance Portmann, 1998; see also Ehrlich, 2000, pp. 62 – 65) and philosophers, especially existential philosophers like Heidegger and Sartre. The idea is also central for Waldorf education. In developmental psychology it is however rather exceptional to see *the whole human life* as a development process. The main focus is on the development from birth to adulthood.¹² One of the exceptions in this case is Erik Homburger Erikson (1980). Rudolf Steiner's "anthropology" has the same point of departure: the human being is in constant change and development, both as an individual and as a species.

It is sometimes said that the human being is the same today as she was 10 or 20 000 years ago. But this is not true today even in a biological sense, Steiner maintained. It is even less true in a spiritual-psychological sense. Man has undergone many important turning points in his evolution: biological, psychological, and spiritual. For example, according to Steiner the transition from the Renaissance to the New or Modern Age in the 15-1600's brought a very significant change in Western humanity's spiritual and psychological constitution. The cultural and historic importance of this epoch shift is also recognised within the humanities and the social sciences.

The principle to teach that which "the essence of humanity dictates" means that knowledge of the human being is basic to educational science. That is why Steiner's series of lectures about "the general knowledge of man as a basis for education" (Steiner, 1932) is the central text in all Waldorf teacher training programs.

¹¹ The idea of *Bildung* has today been taken up again by some educational philosophers; see for instance Lövlie, Mortensen & Nordenbo (2003).

¹² Recently however, an increased interest in spiritual aspects of adult development has arisen, see for instance Sinnott (1994), Cook-Greuter (2000), and Cartwright (2001).

Children's and young people's development is the focal point of virtually all educational thinking, but seldom the importance of *the teachers'* development is emphasised as strongly as in Waldorf education. One of the Waldorf teachers interviewed in our study was particularly clear on this (see Langmann, Andersson & Dahlin, 2005, p. 64):

I wouldn't have had to work so much with myself [in a municipal school] as I have had to do here [in a Waldorf school]. They have been incredibly tough years in fact, at the same time I feel that I can now harvest a little, start to know... some things are going better, but then other things come along that I need to practise. But as a Waldorf teacher you are so much in focus, you can't make yourself disappear behind exercise books, behind pictures, behind films. So you are forced to stand there – stand up straight and receive them [the pupils] [...] For me it has meant a lot that I cannot change the children, I can try to help them to change, but I cannot change them. *The only person I can change is myself.* (italics here)

Waldorf education actually make huge demands on the teacher. Besides what is stated in this interview quote it also demands enthusiasm and involvement in the subject, so that you can pass on knowledge with feeling and warmth of heart. Pure factual information has, according to Steiner, no point and no affect on the children, if it is not combined with enthusiasm and emotional warmth on the part of the teacher.

In this context it is interesting to consider the thoughts of the German pedagogue Klaus Mollenhauer (1983). According to Mollenhauer, the fact that the teacher him- or herself is in their own development process, constitutes the basis for the legitimate authority of the teacher. The teacher constitute be a positive example for children since there can be no pedagogical action in which the teacher does not tell something about herself and her way of life, wilfully or not. If we develop Mollenhauer's reasoning a little we could say that the teacher represents for the young people humankind's whole existential situation *through her acts, behaviour and way of life*. It is also important that teachers do not allow themselves to be subdued by the "necessities" of circumstances and fall into a life of routine. Teachers should not let a crude "realism" crush their dreams and visions, Mollenhauer maintains. It is only the teacher's continuous work on him- or herself, never stopping in his or her personal development, which gives him/her the right to intervene in *the children's* development, in the way that teaching always involves.

In the education of the human being, in humankind's development into a person or *to him/herself*, Waldorf education consider knowledge not an end in itself, but as a means. This idea was found already in the early Romantic concept of *Bildung*, as expressed by Wilhelm von Humboldt. For Humboldt the purpose of studying History, Greek and Mathematics was not for the students to be "educated" in these subjects but that they should develop their spiritual wealth and realise their human potential. Humboldt writes:

It is the ultimate task of our very existence to achieve as much substance as possible for the concept of humanity in our person, both during the span of our life and beyond it, through the traces we leave by means of our vital activity. This can be fulfilled only by the linking of self to the world to achieve the most general, most animated, and most unrestrained interplay. *This alone is the yardstick by which each branch of human knowledge can be judged.* (2000, p 58-59; italics here)

Humboldt developed these ideas chiefly in relation to university studies. In Waldorf teaching methods however, the idea of the education of *the human being* has an impact even on the early school years. The German educational concept *Bildungsgehalt* also mirrors a basic principle of Waldorf education: every subject has a specific *educational content*. Educational content is the knowledge that can serve as a means for a human being's development of his/her innate (spiritual, psychic and bodily) potential.

In Waldorf education however, it is not only knowledge in an academic sense that serves to educate the human being but also different types of aesthetic and practical activities. These are *especially* important in the early school years, but remain an important feature during the whole school career. Since the child's ability for logical and abstract thinking does not begin to develop until puberty (cf. Piaget, 1978), the teaching before this age has more of a practical-aesthetic character. The cognitively more demanding teaching is left until school years 10, 11 and 12.

Can we see traces of this focus on education of the human being in our empirical data? Does it make a concrete difference compared to the municipal schools? There are a few things that point in this direction:

- More Waldorf pupils experienced that their teacher emphasised the value of the human being

- More Waldorf pupils experienced that weaker pupils got the support they needed from their teachers
- Pupils in need of special support had a constructive attitude to their own possibilities for development
- Waldorf pupils involvement in social and moral questions seemed to increase with age
- In their reasoning about social and moral problems Waldorf pupils were rather more inclined to refer to love, fellow feeling and civil courage, and they trusted less that legislation or police measures could solve such problems
- Waldorf pupils had more tolerant attitudes to deviant groups in society
- Waldorf pupils proposed to a greater extent solutions that involved stopping or limiting Nazi and racist ideologies

A common theme in almost all these points can be said to be the *respect* for and *trust* in the *human value of the individual* that seem to characterise both the teachers and the pupils. As the pupils' involvement in social and moral issues seem to increase with age (instead of being constant or decreasing as does that of the pupils in municipal schools) a picture emerges of teaching where the *human* is central.¹³

In our results the following also emerged:

- Waldorf pupils worked less with the school subjects for the sole purpose of passing tests
- Former Waldorf pupils had a more in-depth study style in higher studies
- Waldorf pupils waited longer before going on to higher education

In these differences we can see a tendency with Waldorf pupils to be more guided from within, which also fits with the idea of *Bildung*. The last point, the fact that Waldorf pupils wait longer before going on to higher education, is interesting to connect to the model for the human being's lifelong development that Lievegoed (1980) presents and which to a large extent is based on anthroposophy. According to Lievegoed the years between 20 and 30 should be used to get to know society and the world from as many angles as

¹³ In the flora of present postmodern and constructivist views, the terms "human" or "human nature" may evoke associations to a bygone "essentialism", as if "human nature" was given by Nature and not a social or cultural "construction", the meaning of which changes dependent on historical time and social space. A thorough treatment of this question would lead too far here. Be it enough to emphasise that "human nature" from an anthroposophical point of view is not a static essence given once and for all. But that does not mean that there can be no general concepts for how "human nature" has developed historically and its general characteristics today. Cf. Kemp (2005), who discusses the difficulties defining Cicero's concept *humanitas*, that is, "human nature" or "humanity".

possible. To try different professions and go on long journeys, and also to spend time on shorter trips and more random studies, are therefore suitable ways to spend these years. (One social consequence of this could be to start up practicing positions in different types of jobs which would be available to young people.) This leads to increased self-awareness and self-knowledge. With such a background of experience it is easier later on to make a conscious choice of what kind of work you will devote your life to.

A probable consequence of the strong emphasis on practical and aesthetic ways of working is that factors such as gender and social background have less importance for how the pupils develop as individuals. Talents and weaknesses in the practical and aesthetic fields are likely to be more evenly distributed between gender and social groups, compared to purely “academic” talents. In practical-aesthetic work such background variables tend therefore to be of less importance. Since Waldorf education emphasises these activities, it probably brings out the purely human qualities in the pupils, that is those qualities that are independent of gender and social background.

In the investigation of the Waldorf schools’ parent group there was also a dominance of “humane” or “humanitarian” opinions and values, that is, values for which the individual human being is central:

- Many Waldorf parents embraced a spiritual or religious philosophy
- Waldorf parents to a large extent founded their social standpoint on fellow feeling and solidarity with the disadvantaged

Waldorf parents’ opinions regarding philosophical questions and social issues were also less dependent on their level of education, than was the case for Swedish people in general. In that respect there was a kind of isomorphism between the parents’ group and the pupil’s group: in both groups external social variables seemed to be less important for opinions, attitudes and values in social and world view questions.

This isomorphic relationship between the parents’ group and the pupils’ group poses the frequently recurring question of the degree to which our results are caused by the Waldorf schools’ *pedagogy* and not by the pupils’ social background and family culture. Perhaps the most reasonable answer is that the schools’ pedagogy strengthens the effects of the

children's home environment, at least with regard to the results that have been shown in our study. The forms and content of the teaching may not be decisive, but neither can they be without significance. One may also ask whether these opinions, attitudes and values would have been equally strong or well developed had the children been spread out on different municipal schools, exposed to more heterogeneous and contradictory influences. Most likely they would not.

Do the pupils become anthroposophists?

