

# America's Gold Rush: Can It Be Redeemed?

Dorit Winter

*Based on talks given June 25 and 26, 1999 in Toronto, Canada at the annual teachers' conference of the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America*

Dear Colleagues,

I live in an apartment overlooking San Francisco Bay and am most fortunate in having what the real estate agents refer to as a "Killer View." In other words, it is an endlessly revivifying panorama.

Angel Island, beautiful in its symmetry, green and unspoilt, sits in the Bay half-way toward the opposite shore where Berkeley is just visible over the island's shoulder. Further to the south you can see Alcatraz Island, derelict and barren, and the Bay Bridge, and Oakland on the other side of the Bay. Ferries, cargo ships and sailboats criss-cross the waters. In the distance, toward the east, the summit of Mt. Diablo peeks up over the low horizon of the East Bay hills. To the north, behind a ridge, Mt. Tamalpais rises up between the Bay and the Pacific. For the Ohlone Indians, who lived in this paradise of abundant game and fertile lands, Mt. Tam formed the gentle pole and Mt. Diablo the fierce pole of a great sacred circle. Now as then, fog, mist, wind, water and sunlight continually merge and remerge in an endless kaleidoscope of elemental beauty. And at the gate, the Golden Gate to this great bay, the elements swirl most intensely.

The Golden Gate Bridge, that magnificently engineered, world-renowned tourist destination was named for the gap it spans. It is the gap itself, a narrow channel through the delicate arms of land embracing the bay, that is the Golden Gate. A sign along the Mann Headlands overlooking the gap from the north, attempts an explanation:

Discovered in 1579 by Sir Francis Drake, it was known as the Golden Gate long before the name gained new popularity during the gold rush of 1849.

But this does not actually explain the name and I have found no better explanation than my own, gained through first-hand observation from my window: twice a day, at dawn and at dusk, a swath of golden light is broadcast through the narrow aperture of the gap, and the cliffs and waters of the Gate then shimmer and sparkle with golden light. The swath of light emanating westward from the rising sun and eastward from the setting sun appears to radiate most perpendicularly through the north-south axis of the Gate around the time of the equinox.

One might think that with such daily and cosmic illumination, the gate into one of the world's great sheltered bays would have been obvious to any ship sailing up or down the coast. But, on the contrary, the Bay remained a secret undiscovered by the white man for 230 years after his first recorded coastal voyage, which took place in 1542. At that time, Spanish ships regularly plied the California coast on their way from Mexico to the Philippines. Yet not until 1772 was the gap sighted. And then not from the sea, but from the Oakland hills, reached by Spaniards on an exploratory overland expedition. Another three years passed before the first ship entered the Bay through the gap, in 1775. The name "Golden Gate" was first used by Captain Frémont of the US Topographical Engineers in 1846, almost three quarters of a century later. "Golden Gate," according to Frémont, served as a suitably impressive echo of "Golden Horn."

Why had it taken so long for the tranquil harbors, the abundant fish, fowl and deer, the peaceful Indians, the extraordinary timber, fresh waters and fertile lands to be discovered?

Was it only because the rocky coast, and the very narrowness and placement of the aperture obscured its existence? Or because islands in the Bay itself blocked off the view to the distant hills in the east? Or because the evidence of fresh water from the northern delta of the Bay was masked by the salt water tides? Or because of the widespread fog and mist? These are the prevailing conjectures, but again, I would like to offer a different explanation. Simply stated, the Bay did not want to be discovered. Let me try to explain.

Nature in the Bay Area is a very powerful presence. At its most extreme, it quakes the earth. But there is other, less dramatic testimony, even apart from the weather with its continual swirl of sea, air, and light.

In the environs of the Bay Area, particularly in Mann County just north of the Gate, great areas of land have managed to preserve themselves. The Mann Headlands, Mt. Tamalpais, the Muir Woods, all these are, in spite of their astronomical real estate value, undeveloped. I do not in the least want to detract from the human achievement, the foresight, money and endless political campaigns which were, and are, waged on behalf of these preserves, but it seems to me that nature, the very elementals themselves, provided the means necessary for preservation of this land.

Anyone who has been at Yosemite knows that in spite of the millions of annual tourists, the elemental essence of Nature is still there. Yosemite is not in the Bay Area, but this quality of nature preserved, and the related awareness of the force of nature, is very much a hallmark of life in the greater San Francisco area. San Franciscans are proudly protective of Nature, even as they learn to live with its threat. Nature signifies in the Bay Area.

And here, in an area of powerful natural forces hidden for 230 years from the hungry eyes of explorers, and still (and let's keep our fingers crossed) preserved from the greedy fingers of developers, two other notable phenomena of vital interest to the Waldorf community also exist.

The first is the plethora of Waldorf schools themselves, seven- and-counting in the larger Bay Area between Santa Cruz and Santa Rosa. It is a relatively small area studded by a relatively large number of relatively stable Waldorf Schools. The second is Silicon Valley. Might there be a connection between these two disparate phenomena, and might this connection be related to the elemental character of the Bay Area?

The Peninsula Waldorf School, located as it is in the heart of Silicon Valley, is certainly at the crux of this challenging juncture, but the other schools in the larger Bay Area also exist in the cross-currents of these contrasting and adjacent cultures, as, in reality, does every Waldorf school everywhere. For Silicon Valley, though it has become a place name, also conjures up one of the most powerful phenomena of social change known to recorded history: the creation of cyberspace and the ensuing technological revolution. Silicon Valley is fueling this revolution, and since its defining characteristic is its world-wide reach, Silicon Valley represents a culture without borders, spinning its irrevocable web around the culture of everything, including that of our own world-wide movement of Waldorf Schools. There is more than a grain of truth in the saying that as goes Silicon Valley, so goes California; as goes California, so goes the United States; as goes the United States, so goes the world. We in San Francisco are on the cutting edge. Our situation anticipates yours. Thus it is that I hope I may be forgiven for focusing on what is happening in my home town.

An explanation for the location of Silicon Valley in the once beautiful Santa Clara Valley can be gleaned from Rudolf Steiner's stunning summation: "In technology, the forces of nature are active in their lifeless

form.”<sup>1</sup> Silicon Valley has planted itself in an area where, as we have seen, the forces of nature are powerful. It has usurped these forces, compressed them in the silicon chip. But around the Bay, Waldorf has, I believe, harnessed the forces of nature in a very different way, to benefit from them indirectly. I have no doubt that the proverbial liberalism and openness of the San Franciscans result from their continual awareness of nature’s very real power. People in the Bay Area are always ever so slightly “out of themselves” in a kind of subliminal anticipation of the earth’s trembling, and this edginess gives the place its edge, as it were. San Francisco did, and does, attract seekers.

The search for gold in California, undertaken first by the Spanish from Mexico, then by the Mountain Men from the east, and now by engineers from all over, has a fourth dimension: the “New Age” striving for spirit revelation. People are still coming to the Bay Area looking for gold. Some find it in technology and get rich, but many, and I am speaking from ten years of experience with the public who find their way into the San Francisco Waldorf Teacher Training, are looking for a spiritual path. Most of those entering the teacher training have already tried other paths, including the rampant materialism of Silicon Valley.

Before continuing, I want to make sure you understand that this is not going to be a diatribe against technology. To that end, let me tell you a little about my own tech-conversion. In 1996, because of the large number of refugees from Silicon Valley seeking spiritual enlightenment in the San Francisco Waldorf Teacher Training, I felt I needed to do some research on the subject of technology. The resulting article was published the following year in the *Golden Blade*, England’s journal for anthroposophy, under the title, “Karma and the Internet.”<sup>2</sup>

I wrote, or should I say, processed “Karma and the Internet” using Word Perfect 5.1 on my primitive laptop, a 386SX with 1 megabyte RAM. Within a year of writing the article, I was technologically up to snuff with a 17 inch monitor and a powerful desktop, and a few months after that, in other words, last November, the San Francisco Waldorf Teacher Training published its splendid web-site. At least one of this fall’s incoming students found us first through [www.sfwteachertraining.com](http://www.sfwteachertraining.com), and over 150 inquiries have been sent electronically in the past few months.