Waldorf schools are sometimes criticised for being indoctrinating. It is pointed out that the curriculum is based on anthroposophical principles, which in turn are seen as religious in character. It is therefore considered unavoidable that anthroposophical "religious" ideas characterise both the forms and the contents of the teaching and that the children therefore will more or less subconsciously accept the anthroposophist belief system (cf. Prange, 2000). This problem is too far-reaching to be solved within the frame of this report. It poses the question of how religion shall in fact be defined, a problem that has long occupied researchers both in the human and the social sciences. Latterly however, several thinkers have pointed out the difference between a *religious* and a *spiritual* perspective on life (t ex Bainbridge; 2000; Grosch, 2000; Purpel, 1989). Religion is then characterised as a more or less closed dogmatic belief system; while spirituality is non-dogmatic and open. With these concepts anthroposophy is certainly a spiritual perspective on the world but not a religious belief system.

Here three things are worth noting. Firstly, Waldorf schools do not seem to contribute to any "cultural reproduction", that is, the pupils do not develop into believing anthroposophists. Admittedly we did not research former Waldorf pupils' philosophy of life, but we noted that only an extremely small portion, 1-2%, went on to anthroposophical (professional) training courses. It is possible that a few more have obtained work in anthroposophical organisations, but according to the findings in our first report (Dahlin, Andersson & Langmann, 2003), the majority have applied for all possible types of courses. If the purpose of Waldorf schools is to reproduce faithful anthroposophists, as Prange (2000) have tried to prove, it can be said to have failed quite

miserably. We saw further that only 7% of the Waldorf parents had themselves attended a Waldorf school. This number may in fact rise as the number of Waldorf schools increases in the country, but it seems as though there is a very low degree of cultural reproduction going on at present.¹⁴

Secondly, it should be noted that Steiner himself was well aware of the risk that the Anthroposophical Society could become a kind of sect. Many people within the Anthroposophical Society are aware of this problem. This has to do with the question of school indoctrination in-so-far as a prominent characteristic of sects is the indoctrination of new, young members. Steiner himself saw the tendencies towards sectarianism and he often gave warnings of it. He often pointed out the fact that within the Anthroposophical Society there were strong sectarian impulses and emphasised that it was of the utmost importance to keep away from everything sectarian. It seems to be a human weakness, that in all groups that gather around a charismatic speaker with a spiritual message a sectarian reserve soon springs up towards the surrounding world that does not acknowledge the importance of the speaker or the message. If there were such tendencies within anthroposophy during Steiner's day then they are certainly there today too. However, they may be less common in the Waldorf schools, since they include both teachers and parents who are not anthroposophists.

Thirdly it should also be noted that the Waldorf school curriculum for religious education corresponds to that of the Swedish municipal school in that it aims to convey a factual and all-round portrayal of all world religions and other philosophies of life. Our evaluation results do not contradict this intention.

We cannot completely disregard the possibility that in Waldorf schools there *may* be certain tendencies to "educate anthroposophists". But then can we not equally maintain

¹⁴ Here it is also relevant to add that in Mitchell & Gerwin's (2007) follow up study of former Waldorf pupils in North America, the respondents felt free to search for their own view of life and did not feel that they had been indoctrinated in school. On the other hand, a rather recent German study referred to in Helsper *et. al.* (2007) found that while more than 60% of former Waldorf pupils felt that anthroposophy had nothing to do with their experiences at school, about 16% said they felt a certain pressure from their teachers to accept anthroposophical ideas.

that there are tendencies in the municipal schools to “educate materialists”? The secularised, natural scientific view of the world is obviously, so to speak, the default value for the *background culture* which dominates municipal schools. Terence Copley, professor of Religious Education in Oxford, has suggested the term “secular indoctrination” for this phenomenon (Copley, 2008). And the modern scientific conception of the world is basically materialistic; it does not take into account the possibilities to investigate the spiritual dimension other than in a metaphorical sense, as “culture” or “ideology”. To the extent that children in municipal schools, without reflection, are educated in this outlook on life, are they not also exposed to a kind of indoctrination?

This argument is *not* a criticism of municipal schools. It is rather an argument against those who think that schools can convey some kind of neutral or objective view of life or of the world. There is no “view from nowhere” from whence all philosophies or views of the world can be observed. There is only one fundamental difference between those outlooks where people close themselves up in the belief that they hold the absolute truth and those who are prepared to listen and conduct dialogues with others, who have other views than their own. Anthroposophy and genuine Waldorf education belong undoubtedly to the latter category.

Education for democracy and active citizenship

One of the Swedish schools’ main tasks is to promote the development of pupils into responsible citizens, who take an active part in and help to develop society. The results of the investigation suggest that Waldorf schools to a great extent produce active and responsible citizens with democratic values. This is quite possibly the result of both the Waldorf schools’ special educational methods and the Waldorf pupils’ specific social and cultural background in the form of their parents’ values and social involvement. Which of these two factors plays the greatest role is, as we have already pointed out, very difficult to say, but the educational methods are surely not unimportant.

This result can be contrasted with a common perception among those who have observed something of the teaching in Waldorf schools, namely that the teacher (or the educational

method itself) is “authoritarian”. As an illustration of this it is often stated that children in the first years of school are not allowed to use the black colour when painting, or one gives examples where they must do exactly what the teacher says. Many comments can be made about this perception. Firstly, there is always a *pedagogical* reason as to why the children are told to do things in a certain way. This reason has nothing to do with the teacher but is connected with what is thought to be good for children’s development.

Secondly, in Waldorf education it is considered important that the teachers of younger children are an *authority*. To be an authority is very different from being *authoritarian*. A true authority awakens a *desire* to follow, while an authoritarian person *demand*s obedience. The authoritarian is not open to negotiation. An authority on the other hand is open to reasoning and argument. It goes without saying that a teacher demonstrating the “right way” to conduct a certain activity is not necessarily authoritarian. If the children spontaneously follow the teacher’s example it merely shows that the teacher is an authority for them. The critical point lies in how the teacher responds if the pupils do not “obey”. If she merely demands their obedience and does not meet the children’s protests with a responsive dialogue, *then* she becomes authoritarian. However, to demonstrate how something should be done cannot in itself be seen as authoritarian.

Thirdly, we must note that the principle of the teacher as an authority is not valid for the whole of a child’s school life; it is meant only for the younger children. In this respect Waldorf education agrees with Piaget’s insight, that *receptivity* is as natural for younger children as is spontaneous activity (cf. Ginsburg, 1982). Therefore the teaching of younger children is based on their receptiveness and joy in mimicry.¹⁵ For teenagers however, the teacher must change role and become more of an equal and a friend. This is a change of role that is not always easy to carry out since it requires both self-reflection and flexibility in the teacher’s acting repertoire. The change of the teacher’s role is

¹⁵ In this respect it could be said that Waldorf education builds upon the classical concept of *mimesis*. According to Kemp (2005), this concept has been suppressed or neglected by modern educational thinking, due to fears of indoctrination, manipulation and conformism. However, “mimesis, interpreted as productive imitation, is part of all formation and all education”, Kemp asserts (p 187; translated from Swedish).

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connected to the idea of *metamorphosis*, which is emphasised by Waldorf teacher trainers as central to Waldorf education.

The idea of metamorphosis versus the linear view of child development

During the 1970's, Carl Rogers contributed to a strong disassociation from all authoritarian elements in upbringing and education (Rogers, 1969). In Sweden his ideas were specifically expressed in what was called dialogue pedagogy (Schyl-Bjurman & Strömberg-Lind, 1976). Later, Alice Miller's notion of "black pedagogy" contributed to similar thoughts within education (Miller, 1984). From this kind of reasoning the conclusion is often drawn that everything that *restricts* children's opportunity for expression and action also *impedes their development*. This is probably the reason why being an "authority" is easily confused with being "authoritarian". Since both "the authority" and "the authoritarian" set limits for action their effects are seen as similar and both are experienced as "inhibiting". The concepts of "authority" and "authoritarian" are easily mixed up.

Another implicit idea in such reasoning seems to be a rather *linear* view of the development from child to adult. This suggests that all spontaneous impulses to activity *regardless of at which age they appear* are seen as potential opportunities for development which should be seized upon and encouraged. Of course there are things we must prevent children from doing so that they do not hurt themselves, but in principle as much as possible of their own initiative should be utilised and helped forward. It is only when these impulses could lead to bodily or medical injury that children should be held back. The fact that there may be activities that could lead to *psychological* injury or have other negative effects on their development is often difficult for modern educational thinkers to imagine. Psychological or mental injury is almost only thought to occur through traumatic experiences, which in turn are caused by, among other things, authoritarian ways of upbringing.

In such a linear developmental thinking there is no room for the metamorphosis concept: that the development from child to adult (and also thereafter) goes through various *stages of transformation*. The sequence of development larva – pupa – butterfly is a biological

example of such a metamorphosis, where the pupa stage is a typical *transformation phase*. There is no “mini butterfly” inside the larva or the pupa, the butterfly emerges as something quite new in relation to the larva. In the same way there is no latent fully-developed personality within the child that suddenly appears when it has “matured”. The fact that the child’s soul development is characterised by metamorphoses (that are connected more or less strongly with the bodily development) seems to be an alien idea for much of the practical-pedagogic views of child development, even though it is more or less clearly stated in certain developmental psychology theories, for instance in Piaget’s stages of development.¹⁶ In Waldorf education the concept of metamorphosis is a central theme, both in theory and practice. In metamorphosis the bio-psychological developmental forces are transformed from being active in one area of the bio-psychological organism to being active in another. On the basis of this view it could be unsuitable to support certain impulses at a certain stage, while it could be quite right to support the same impulses at a later stage. According to Waldorf education it is, for example, unsuitable to encourage younger children to see themselves as equal to adults, that is, to expect them to have the same knowledge, experience and psychological maturity as adults. But it is quite right to begin to expect this when they are teenagers (cf. Coleman, 1980).