Furthermore, as I prepared my history of art main lesson last fall, for the 9th graders of the San Francisco Waldorf High School, there was many a late night when I found the internet to be a nifty place for research. You can find anything on the information highway, and that includes the entire Sistine Chapel in magnificent detail. In fact, depending on the quality of your printer, you can have a perfect print, superior in quality to what you could find in most books, in hand, in mere seconds. You can get exquisite prints of the Sistine Chapel or the Sistine Madonna, download and print any self-portrait of Van Gogh or Rembrandt, and research just about any facet of the life of any artist. Then too, in preparing the summer session literature class (which I interrupted to come here) I wallowed in Shakespeare on the web. Did I want four particular sonnets on a page? Nothing could be easier than to choose them, reformat them, and print them. Voila! You can find anything on the Internet including all of Shakespeare’s sonnets. And what’s more, there is a kind of thrill, a certain rush, about having all that material at one’s finger tips. I use the internet, I have email, and the teacher training has a web site. No, let it not be said that I am a Luddite.

Nor, for that matter, was Rudolf Steiner. From early childhood he was fascinated by technology. The nib of the fountain pen interested him more than the words his father asked him to write. And as the son of a railway employee, he learned early about the telegraph and the steam engines. No, he did not eschew the technology of his day, and, as I learned in the course of writing the Internet article, he anticipated our technology and its radical impact with startling precision.

“Man,” said Rudolf Steiner, in 1914, “...will chain a second being to his heels. Accompanied by this second being, he will feel the urge to think materialistic thoughts, to think not through his own being, but

through the second being who is his companion.”<sup>3</sup> It is, you must agree, a devastatingly accurate picture, right down to the PC, the “personal companion” being described.

But I also discovered that

It would be the worst possible mistake to say that we should resist what technology has brought into modern life .... The real remedy is... to make the forces of the soul strong so that they can stand up to modern life. A courageous approach to modern life is necessitated by world karma, and that is why true spiritual science possesses the characteristic of requiring an effort of the soul, a really hard effort.<sup>4</sup>

‘What could be clearer than this antidote for SV (that’s Silicon Valley, not Spring Valley) syndrome? A really hard effort of soul is necessary. But there’s a catch. SV syndrome is insidious. It leeches the soul. The more technology we use, the less we want to use it less.

Just recently I came across an even more telling description of where we are now at, and I could not help but be stunned.

Yes look at all we’ve achieved! Wireless applications carry our thoughts, applications encircling the entire earth, about which previous epochs could not even have dreamed. But what have we gained thereby? We send the most trivial, most empty thoughts from one place to another; we have harnessed the highest powers of human intelligence, so that we can use all kinds of perfected appliances to transport food from one part of the globe to another, and we have harnessed the power of our intelligence so that we can quickly, very quickly, circle the globe, but we have nothing in our heads that is worth sending from one place to another. For thoughts that we carry about are cheerless, and in truth, they have become even more cheerless ever since we began to carry them in our present conveyances instead of carrying them in the old snail paced conveyances.<sup>5</sup>

Doesn’t this sound as if it could be part of a recent editorial lamenting the “trivial and empty thoughts” we send from one place in cyberspace to another? In fact, it is Rudolf Steiner in 1911, speaking about a very far distant future, a future our present technology is merely forecasting. And once again, the very choice of words, as in “snail” mail, makes you wonder. I am at pains to point out Rudolf Steiner’s perspicacity on the subject of technology, because the complaint is sometimes heard that we anthroposophists are behind the times and should “get with it.” Well, it does seem that Rudolf Steiner, at least, was not just with it, but ahead of it.

It seems to me that we in the Waldorf community, or even more sweepingly, I might say, we in the anthroposophical community, are so keen to get with it, that we are in grave danger of losing ourselves in the process. And the sad part of this is that while we are scrambling to earn our tech-qualifications, plastering the internet with our web-sites, littering each other’s e-mail boxes with e-list documents, flooding our institutions and each other with word-processed paper, there are others out there with the very best of technological credentials, already warning, in all earnestness, of the computer’s potentially dehumanizing powers, especially in education, and who are looking to us to stand firm as bastions of human intelligence in a world increasingly dominated by RAM.