In the linear developmental view there is a strong tendency to imagine that if we wish adults to have the characteristics or skills A, B and C then it is a good thing to begin to develop these in children as early as possible.¹⁷ We want to form the children into our own ideal and the sooner the better. According to the development psychology of Waldorf education, this is in direct contrast to how a person develops. Regarding the democratic development of society, which in a sense “loosens the bonds” between individuals and stands everyone on their own feet, Steiner argued against the idea that

¹⁶ For a comparison between Piaget’s and Steiner’s view of the developmental stages of children, see Ginsburg (1982).

¹⁷ Recent brain research actually seems to question this idea. Blakemore & Frith (2005) write that “research also suggests that there is no biological necessity to rush and start formal teaching earlier and earlier. Rather, late starts might be reconsidered as perfectly in time with natural brain and cognitive development” (p. 9).

children in schools should also experience this same situation, which society's development had made a necessity for adults:

A good psychologist – someone who understands the soul – would never think that just because we loosen the bonds between adults, we should do that for children as well. [...] If, however, we raise children in a school where democracy and socialism define the organization, *later in life they will most likely be unfit for democracy and socialism.* (1997, p. 193; italics here)

The Swedish educational researcher Rune Romhed (1999) makes an interesting comment in this context when he points out that during the 1950's, when the importance for schools to "educate for democracy" was much less discussed than it is today, the political youth associations had no problems in recruiting members. Today, when schools have class councils, school elections and other events aimed at promoting children's education for democracy, young people have lost interest in politics, at least in party politics. Could this be an example of how schools start activities that really belong to the world of adults too early? Romhed also quotes a school headmaster who said that the school gives too much importance on exercises in *formal* democracy, at the same time as it does not give enough importance to "democratic ways of working and pupils' right to their own language, an individual way of working and a kind of individual search for knowledge" (p. 94), things which according to the headmaster were to do with the teachers' view of the human being and which cannot easily be controlled through rules and regulations. In Wadlorf education it is exactly ones own language and the individual way of working which become progressively important as the child moves along in the school years. This is shown particularly in the work with what is called the "silk book", a notebook in which the pupils write what they have heard the teacher tell, as well as what they have read etc, also with their own drawings and illustrations. On the other hand, this method may sometimes be used too routinely and indiscriminately, so that pupils get bored of it.

The idea of metamorphosis forms the basis for several different elements in the Waldorf curriculum. It is connected, for example, with the strong emphasis on imagination and aesthetic activity. Steiner maintained that a school career that is marked by many vivid aesthetic experiences has a health-promoting effect on the whole of a person's lifetime. He criticised the contemporary educational methods for attaching too much importance

to cognitive functions and merely factual knowledge (that criticism could also be levelled today). If the cognitive forces are over-stimulated during childhood this leads to a kind of mental emptiness in adult life. The reason has to do with the relationship of the head to the rest of the body. The following quote is from a lecture Steiner held in 1918. His words are perhaps even more relevant to the situation today:

Today teachers are given their qualification based on their knowledge. What signals does this send? In fact just one, that one remembers what one has read and can reproduce it. But what should really be more important is the ability of the teacher to form a real relationship with children. In reality the main area of importance should be the pure human factors. I know that one is not seen to be very sensible or to be living in the real world when one makes such demands.

I mention this partly to illustrate life from another side, but also in order to draw attention to something that the human being has always felt deep down in his soul and which, particularly in our time is so difficult to bring to consciousness. It is a force that the soul longs for, a longing which will become all the stronger in the future. We need contact with this force so that we can be constantly renewed and rejuvenated, otherwise we will sink into the physical body's declining life processes and become tired and infirm. If we have access to these forces we will be full of hope and live every new day as if it were the first. – Then we will not need to age prematurely. Today we see relatively young people who are already so old spiritually that they do not live every day as a gift of life, like the way a healthy child meets the day. This demonstrates clear needs that a spiritual culture could fulfil in our time. (Steiner, 2005, pp. 16 – 17; translated from the Swedish edition)

Certainly it can be said that elderly people today are often both healthier and more active than ever before, but Steiner is speaking mainly about the spiritual quality of life. Could it possibly be that the increasing symptoms of depression, listlessness and “burn-out” among today's adults are at least partly connected with a lack of imagination and aesthetic activities in their school years?¹⁸

What then has this to do with educating children to become active and democratic citizens? One of the most interesting results of the investigation into civic-moral competence was the indicated difference in how the interest and involvement in social issues “develops”¹⁹ from school year 9 to the last year of high school (see above, Table 6).

¹⁸ It may be of interest to note that a recent German study found that former Waldorf pupils were less prone to ailments like high blood pressure, diabetes, angina pectoris and “arthrosis”, even when social class was taken into account; see Barz & Randoll (2007). Of course, this may be due also to food habits and other factors not directly related to pedagogy.

¹⁹ “Develops” is put within quotation marks since the comparison is built on cohorts and not on longitudinal data.

Among Waldorf pupils this increased, among pupils in municipal schools it decreased or remained constant. Could it be that the Waldorf educational method of “saving” the cognitive forces during the elementary school years leads to a stronger awakening of these forces during the late teens and therefore to a greater interest and involvement in questions concerning society and the world? Could it also be that the emphasis on aesthetic activities during early childhood lays the foundation for certain “surplus forces” during adulthood? Such forces are obviously needed today, in order for people to involve themselves in social and political issues. Listlessness and depression hardly create active citizens.

The importance of positive self-esteem

There is research into child development that suggests that involvement in social and political issues is often connected with positive self-esteem. Rosenberg (1989) reports on such studies. His investigations suggested that:

People with low self-esteem are less likely to express interest in public affairs, to follow such affairs in the mass media, to possess concrete knowledge of such matters, to discuss them actively and frequently in peer groups, or to be public affairs opinion leaders. (p. 221)

On the basis of his empirical data Rosenberg drew the conclusion that:

[T]hose social conditions and family experiences [...] which operate to destroy the child’s sense of his own worth are at the same time undermining the personality prerequisites of a democratic society. (p. 223)

Or evaluation showed that the Waldorf pupils to a greater extent had both positive self-esteem and were involved in social issues. At the same time they expressed less self-confidence when given concrete tasks related to the subjects of Swedish, English and Mathematics, which may seem paradoxical. We can however, differentiate between self-confidence when faced with specific tasks and a more general self-esteem or self-awareness. These two do not always have to correlate with each other.

Waldorf pupils most certainly acquire their positive self-esteem from the home and from the school. The Waldorf culture’s “pedagogical environment” seems to contribute to a comparatively high degree of self-appreciation, which in turn, according to Rosenberg,

creates the pre-conditions for involvement in social and political questions.²⁰ Our results (in Report 3) showed that as early as school year 9 Waldorf pupils tended to be more active in interest groups and political and cultural associations.

In the investigation into civic-moral competence we also noted a comparatively large portion of “destructive” and other useless responses from the Waldorf schools. These responses can be interpreted as an expression of distrust of, or rebellious attitude to, established societal and political control functions. Such actions can be evaluated in a positive and a negative way. One can think that they show a deficient insight into the fact that a democratic society demands certain follow-ups on how their institutions really function. They can also, as has already been pointed out, show a kind of *singularity*, which can be the result of the Waldorf education’s strong emphasis on individuality. But the responses can also be seen as an expression of a healthy spirit of revolt in young people. Perhaps it is even a healthy (more or less conscious) reaction to the different, more or less subtle, control and monitor technologies that a number of social researchers point out as characteristic of modern society (cf. McKinlay & Starkey, 1998) and of which our investigation would then be a part.

²⁰ Of course, the value and consequences of high self-esteem depends somewhat on the social context: it may also contribute to antisocial and criminal behavior (a Mafia boss probably also has a high regard of himself).

4. Waldorf Schools as Factors of Cultural Power

In this chapter we leave the empirical results of the evaluation and the comparisons between Waldorf and public schools. Instead, we move on to a discussion of the ideas of *social and political philosophy* which are connected to the principles of Waldorf education. One of the purposes of this move is to increase the relevance of this report to Waldorf teacher training. In a compilation and discussion of Rudolf Steiner's statements about teacher education, Johannes Kiersch (2006) finds that these statements can be categorised in four types: 1) those pointing to the necessity of having broad and deep knowledge about human culture and history; 2) those about awareness of and engagement in the social and political issues of the present time; 3) those about having deep insights into human nature and the development from child to adult; and 4) those about cultivating artistic and aesthetic abilities related to teaching as an art. Kiersch further notes that institutions for Waldorf teacher training generally emphasises the third point, whereas the second point about social and political issues, is often completely neglected. It is precisely the social and political issues that will be focused on in this chapter, by relating Steiner's social thinking to present discussions within social and political philosophy.

There are many parallels between Steiner's ideas and the theories and perspectives prevalent in social research today. These issues are relevant not only for Waldorf schools but for the general question of *how to shape politically the relations between the state and the educational system*. By explicating these problems and pointing out existing and relevant theoretical resources it is hoped that a contribution will be made to a bridge between the Waldorf movement on the one side and academic educational thought on the other. The critical arguments in the following sections is therefore not directed towards the public state schools *per se*, but towards the *general conditions* under which both independent and public schools exist today, in Sweden and in other countries, where the conditions are similar.

The emphasis placed by Waldorf education on *Menschenbildung*, rather than on the dissemination of knowledge, is coupled with its view on the relationship between the

individual and society. According to this view a democratic society is characterised by making it possible for each individual to develop his or her own innate potential *and then allowing society to develop in accordance with the abilities and the creativity that is released in this way*. This means that the future development of society is, actually, *unpredictable*. The logical consequence of this idea is that schools are to develop the positive natural abilities of all children, without considering what the state and/or economical agents currently believe that the nation needs.

Schools and civil society

If schools are to be able to work in this way, they must naturally be allowed considerable degrees of freedom. Steiner was fully aware of this. His educational philosophy is thus one component of a broader social philosophical perspective on the development of society, particularly that of Europe. As the Swedish historian of ideas Håkan Lejon (1997) has shown, Steiner's educational principles can be described as a *social philosophy of Menschenbildung*. Steiner claimed that the historical development of society, at the time he was writing after the First World War, had led to a condition in which it was necessary to create three *relatively autonomous* social spheres: the state or judicial sphere, the economic sphere, and the cultural sphere (Steiner, 1985). The fundamental principle for cultural life should be *freedom*, that of the state and judicial system should be *equality*, and that of economy and commerce should be brotherhood or *solidarity*. Schools and education belong to the cultural sphere, and thus a threefold social structure based on these principles will create the conditions required for freedom of education within the educational system. Certain aspects of these social philosophical and political philosophical ideas of Steiner can, as Lejon also points out (*ibid.*, p. 96), be compared with the ideas of Wilhelm von Humboldt. It was Humboldt's opinion that the economical sphere should *support* cultural life (which includes schools and education), and the state-run judicial system should *protect* it, without either *controlling* or *directing* it. Under such conditions the inherent potential of the individual can be optimally realised in freedom and self-determination (Humboldt, 1993).²¹

²¹ As Burrow (1993) remarks, Humboldt is perhaps the first political thinker to point out the risk that citizens become more passive the more the state caters for their needs. Thereby he anticipates that critique of the welfare state which holds that it turns its citizens into clients.

Steiner's idea of a threefold social structure has been adopted in recent years by activists within what is known as the "global civil society".²² Nicanor Perlas (1999) and Jesajah Ben-Aharon (2004) have shown how economic globalisation has led to a *de facto* threefold structure at the global level. This is tied up with the growth of a global civil society that acts as a third power factor, relating to the two others: states and transnational corporations.

The concept of the civil society has also obtained renewed relevance in the social sciences in recent decades, and there is much literature discussing the concept, which has been interpreted in many different ways. A rough generalisation of the various definitions that have been proposed is that those with neoconservative and neoliberal perspectives include everything that does not belong to the state as parts of "civil society". Neoliberalism, in particular, tends to assimilate the civil society into the economic sphere. There is a precedent for this among 18th century economists, who used the concept of civil society to counteract the growing power of the state over the commercial sphere (Whitty, 1997). Socialists and social democrats, in contrast, tend to assimilate civil society to the institutions and structures that are controlled by the state, and this, when extended, becomes in reality *all of society*. There is, however, as Alexander (2001) points out, "a growing recognition of, and interest in, civil society as a sphere that is analytically

Humboldt's ideas about limiting the influence and the commitments of the state can at first glance seem identical to the liberal notion of a "night watch state". It is, however, hard to equate Humboldt's political ideas with such an extreme liberalism. Burrow comments:

[I]t is essential to insist on the difference of Humboldt's political theory [...] from the kind of liberalism whose ideal is (or was) the smoothly running, strictly segregated traffic of a sophisticated motorways system. His ideal of society has in fact more in common with some aspects of socialism. It is an ideal of fellowship in which each individual is both separate yet involved... (1993, p. xlix-l)

It should also be noted that Humboldt did not hold on to the principle of a non-state, completely independent school system forever. He was rather ambivalent in this question; a sign that the governing or the freedom of education always has been a central dilemma for liberalism: how will people become aware of and understand their rights, obligations and possibilities if they do not all first get the same education in these issues?

²² Cf. Kaldor (2003) who maintains that the concept of a global civil society grew out of the dialogue between the peace movement in Western Europe and the dissident movements in Eastern Europe before the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989.

independent of – and to varying degrees empirically differentiated from – not only the state and the market but from other social spheres as well” (p. 19).²³ Ben-Aharon (2004) has shown that this “dawning realisation” is dawning not only among academics: it is being expressed with all the clarity that can be desired by others who have an economic interest in the global market. After the “battle of Seattle” in November 1999, in which WTO negotiations were brought to a halt by demonstrating activists from several different international non-governmental organisations (NGO’s), it appears that the managers of transnational corporations, in particular, have come to the insight that the global network of organisations in civil society has become a third, independent, power factor in world politics.

²³ Alexander (2001) divides the history of conceptions of civil society into three phases: 1) as an umbrella concept including all institutions outside the state; 2) as a condescending term only referring to market capitalism; and 3) as a more differentiated and realistic concept in accordance with the quote above. A civil society concept of the third kind has been proposed by Cohen & Arato (1992), who also associate civil society with the value of freedom. The rights to communicate and associate make civil society a sphere of freedom within which people can collectively discuss common issues and exercise influence on the political and economic spheres.

Cohen & Arato’s normative and political position constitutes a third approach in relation to on the one hand the neoliberal idea of letting “the market” rule as much as possible and on the other the left winged ideologies’ idea of putting as much as possible under state rule. They wish to warrant the autonomy both of the state and the economy but at the same time protect civil society from destructive penetration and instrumentalisation by the ironhand forces of the two other spheres. This idea is almost identical to that of Steiner’s threefold society. Steiner maintained that cultural life is threatened by erosion as long as its needs of protection from economic exploitation and state clientisation is not realised. Cohen & Arato summarises their conception of civil society in three points:

1. Civil society is clearly distinct from both the state and the economy; it has its core in *society*.
2. The central institutions of civil society are social *communication* and voluntary *association*.
3. The institutions of civil society are stabilised on the basis of *rights*, the norms of which demand *democratisation*.

They further maintain that the concept of civil society is needed to capture and describe the character of certain phenomena in (post)modern societies – phenomena that do not belong to the state, nor to the market, but that are central for the understanding of the “crisis of democracy” and how we can work for the improvement of democratic conditions. The most obvious of these phenomena are the so called NGO’s and NPO’s (non-government and non-profit organisations). Independent schools *not run for economic profit* also belong here, especially if founded on a long and world wide tradition, as is the Waldorf school.

This growth of this third power factor, relative to the state and to economic interests, is compatible with Steiner's idea of a threefold social structure. The difference is that the process of differentiation seems to take place more at the global level than at the national level. If we disregard, however, the difference in level, the issue becomes in principle the possibility of creating a balance between *three types of power*: the power of the state, economic power, and cultural power (Normann Waage, 2002).

The means by which the state exercises power are legislation, the judicial system and the system of punishment associated with it. State power is based on the requirements of people for protection and security, or as Zygmunt Bauman expresses it: "Human vulnerability and uncertainty are the foundation of all political power" (2004, p. 85). Economic power has its obvious base in the unavoidable needs of people for the necessities of life. But what is the base of cultural power, the power of civil society?²⁴ This type of power is founded on another type of human need. It is well-known that man cannot live by bread alone: life requires also *meaning and identity*. Culture creates meaning and identity, something that is true of "culture" both in its anthropological and in its aesthetic sense. Meaning and identity are created and maintained both by the various forms of fine art and by "everyday" culture, ideologies and lifestyles. This is a process that occurs both at an individual level and at a collective level.

Manuel Castells and "the power of identity"

Ethnicity and membership of a religious faith have been the strongest forces for creating meaning and identity through human history. The rise of the nation-state depended on these forces, particularly that of ethnicity. It could be said that the cultural sphere has lent its power to the state so that it was possible for the latter to consolidate itself historically (cf. Cassirer, 1961; Quispel, 1999). However, one important aspect of Steiner's idea of the threefold social structure is that the state now must be based solely on a *judicial* basis, and

²⁴ This argument is based on an essential link between culture and civil society. See Cohen & Arato (1992) for a more elaborated argument that the institutions of civil society have their grounds in what the German social philosopher Jürgen Habermas calls the cultural lifeworld. Habermas argues that the institutional core of civil society consists of the non-state and the non-economical voluntary associations that anchor the communicative structures of the public sphere in the lifeworld (see also Kaldor, 2003).

this in turn is fundamentally based on the equality of all humans, independently of race, sex, ethnicity, etc. All are equal, solely in the light of their humanity. The idea of a nation-state founded on ethnicity is now obsolete, and this idea readily becomes destructive (as happened, for example, during the war in the former Yugoslavia). The power of ethnicity to create identity must be returned to the cultural sphere and it must be decoupled from the formation of the state (see further the discussion of Benhabib below).²⁵

Manuel Castells (2004) argues that ethnicity has actually lost much of its significance for the creation of identity in today's "network society". However, the very title of Castells' second volume of his *magnum opus* about the information age suggests that he regards identity in itself as a social power factor. Castells describes the connections between culture, identity and power in ways like the following:

Along with the technological revolution, the transformation of capitalism, and the demise of statism, we have experienced, in the past twenty-five years, the widespread surge of powerful expressions of collective identity that challenge globalization and cosmopolitanism on behalf of cultural singularity and people's control over their own lives and environment. (2004, p- 2)

The quotation above makes it clear that Castells focuses more on *collective* identity than on that of the individual. In this respect he is not in complete accord with the focus placed by Waldorf education on the individual, rather than on a collective identity formation. However, Waldorf education does not disregard the ethnic and cultural context of identity formation. The collective identity is an inescapable part of individual identity.