One of these is Clifford Stoll. His was one of the first books I read, when I started my inquiries. He is the author of *Silicon Snake Oil: Second Thoughts on the Information Highway*.<sup>6</sup> As I read his book, it quickly became apparent to me that here was someone begging to become acquainted with Waldorf education. I noticed from the book jacket blurb that he lived in Oakland. To make a long story short, I got in touch with him. Clifford Stoll, as I learned upon meeting him, has two little children. He already knew about

Waldorf, but not very much, and whereas I wanted to talk to him about technology, he wanted to talk to me about education. Thus it was that we met several times, and his wife, a physician, enrolled for one semester in the teacher training. Clifford has himself been attacked as a Luddite by the tech establishment, but he is, in fact, a techie of the highest order. His first book, *The Cuckoo's Egg*, describes how he tracked and caught a German spy ring hacking its way through the internet. Stoll lectures world wide on the limitations of technology, especially in education; he has his own spot on MSNBC; he writes op-ed articles that get published in the NY Times, has appeared on the Jim Lehrer "Newshour," and has just published another book specifically on the use of the computer in education. It is called *High Tech Heretic - Why Computers Don't Belong in the Classroom and Other Reflections by a Computer Contrarian*) and here are several excerpts from a prepublication manuscript:

Yes, I'm critical of computing, but I'm not down on technology. Computers don't bother me - hey, I've programmed them since the mid '60's. Rather, it's the culture that enshrines computers that gives me the heebiejeebies. I worry about a naive credulity in the empty promises of the cult of computing. I'm saddened by a blind faith that technology will deliver a cornucopia of futuristic goodies without extracting payment in kind.

What's lost when we adopt new technologies? Who's marginalized? What valuable things get trampled?

Many of my comments deal with computers in education. I shrug when businesses blow fortunes on dubiously useful computer systems, but I'm furious to watch our schools sold down the river of technology. Throngs of educators, lemming-like, line up to wire their schools. Parents grin as they plunk down credit cards to buy electronic machines for their children, anticipating their kids getting a jumpstart or a quickfix. Meanwhile English teachers must deal with the cry for computer literacy, while coping with semiliterate students itching to play with computers who can't read a book.<sup>7</sup>

This is certainly a man after our own Waldorf heart. And, by now he has, indeed, enrolled his children in the East Bay Waldorf School. But the reason I mention all this is that he has made it plain to me, that if Waldorf begins to go mainstream, becomes, in other words, too wired, he may have to look elsewhere for his children's education.

Let me mention another Bay Area personage on the cutting edge of the cutting edge of technology. She is Moira Gunn, columnist for the San Jose *Mercury News*, a Silicon Valley newspaper, and host of her own radio show called, "Technation; Americans and Technology." Here is what she writes in a June editorial:

Millions of American office workers now use a personal computer, and they are reporting an unprecedented incidence of health-related problems. While the federal government has worked hard to bring all our schools online, we have begun to fear for how the World Wide Web may be adversely affecting our teenagers. Hightrading Internet stocks presume a high-flying wired economy, and yet, is it also possible that we have an unseen underclass of 'technology have-nots' who are destined to a future of menial jobs? If they have any jobs at all?

Here is a computer engineer with impeccable credentials, someone who makes a living from being as technologically with it as you can be, pierced by the horrifying recognition that nothing less than the center is in danger of annihilation. The center, that is, of the human being. The center between the "high-flying wired economy" and the "underclass of... menial jobs." The middle is being obliterated, the middle class, the middle man, the middle of man, the soul. Going.. . going... gone are the tradesmen,