Castells, further, sees the collective identity as the source of meaning and experience. To be more precise, identity is for Castells "the process of construction of meaning on the basis of a cultural attribute, or a related set of cultural attributes, that is given priority over other sources of meaning" (*ibid.*, p. 6). Thus identity is both itself a construction of meaning and the basis for further constructions of meaning. The construction of social identity always takes place in the context of a power structure. This leads Castells to the distinction between three types of collective identity (*cf. ibid.*, p. 8):

²⁵ It may be of interest to note here that Mitchell and Gerwin (2007), in their follow up study on former Waldorf pupils in North America, found that these to a high extent felt themselves to be world citizens.

- 1) *Legitimising identity*: this is created by socially dominant institutions in order to extend their dominance and to give it a rational basis *vis à vis* the social stakeholders.
- 2) *Resistance identity*: this is created by the groups that are located in subordinate and/or stigmatised positions relative to the dominating institutions and their logic (rationality, ideology).
- 3) *Project identity*: this is created by social stakeholders who redefine their social position, desiring in this way to achieve a transformation of the overall structure of society.

These forms of identity are not static: they can transform one into another. An important point of Castells' reasoning is the process by which something that starts as resistance identity can be transformed through historical development into project identity, and can subsequently become legitimising identity. Each one of the three formations of identity, however, leads to different kinds of social structures. The legitimising identity forms the basis of civil society, while resistance identity gives rise to exclusivist "*communes or communities*" (ibid., p. 9), the principal goal of which is to *preserve* their own tradition or way of life. Finally, project identity gives rise to social movements, associations or federations that aim at comprehensive *changes* of society. They strive for this reason after expansion, to include more and more members.

Castells associates only the legitimising form of identity with civil society since he uses a different concept of civil society than that presented above.²⁶ Castells agrees with the description put forward by Gramsci, in which the institutions of civil society exist in total *continuity* with the apparatus of the state, while *at the same time* having deep roots in the general public (cf. ibid., pp. 8-9). This differs from the concept proposed by Cohen & Arato (1992), who would like to see a critical difference between the institutions of the state and those of civil society. Viewed from Cohen & Arato's perspective, and viewed in

²⁶ However, Castells seems not completely consistent in his use of the concept since he also says that the WTO negotiations in Seattle 1999 were stopped precisely by activists from civil society (ibid., p. 158). Surely such activists must have more of a project, or a resisting, than a legitimising identity.

the light of Steiner's idea of threefoldness, it may be true to say that the legitimising identity is to be regarded as the basis of identity as a *citizen*, and thus to be associated with the state rather than with the civil society.²⁷ In contrast, both project identity and resistance identity are to be seen as bases of – or based on – the civil society. Stoer & Magalhães (2002) also present arguments in the latter direction, when they talk about an “emergent citizenship, founded mainly on cultural factors” (p. 696). It is a characteristic of this new form of citizenship that:

[t]he sovereignty which individuals and groups ceded to the modern social contract is now being reclaimed to the tune of ‘I want my sovereignty back’. In other words, individuals and groups want to decide themselves [...] with regard to how they live, how they educate, how they care for themselves, how they reproduce, etc. (ibid., p. 696)

At the same time, Castells also appears to believe that at least project identity has *previously* in history, particularly before the period of “late modernity”, had its basis in the civil society (cf. ibid., p. 11). He gives the socialist movement as an example of this. But according to Castells, the development of modernity has entailed the gradual disintegration of civil society. It is against this background that he proposes the hypothesis that *project identities in our time principally grow from resistance identities*.

It is interesting to examine this hypothesis in its relationship to the Waldorf school movement. The first question that arises is that of whether the Waldorf movement belongs to the category of “social movements”, as defined by Castells. Castells defines “social movements” as “purposive collective actions whose outcome, in victory as in defeat, transforms the values and institutions of society” (ibid., p. 3). What would a “victory” for the Waldorf movement entail? It is probable that the answer depends on the social context in which the question is posed. “Victory” in Sweden today (and in other countries where the situation is the same) could be the acceptance of an independent Waldorf teacher education as being on parity with that provided by the state, that is, awarding it the status of an academic degree. Waldorf teacher training has this status in

²⁷ This critical difference between state and civil society concerns the social level. On the individual level there is, or ought to be, an underlying continuity in the sense that the state consists of all citizens of age. Steiner's idea of threefoldness implies giving each human being both the right and the possibility to *actively* participate in all three social spheres. Such active participation could be seen as an essential aspect of *Menschenbildung*.

both Norway and Finland. Such a victory for the Swedish Waldorf school movement would also lead to a certain amount of transformation of the Swedish educational system.

If the Waldorf school movement is a social movement, the next question that arises is what types of collective identity characterise it. It is naturally only project identity or resistance identity, or both, that are relevant here. To the extent that the movement is characterised by exclusivist sectarianism, we are dealing with resistance identity, as defined in Castells' terminology. In contrast, to the extent to which the movement aims at a transformation of the organisation of the school system, we are also dealing with a form of project identity. However, the movement historically does seem to have been principally characterised by a resistance identity: it has been sufficient for the movement to preserve Rudolf Steiner's legacy with respect to curriculum and teaching methods, and to fight for the right to operate schools outside of the auspices of the state. The "dominating logic" in Sweden (that is, the policy for independent schools in the Social Democratic Party) has long been such that it has been difficult to develop "resistance" into "project" identity. But the project identity has always been implicitly present as a possibility. It is, however, important to understand that the ultimate goal of the movement is not – or *should not* be – that all schools are to become Waldorf schools. The ultimate goal must rather be, according to Steiner's idea of threefoldness, to create opportunities for free self-administered education and cultural institutions with completely different educational philosophies; educational institutions that form parts of a similarly free and self-administered cultural life.²⁸

²⁸ In a lecture from 1919 Steiner points out that the state certainly did a "good deed" when it liberated schools from the church and put them on their own feet. But we must also be able to empathize with people who hold other world views than our own and give them the same freedom that we want for ourselves:

It is important that we do not become afraid when, for example, Catholic parents demand that their children receive instruction in Catholicism. We don't have to fear that when we stand firmly on our own foundation. Similarly, we don't need to fear the worldview of another if we are enthusiastic and strong in our own. Such attitudes can develop in free spiritual competition, but certainly not through laws. (Steiner, 1997, p. 213)

The state has a long tradition of claiming to represent “the general”. Pierre Bourdieu expresses this by saying that the state has a monopoly on the universal (1992). It is part of the granting of legitimacy to the power of the state that it considers itself to be above vested interests and to work for the general good and for general justice. This also grants legitimacy to the state monopoly on physical violence. But it means that the state will always have problems in acknowledging “the Other” and the strange, anything that deviates from the ideological or cultural hegemony that the state itself participates in maintaining. Acknowledging the equality of the Other would entail relinquishing the claim to represent the *general* interest. This becomes particularly problematical when the state is based on national, ethnic or religious principles. But even to the extent to which it has differing cultural or ideological grounds, the question of its relationship to those groups that deviate or “resist” the prevalent hegemony arises. The state must be decoupled from all cultural and ideological interests in a society that strives to achieve a balance of power between state, culture and economy. *It must genuinely represent the universally human*. Only in this way can it justify its “monopoly on the universal”. “The Folk home” must provide a home for folk in plural, not just for one particular folk.²⁹

The usurpation of cultural power by the economic sphere

The creation of meaning and the creation of identity are fundamentally creative processes that arise from the spiritual nature of humankind. The spiritual is that which is active in the work of the mind or the soul; that is, in thought processes, emotions, dreams and imagination; as well as in our will, wishes and desires. The creative power of the cultural life, however, easily becomes invisible in a secular society, in which a materialistic worldview dominates.³⁰ Culture is often equated with “ideology”, which in turn is seen as some form of “superstructure”, as in Marxism. It then tends to be seen as simply a futile shadow of the *real* world, which is considered to consist of material and economic processes.

²⁹ The expression “the Swedish Folk home” was coined in the late 1920’s by the social democrat and subsequent prime minister of Sweden, Per-Albin Hansson.

³⁰ The concept of secularization is a contested one both within theology and sociology. However, it is evident that the church no longer has the same social and political power as it had for instance in the Middle Ages. That does not mean that people are no longer religious, but religion is often seen as something “private”, which again contributes to making the spiritual reality of human life invisible.

However, the fact is that all social change and development are results of human spiritual creativity. Steiner was of the opinion that this creativity in our time becomes more and more absorbed by the commercial world. Today we see clear examples in the economic sphere of how people consciously strive to exploit the power of the cultural sphere. To be more precise, it is a question of channelling the power present in the creation of meaning and the formation of identity so that this power serves the interests of economic profit. One example of this is advertising, and the emphasis that is placed today on “branding” (cf. Klein, 2000). Another example is the phenomenon of the “experience industry”, which took off during the “new economy” in the middle of the 1990’s, when terms such as “imagineering”, “event manager” and “future magician” were coined. The enormous sums of money invested by companies in advertising and branding are sufficient evidence that culture, in the sense of meaning and identity creation, is a power factor.³¹ Marketing consultants can be found today who propose that business companies should consider themselves to be a form of religious institution. Normann Waage quotes Jesper Kunde, author of the book *Corporate Religion*:

I am using as strong a word as “religion” advisedly. [The word “religion”] is derived from [...] “religare” – the act of binding something together in a common expression. A religion is thus a means of giving a group of people a single set of ideas that points in one clear direction. [...] Only when the ideas and values of the employees are bound up with their skills, and only when it is effectively controlled using a Corporate Religion, is the company geared up to seek the ultimate branding achievement: Brand Religion. (Kunde, quoted in Normann Waage, 2002, p. 97)

Schools and education are regulated and controlled by more or less inhibiting bureaucratic ordinances, curricula, exams, and evaluations. But they are now also beginning to be exploited by the interests of economic profit (independent schools formed as

³¹ The exploitation of cultural power by advertising seems to have started in the USA in the 1920’s. Ewen (1976) writes about this:

In what was viewed as their instinctual search for traditional ideals, people were offered a vision of civilized man which was transvaluated in terms of the pecuniary exigencies of society. Within a society that defined real life in terms of the monotonous insecurities of mass production, advertising attempted to create an alternative organization of life which would serve to channel man’s desires for self, for social success, for leisure away from himself and his works, and toward a commoditized acceptance of “Civilization”. (p. 48)

shareholding companies, and sponsored teaching materials that include advertising). This illustrates how difficult it is for the social power and the creative energy inherent in the processes of meaning and identity creation to function in optimal freedom in the society of today. It makes it impossible for culture to function as a third, challenging and balancing power factor, in relation to the state and economic interests.

The creation of meaning and the formation of identity must be seen as fundamental elements in human culture and education. It could be argued that the ultimate goal of human culture and education is an experience of identity that is based on the universally human, without therefore denying that social, ethnic and other local conditions also influence a person's character and personality. Human culture and education have, when considered in this light, *cosmopolitan* properties (cf. Kemp, 2005), and Waldorf education has an inherent cosmopolitan ideal. This is a logical consequence of making the universally human the basis of the educational process. Such a universal human identity formation is becoming evermore important in order to counterbalance the negative consequences of today's processes of globalisation.

Seyla Benhabib, professor of political science and philosophy at Yale University, regards these negative consequences as very serious for democratic citizenship (Benhabib, 2002). There is a risk that the global free movement of people, goods, news, and information will create a flow of individuals without commitments, a commercial life without obligations, news media without a public conscience and the spread of information without a sense of tact. In this "global.com" civilisation people will shrink to become e-mail addresses, and political and cultural life will be spread throughout the electronic world, while real-world associations will be brief, shifting, and superficial. Citizenship of a democratic society is, despite all imaginations of an internet utopia of global democracy, incompatible with such tendencies. Democratic citizenship requires commitment, commitment requires responsibility and loyalty.

It may very well be the case that responsibility and loyalty only arise in the situation that Benhabib describes on the basis of a genuine feeling of being human, and as a consequence of this a participant in global humanity. However, if the cultural power of

meaning creation is absorbed by economic and/or state political forces, the basis of such a universal human identity formation is undermined – just as much as it is by sectarianism and dogmatic exclusivism, which belong to the negative aspects of the power of culture.

Václav Havel on the “power of the powerless” and “living in the truth”

Four years before the fall of the Berlin Wall, Czechoslovak dissident Václav Havel published a paper entitled *The Power of the Powerless* (Havel, 1985). (The paper, however, had been written directly after the formation of Charter 77.) It is interesting to read this text in the light of the relationship between state power and cultural power, both in the former socialist states and in our present capitalist system. In the preface to the book it is said that the Eastern European socialist states could only function by totally extinguishing the civil society (Keane, 1985). However, it was Havel’s opinion that his ideas, and those of like-minded authors, were valid not only for Eastern Europe, but also as a response to the “global technological civilisation” (cf. Kaldor, 2003). The expression “the power of the powerless” can be understood as a way of capturing the paradoxical nature of cultural power (the power of civil society), since this power lacks all of the instruments that we normally associate with the wielding of power. The fact that the power of the powerless is, for Havel, an issue of culture (in the sense of the creation of identity and meaning) is made clear in several ways. He raises the question, for example, of why it was necessary to exile Solzhenitsyn from the Soviet Union. Havel’s answer is that this was the way in which the political powers sealed

...the dreadful wellspring of truth, a truth which might cause incalculable transformations in social consciousness, which in turn might one day produce political debacles unpredictable in their consequences. (p. 42)

It was necessary to exile Solzhenitsyn because he chose, as Havel expresses it, to “live in the truth”. I understand Havel’s expression “to live in the truth” to mean *refusing to surrender the freedom to express and to live one’s own creation of identity and meaning*. This does not necessarily mean anything high-flown, with claims or ambitions of a “metaphysical” nature: it may be something as innocent as playing a particular taste in music (such as underground rock, a genre that was frowned upon by the authorities in socialist Czechoslovakia). When people claim this freedom through particular actions, in full

consciousness that a necessary condition for this freedom is the concomitant right of others to the same freedom, they constitute a threat to all social systems that require or compel cultural homogeneity and adaptation. Such actions, of course, become more threatening as the extent to which the uniformity is based on a lie that is obvious for all, but which few dare to mention, increases. It is in such a social system that “a life in the truth” acquires not only cultural, but also political dimensions:

[L]iving within the truth has more than a mere existential dimension (returning humanity to its inherent nature), or a noetic dimension (revealing reality as it is), or a moral dimension (setting an example for others). It also has an unambiguous *political* dimension. (ibid., p. 40)

This quotation once again makes it clear how Havel couples a life within the truth with identity – *an existential dimension* – and meaning – *a noetic dimension*; thus, how he couples such a life with what characterises cultural processes. Havel’s argument suggests how cultural processes of identity and meaning creation have potential political consequences, and how they thus constitute examples of a secondary, or “inofficial” but nevertheless *public* life (cf. Benhabib, 2002).

The repression of culture was obvious in the former Soviet states, at least for those who did not share the worldview prescribed by the state. In contrast, the freedom to adopt a faith and to live according to it has long been considered “natural” in the western world. We have, at least, a freedom of thought and a freedom of expression that are protected by the constitution. But – do we also have the freedom to *live* according to our beliefs (as long as these do not impinge upon the freedom of others)? The fall of the Berlin Wall and the “victory of capitalism” opened the gates to a globalisation of the market economy and its neoliberal political principles that faced no resistance.³² A significant reinforcement of the *economic tyranny* that Steiner actually pointed to nearly a hundred years ago (Steiner, 1997, p. 151) took place. How free are we in reality, when we are continually reminded of

³² Zygmunt Bauman comments on the dissolving of the Soviet states:

As long as the enemy was not just another competitor in the same race, but a genuine ‘other’, a carrier of an alternative mode of life, it could induce capitalism to self-limit and self-correct. This is the kind of adversary that is now conspicuously missing. (2004, p. 73)

how important it is to be “employable” in a labour market that threatens to exclude ever-increasing numbers, particularly of the young? How free are the youth of today, who are compelled to an ever-increasing degree to adapt to these conditions? Our freedom seems to consist mainly of the freedom to choose consumer products. We can in the wealthy part of the world feel free to purchase cheap clothes from the other side of the world, but how free is the seamstress in Thailand, who has produced these clothes under inhuman conditions? There are many examples that could be given, but they are unnecessary in this context. The point is: can we really discern the repression under which *we ourselves* are living? Havel’s “life within the truth” remains an important strategy of resistance for the one who can so discern, not least because the purely political battle against this economic repression has nearly died out.

A life within the truth in modern-day Sweden may be that of fighting for a state independent Waldorf teacher training, with the same rights and economic resources as that of the state. An independent teacher training would be an example of a free cultural institution in accordance with the principle of a free cultural life. Steiner actually formulated his idea of a threefold society as a strategy to combat the economic tyranny that he predicted would emerge from the Anglo-Saxon world, powered by the US (Steiner, 1919b). Whereas Asian nations can be seen as representatives at a global level of the tendency to allow both culture and economy to be absorbed by the state, Anglo-Saxon nations tend rather to allow the economic sphere to absorb both the state and the cultural life. Steiner claimed that a third tendency flourished in Europe, particularly in central Europe; namely that of allowing a free cultural life to constitute the basis of both the state and the economic sphere. He believed that it was particularly important to reinforce this tendency and to arrange European social life according to it, in order to create a counterweight to the economic forces that arose – then as now – particularly within the US; economic forces that strive for world dominance, inevitably followed by the erosion of culture and of traditional forms of life (Ben-Aharon, 2004).³³ The idea of

³³ When Bauman shortly after the quote in the previous footnote asks himself if Europe can be or become an alternative to the US world politics based on market economy and answers that this seemed to be a realistic possibility at least for some decades after WWII, he is actually expressing a similar idea about the role of Europe in the global power game:

threefoldness, however, never became reality, and a global market economy dominated by the US is today upon us (cf. Hertz, 2002; Chomsky, 2004).³⁴ These claims must not be taken as an expression of general hostility to the USA. Actually the population of the US itself is affected negatively in some respects by US government policy, just as much as the rest of the world (cf. Bauman, 2004, p. 59f).