artisans and craftsmen; increasingly, the vocational and service industries consist of push-buttons; the bakers, mechanics, and toll collectors... even the pilots are being replaced by machines. Artists have always been peripheral, that has been their strength, but now they too are being marginalized out of existence. Medicine has become highly mechanized. “Bed-side manner” as I discovered in May, when my father spent his last three weeks in a hospital, is an anachronism. In every sphere, the “choice mentality” which equates creativity with choice is insidiously persuasive. Gene technology, which atomizes, splices and synthesizes to create gene-tech food, gene-tech medicine, gene-tech animals, and gene-tech humans, also encourages an atmosphere in which synthetic thoughts prevail, and we begin to confuse synthetic research with the real thing. This is part of the binary revolution. Digital used to mean “by hand,” and earning one’s living by the toil of one’s hands used to be honorable. But factories now consist of machines run by machines, and we have digital wars, digital research, digital art, all of which use point and click methods and mock the soul. While the humanities atrophy in conventional school systems, and the arts are already more dead than alive, we lose the center between the nerdy geeks and the brazen jocks, a center, without which the tragedy of Littleton, Colorado, will spread. While Clifford Stoll and Moira Gunn decry the loss of the human heart, we, who have the most rock-solid reasons for understanding its central importance, are ourselves in danger of getting swept up in the powerful attraction exerted by technology.

Our own Waldorf and anthroposophical institutions, no less than others, are in danger of losing their core. Our anthroposophical presses repackage already existing volumes, hoping that a better sounding title will sell more books. Slick presentation is all the rage. Books that have already been translated, get re-translated into politically correct but inaccurate renderings. Reading Rudolf Steiner in German is difficult enough; reading him in a good translation is challenging; but reading a politically correct translation is downright repellent. It obscures rather than clarifies, casually trading “I” with “we,” or “he” with “they,” as if it didn’t matter whether a pronoun were singular or plural. Meanwhile, dozens of Rudolf Steiner’s lectures from the early teen years of the century, lectures in which he delves into the depths of esoteric Christianity, have still not been translated. We want people to find us but put a thicket of thorny texts in their hands, while denying those of us who have already found Rudolf Steiner’s work access to the development of its core.

And that core is what people are looking for. Certainly people entering the teacher training are looking for it. They arrive with spiritual thirst, spiritual hunger. “Living nourishment,” is a phrase Rudolf Steiner uses to describe anthroposophy. In 1911, in one of those untranslated lectures, he says,

Theosophical truths... serve humanity as living nourishment, like bread, like air. If the human being, humanity itself, is not to suffocate, if it is to fulfill its mission, this nourishment must be brought, and brought now, because it is so extremely necessary. That is the reason for anthroposophical study...<sup>8</sup>

This “study” is the “really hard effort of soul,” the strengthening of soul, which Rudolf Steiner refers to as the necessary answer to that world karma which now brings us modern life and technology. We cannot hide. We should not hide. We do not hide. But we are pressed to compromise the hard work of soul, to compromise and flatten ourselves, pressed as we are by economic necessities. It is not computers in the classroom which threaten us, because that is a danger of which we seem to be conscious. It is rather the increasing dominance of technology over human intercourse in our own institutions, which is, understandably, reaching alarming thresholds. I think you know the story: Waldorf offices where computers seem to take on a life of their own, requiring ever more people and machines to service them in the name of time management; word processors that let loose floods of redundant paper throughout our schools and institutions in the name of organization and information; voice mail answering machines in our offices in the name of personnel management; our own confusion about information vs. process in the preparation of our classes, in preparation for our meeting with the children. I certainly speak from my

own experience when I say that these conveniences sap our life forces even as they supply us with expertise. State of the art technology can be a great help, but it is addictive. And more and better technology in our schools seems not to have solved the Waldorf teacher's endemic lack of time. Please don't get me wrong. I'm not saying, "Let's not use the technology" I'm just reminding us to heed the very questions raised by computer maven, Clifford Stoll:

"What's lost when we adopt new technologies? Who's marginalized? What valuable things get trampled?"

For the more we lose our anthroposophically derived sensitivity-the sensitivity which is either the antidote for, or (and this is the sinister part) the victim of technology-the more we lose that sensitivity for what really happens when we meet face to face, the more we are in danger of losing confidence in the human being at the center of education. We are endlessly focused on impressing the world and the more we try the less we succeed because the world is looking for our essence, the fruits, one might say, of that hard labor of soul, and not for a technologically mainstream persuasion.