Europe set out to work hard, for thirty glorious years, on the great social experiment of mitigating the unacceptable extremes of unbridled capitalism with 'socialism with a human face', while averting the unbearable consequences of the raw and uncouth communist version of social equity with 'capitalism with a human face'. Europe was searching, so to speak, for a 'third way' *avant la lettre*. (p. 73-74)

On the basis of Bauman's analyses one can also maintain that the grounds for Europe's "third way" lie mainly in the sphere of *culture*, not in that of the state or of the economy:

1. The social welfare policy, which has its grounds in the idea of social and political rights (Habermas). This in turn has grown out of Christian humanism (but Bauman does not refer to that in this context).
2. The cultural life of Europe is characterized by a hermeneutic translation praxis, in which different languages and traditions have met and merged (Étienne Balibar).
3. In Europe, values of identity formation have long played an important role. The foremost of these values are rationality, justice and democracy (Tzvetan Todorov). Their common denominator is the idea of an autonomous society (not state), that is, a society with institutions created by the citizens themselves, not by some external or "higher" power.

In his book about the world citizen Peter Kemp also argues that Europe has something important to contribute in the striving for a global human community:

Let us not be ashamed of the belief that we Europeans, in spite of many passed misdeeds, can give our contribution to a genuine world citizen community by showing that Europe has the cultural experience needed to realize a pluralism in unity and defend the individual in the universal (2005, p. 56; translated from Swedish)

³⁴ In his recently published book *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man* (2004) John Perkins makes astonishing revelations about his life as a "secret agent" for the world economic interests of the US. See also Brzezinski (1997) for a non-concealing discussion of what is needed in order for the US to maintain and increase its political and economical world hegemony. Zbigniew Brzezinski, security counselor to President Carter in the 1980's, spoke already 1969 about the USA as the first global society in history (Kemp, 2005, p. 31). It would probably be a mistake to underestimate the influence that Brzezinski's ideas have on political and economic circles in the US, cf. Escobar (2005).

Waldorf education and the fundamental issues of educational thought

Steiner's "social philosophy of *Menschenbildung*" is unique with respect to its ideational content. It is hard to find any system of educational principles that is so "weird" when seen in the light of the dominating characteristics of currently accepted educational, psychological or social perspectives. Steiner himself was of the opinion that Waldorf education could not be compared with other educational theories, since it gives answers to questions that lie outside of the frameworks of conventional educational theories. He was referring to questions about the development of humanity on Earth since the beginning of history, how this development is reflected in our current situation, and the seeds of the future that are derived from it. The questions that lie at the centre of Steiner's texts and lectures on educational theory are those of the deeper development of the mind and the spiritual development of humankind – questions that are seldom if ever considered in conventional educational thought (for some exceptions, see Gidley, 2002 and 2005).

The *form* of Steiner's educational thought, however, is compatible to a certain extent with that of *classical* educational theory, based as it is on ideas involving upbringing and teaching whose development commenced as early as the ancient world. It is particularly interesting to compare the educational philosophy of Aristotle with that of Steiner. Practical pedagogy, that is, the specific forms that upbringing and teaching take, is based for Aristotle on broad and deep philosophical grounds. His starting point is the question of the nature of the human being (cf. Reeve, 2000), a topic traditionally called *philosophical anthropology*. The answer to the question of the nature of the human being provides for Aristotle the basis on which we can understand the "purpose" or "meaning" of human life, and this in turn provides a basis on which to answer the question of what it is that constitutes a good life for people. The question of "the good life" traditionally belongs to the field of *ethics*. Insight into "the good life" provides the basis on which to organise a just society, that is, a society in which all people (although for Aristotle this meant only the "free citizens") obtain the opportunity of living the good life. This question traditionally belongs to the fields of *social* and *political philosophy*. It is only after we have achieved clarity into how a just society should be constituted that we can determine the ways in which upbringing, training and learning are to be designed. This design includes

determining what is to be taught and how it is to be taught, these being more specific questions of practical pedagogy.

Certain similarities appear when we compare Aristotle's reasoning with Steiner's educational ideas. Waldorf education is based, as we have already pointed out, on a well developed view of the human being and of human development (Steiner, 1932). The question of the nature and essence of the human being is central for anthroposophy. The answers to these questions form, together with insight into the development of the child, the basis of the professional skills of a Waldorf teacher. The good life is one in which the innate abilities and skills of all individuals are given the opportunity to develop. Even if we as individuals are gifted in more or less one sided ways, we should always strive to achieve *comprehensive* cultivation of our abilities. One of the consequences of this is a continuous process of *becoming* human. The just society is a society that makes this possible for all people. It was Steiner's argument that a threefold organisation of society with a free cultural life was that which gave people the best opportunities in this respect.³⁵ Only in such a society can schools and education be formed without interference from state and/or economic interests, and schools and education can thus be allowed to rest solely on the universally human.

When we consider the specific, didactic design of Waldorf education, its "what, how, when and why", we conclude that this is always based on insight into the nature of the human being and the development of the child. Ethical concepts of the good life, or political concepts of a just society, play in this case solely a formal role, never a substantive one. It is here that Steiner parts company with his classical predecessors. There is a "logical chain" that forms the basis of Aristotle's theory of education – a chain in which insight into the nature of the human being leads to insight into the good life,

³⁵ The economical sphere must then also be transformed from a capitalist profit economy to an economy of solidarity, in order for the universally human to flower also in this field of life. According to Steiner there is a big mistake in coupling *wages* to *work*, since this inevitably turns human capacities into commodities. As a consequence, the human being herself becomes a commodity. But all human beings have the right to the economic means for fulfilling their basic needs, whether they "work" or not. This idea has also been taken up by some political movements, the ideas of a "citizen salary" or a "basic income for all" being two examples; see for instance Van Parijs (2001).

which in turn leads to insight into the just society, which in turn leads to the design of a specific educational system. It is possible, however, to lose or forget the philosophical-anthropological starting point of this chain before one “arrives” at the educational system. It is possible that religious norms or values, for example, play a role in ethics or in the concept of the good life. These norms or values may not be founded on insight into the nature of humankind, being instead “supplied” by other interests. Both the Catholic and the Protestant Church have exercised such an influence on education in Europe. It is also true that concepts of the just society often arise on the basis of ideologies or political interests, rather than as a consequence of anthropological insight. The striving of the nation state to consolidate itself as “one nation, one folk” and to justify its power structures by, for example, rewriting history in a favourable light or by patriotic upbringing, may serve as examples. Steiner’s educational principles avoid influence from such “external” interests, and the whole of Waldorf education is drawn from the nature of humankind and our development, both in an ontogenetic and in a phylogenetic sense. It is for this reason more correct to say that for Steiner, ethics, social philosophy and educational theory have their roots *directly* in anthropology.

A state independent teacher education?

It is interesting to note that the tendency to base educational theory solely on knowledge about the human being has been strong for a long period within state-run teacher education, both in Sweden and in other Western countries. The psychology of learning and development, and the more philosophical “view of human nature” have often been considered to be the theoretical grounds from which practical educational consequences can be drawn. While it is true that the history and sociology of education, and the “role of the school in society”, have also been studied, these subjects have often been less important for the specific ideas applied to educational practice.

The tendency within state-run educational systems is that the *contents* of the curriculum are determined by the state, while the *forms* of teaching are based mainly on the psychologies of learning and development. In contrast, not only the form *but also the content* is based on the study of human nature in Waldorf education. Furthermore, the Waldorf teacher education includes an extensive component of personal exercises in various forms of

aesthetic activity, as part of the teacher's personal development. This is connected to a certain extent with the fact that teaching is principally regarded as an *art*, not as the technical application of theoretical models.

The state-run teacher training contains several educational theories and perspectives on the ways in which children learn and develop. The psychological theories are not homogenous, based as they are on what are to a certain extent contradictory axioms. Humankind is seldom regarded as a unified whole of spiritual, psychological, and physical functions. If this notion is taken up, it is claimed that humankind can be regarded as such a whole only "in principle". The holistic perspective is not developed into *explicit concepts*: its remains often as a kind of creed. It is, of course, not a disadvantage that teacher training contains a diversity of theoretical perspectives. One's own thoughts and one's own understanding can develop in the meeting and interaction between different points of view. There is, however, at the same time an obvious risk that this leads to a fragmented knowledge of child development, knowledge broken down into small pieces without establishing clear relationships between them. It may also lead to the theories being seen by the teacher students from a relativistic point of view, where they are reduced to different "opinions" that can be accepted or rejected as desired. This leads in turn to the professional skills of the teacher-to-be being undermined or diluted.

We are today, obviously, in a different situation than Aristotle was in his day, with respect to the question of the extent to which educational theory depends on or is coupled to issues of human nature, the good life, and a just society. Our age and our culture are characterised by pluralism, relativism, and post- or late modernism. We cannot hope to achieve agreement or consensus concerning the answers to such fundamental questions. It is true that these questions were contested even in the time of Aristotle, but the conflict then was fought within very small philosophical elites. Today, nearly every individual is involved in it, to some degree. In this situation, we would expect the cultural freedom that Steiner advocated to become evermore important. According to the idea of social threefoldness, with a state-independent school and educational system, it would constitute a citizen's freedom and a citizen's right to be able to found schools and teacher education programmes on different, competing responses to the three fundamental questions of

educational theory concerning the nature of humankind, the good life and a just society – as long as the answers are compatible with human rights, which is the role of the state to maintain. This would also be fully compatible with the processes of individualisation and the development of democratic values that have characterised the history of Western society ever since the Renaissance.

Insight is growing today that all development, both biological development and social development, is better served by diversity than by uniformity. An “alternative” teacher education can enrich the educational system and it can suggest solutions to problems that cannot be solved as readily within at present dominating structures. For example, a report of a recent Swedish school experiment in working without the national time-plan for the various school subjects showed, that the participating head masters and school leaders wanted their teachers to have greater opportunities and greater abilities in getting to know each pupil, and in dealing with “the whole child”, not just the child’s knowledge or abilities in particular subjects (Kristiansson, 2005). Another desire that was expressed was that of having teachers work more independently in autonomous teams. Waldorf teacher education provides major opportunities to solve all of these problems. It gives a holistic view of child development and a broad knowledge base in many subjects, at least up to school year 8. It is based also on the idea of autonomous teaching teams.

The return of *Bildung*

In the introduction to this chapter it was referred to the return of the concept of *Bildung* within the philosophy of education. For example, Gert Biesta (2003) raises the question of the possibility to discuss *Bildung* today, in an age in which we have realised that all measures, values and perspectives are historical, relative, and context dependent. Biesta argues that the concept of *Bildung* was basically a response to the problem of how to deal with the new political situation that arose at the end of the 18th century. This suggests, according to Biesta,

...that any answer to the question of whether there is a future for *Bildung* in a post-modern world, a world in which the idea of a general or universal perspective has itself become a problem [...] will have to be an answer to the question of how to respond to, how to deal with, how to understand this very world. (2003, p. 74)

In his reflection on the history of the concept of *Bildung*, Biesta focuses exclusively on the concept that was based on the Enlightenment, that is, the idea of the individual achieving autonomy through reason. But it is also the case that Romanticism, with its idea of human culture and education, was also a response to the historical situation in which European humankind found itself, just over 200 years ago (cf. Beiser, 2006). Waldorf education, with its anthroposophical principles, answered, in its turn, the question of how to deal with the historical situation in Europe at the end of the First World War, an answer that is also partly based upon the philosophy of the Romantic Age (Mansikka, 2007; Nobel, 1996). There is much in the philosophical and educational ideas of Steiner that is associated with those of Goethe and Schiller. It is therefore interesting to note that the philosophical issues raised in Romanticism retain a bearing and relevance today, not least on the issues that are currently dealt with within post-modern philosophy. Andrew Bowie, professor of philosophy and German language, has written a deep study of the treatment by the early Romantics of subjectivity, aesthetics and knowledge – central topics also in Steiner’s philosophy. In the introduction to this work, Bowie argues that current discussions of these topics are based on a selection of earlier philosophers that is far too narrow:

The history of subjectivity in modern philosophy still current in these debates involves certain thinkers, usually Kant, Hegel and Nietzsche, to the exclusion of others. The ideas of Schelling, Schleiermacher, and the early Romantics, Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis, who are central figures in the present book, rarely appear in a serious form in these debates. However, philosophers like these, for whom aesthetics is a central concern, often advanced arguments as to why reason cannot ground itself in subjectivity that are closely related to contemporary arguments. At the same time, however, they *also* show why it is a mistake for philosophy to relegate subjectivity to being merely a function of something else, such as language, ideology, history, or the unconscious. (Bowie, 2003, p. 8; italics in original)

The final sentence in the quote above is crucial. In contrast to the post-modern tendency to reduce both subjectivity and reason (or cognition) to a function of something more objective (such as language or discourse), Steiner’s philosophy preserves, as did the Romantics, the notions of subjectivity, consciousness and reason as important, albeit *decentred*, epistemological and ontological categories.

Our interviews with Waldorf teacher educators at the Rudolf Steiner College and the Stockholm Institute of Education (Langmann, Andersson & Dahlin, 2005) revealed that the personnel at the Stockholm Institute of Education were sceptical, indeed critical, of what they termed the “semi-religious” aspects of Waldorf education (see above, p. 48). For those active in Waldorf education, this spiritual aspect was to a large extent concerned with the “I” as the active agent in learning, and this led to the question, as one of the interviewees pointed out: “What is an ‘I?’”. How can such a basically spiritual question be handled on “scientific grounds”? Mainstream science does not include any spiritual views. However, as Bowie (2003) maintains:

...forms of self-understanding that do not and could not have scientific status remain vital to one’s ability to make sense of and inhabit one’s own world. To this extent, one can also question theories in the philosophy of mind which aim to provide a definitive account of the structure and nature of self-consciousness. (p. 314)

It is Bowie’s claim that the obvious correlation between the aesthetic and the subjective can lead to a questioning of scientific theories of the “I”, since such theories conceal or neglect those aspects of individual self-consciousness that are central in aesthetic experience. In Steiner’s ideas of philosophical anthropology and the theory of knowledge, however, these experiences are not treated in a reductionist way. Thus, there are serious reasons for claiming that Steiner’s philosophy remains relevant today. The Oxford scholar Andrew Welburn has recently (2004) highlighted several themes within Steiner’s thinking that can be related to current issues within social and human science. The Waldorf education, with its philosophical basis and its principles of *Menschenbildung*, can thus be seen as *one* pertinent answer to the question of how to cope with today’s social and global situation.

One of the foreground figures of postmodernism, Jean-François Lyotard, has declared that today all “grand narratives” have lost their legitimacy and supporting power (Lyotard, 1984). All claims to explain the world and history based on a holistic perspective are met with mistrust and scepticism. However, large fractions of humankind still actually believe in their traditional narratives. Anthroposophy is also a kind of grand narrative. A cultural life that is based on freedom and relative autonomy implies that people who bear within

them different grand narratives must live together and *acknowledge* each other – and this is also true, of course, of those who doubt all such narratives.

In spite of all talk about the value of pluralism and multiculturalism there is in the world today a strong tendency towards uniform ways of living, connected to the spread of a global market economy. A traditional culture is not just a more or less old fashioned way of life; it is also a way of cultivating specific forms of thought, perception and apprehension of life. There are different “cultures of perception” in the world, as Sawa (2004) calls them. Waldorf education is one such particular culture of perception, cultivating specific forms of thinking, understanding and experiencing the education of human beings, as well as the world in general. Such non-mainstream cultures today need active protection and support from the state and the economical sphere – unless we want to end up in a virtually totalitarian world system, a worldwide “monoculture of the mind”, as Vandana Shiva (1993) calls the scientific-technocratic world conception, spreading from the West. In such a world, the potentials for cultivating humanity would be severely reduced.

PostScript to the second, revised edition

There are three reasons for publishing a second and revised edition of this evaluation report. The first is the discovery of mistakes on my part as author. The second is that there were many minor mistakes in the translation of the Swedish text. The third is the appearance of massive but mostly ill-founded critical views of the report, published mainly on the internet by rather aggressive enemies to anthroposophy and Waldorf education.

In this revised edition I have, apart from correcting my mistakes and improving the English translation, added some information about how the evaluation study was carried out, in order to meet some of the criticisms. I have also added some new references of relevance to the empirical results and to the theoretical arguments.

As for the critical views of the evaluation, one point that is often raised is the funding of the study by a foundation which itself is claimed to have an interest in the promotion of Waldorf schools. But if people in the civil society are criticized for pursuing their interests, in particular in areas where the state seems completely uninterested, what happens to freedom and democracy? The foundation supporting the evaluation would certainly have been happy if the National Agency for Education spent some money on the evaluation of Waldorf schools, but this has not been done to any sufficient extent.

Another critical point raised is that the project group consisted of people with sympathies to anthroposophy and Waldorf education. However, there is a big difference between being sympathetic to the basic *ideas* of Waldorf education, and to how these ideas are realized *in practice*. The project group had no interest in hiding unpleasant facts and we have even gone beyond the frames of the questions we set out to investigate in order to point out things which are or may be problematic with the Waldorf schools. Finally, but most important, the critics have completely disregarded the fact stated in the acknowledgements, that the project was monitored by two professors of education with absolutely no vested interests in Waldorf education. In addition, the draft of the final

report was reviewed by a third professor of education and discussed at a research seminar, as is the common procedure before publishing research findings.

This is not to say that our evaluation is perfect in all respects. There are many things which could have been done in a better way. For instance, the sample of former Waldorf students could have covered a wider range of ages, so that more people with a completed higher education degree would have been included. We could also have asked how many of the former Waldorf students had felt a pressure from their teachers to accept anthroposophical ideas; or how many of them felt they had to upgrade their knowledge after having finished school, due to their teachers' lack of subject knowledge. Answers to these questions could have been of some interest. However, at the end of any research project one always discovers new questions. The evaluation of Waldorf education is not completed with this study and we welcome further serious empirical studies of this interesting and long-standing tradition of "alternative" pedagogy.

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The Waldorf School – Cultivating Humanity?

This report is a summary of an extensive evaluation of Waldorf schools in Sweden, carried out between 2003 and 2005. The evaluation dealt with several questions, such as former Waldorf pupils in higher education, the civic-moral competences developed by Waldorf pupils, how Waldorf schools care for children with learning problems, and questions concerning Waldorf teacher training. In addition, the results are related to the idea of cultivating humanity inherent in Waldorf education, as well as to issues of social and political philosophy discussed today, for instance the notion of a (global) civil society.

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