Let's face it, we all live in the here and now. We cannot help it. We are "with it" just by being alive. No matter how healthy our lives, we will pollute ourselves merely by drawing breath. No matter how conscious we want to be, we are bound to fall prey to the relentless pressures of marketing appeal. No matter how much we want to deal with individuals, we succumb, with the best of intentions to the awesome powers of homogenization. Waldorf cannot but compromise itself because it does not live in a hermetically sealed bubble.

Sometimes I think that the reasons for our wanting to be so conventionally with it come from a very understandable fear of seeming to be uncool. There have been students in the teacher training who have rebelled outright at the idea that a Waldorf teacher has a certain look. Not for them the Birkenstock sandals and purple, silk skirts [with apologies to Virginia Sease, sitting in the audience and wearing a purple silk skirt]. But the funny thing about that is that other people seem to have discovered the comfort of Birkenstock sandals and not only have they become cool, with it, and in, you can now find them in any catalogue, in any department store. They have been cloned all over. Forget about packaging. People are looking for Truth. And the truth is that Birkenstock sandals are comfortable.

I remember when I was in high school, the most uncool people imaginable were my teachers. Remember, I was a student in the Rudolf Steiner High School in New York City. And who were those teachers? They were the very pantheon of Waldorf teachers in America. One of them is in the audience today [reference to Henry Barnes]. These uncool people obviously had a lasting influence on me, and if I try now, to articulate what it was they gave me, I would unhesitatingly say, "Truth." Whether they were talking about Romantic poetry, as did Mrs. Barnes; or Babylonian history, as did Mr. Barnes; or projective geometry, as did Mr. Pratt; or physics, as did Mr. Franceschelli; whether they were demonstrating book binding, as did Mrs. Froehlich; or painting as did Mrs. Ege; or woodcarving, as did Mr. Zay; or eurythmy, as did Mrs. Van Ordt; they were showing us a bit of the universal truth. To our teenage way of seeing things, they were a motley lot. After I became a teacher at that very school, I saw that they really were a motley lot, that they were as individual as individual could be, and that harmony did not always reign. It was easier, I think, to be an individual back then. It was, after all, the 60's, even for people in their 50's

Now, a generation later, we may well be headed for a new hippie movement. I see it in the Waldorf high school students I teach. They are not looking for flower power, or digital power, or even power for the people. I think they are looking for human power. One of the most venerable of Berkeley institutions, Mo's Books, runs a commercial on local radio and its punch line is: "Where humans, not computers, serve you." Well, I think that our Waldorf schools can boast that too. My teachers were certainly humans, with all the accompanying flaws and foibles, and in the 38 or so years since I was a high school student,

the truth, that deep and nourishing truth, hasn't changed all that much. The heart and soul of Waldorf is still the heart and soul of the human being teaching, and that heart and soul is not nourished by websites or bio-tech carrots, but by "hard work of soul."

I once had a flute teacher, whose flute teacher was the student of a famous flute teacher. I was the 4th generation of this flute method, going back to the master, Marcel Moyse. Any serious flutist recognizes this as a credential. In our own Waldorf movement, we are strangely reluctant to notice the direct influence of the masters, those teachers born in the teens and 20's of the century, many of whom still had ties, directly or indirectly, to Rudolf Steiner. I would suggest to Steve [reference to Steve Sagarin, conference participant who had just announced his book], who is researching the history of Waldorf education in North America, that he consider investigating the difference between schools which have teachers with a connection back to that first generation of master teachers, and those that don't. It would be interesting to note whether there are differences in the schools, and what those might be. I am well aware that such a suggestion smacks of a sort of backward looking attitude, and that I may be accused of a self-serving theory. That is why I mentioned Marcel Moyse. That I had a teacher whose teacher studied with him is simply a fact. It would also help if I practiced more. I think you get my point, which is not that you are not a good teacher if you cannot trace your Waldorf credentials back to that group of Olympians, as I call them.

Those teachers are now mostly in their 80's, some are in their 90's, some have died. They were born in a different era. Today we have very few teachers born immediately after them, in the 1930's and 1940's. There is a hiatus. My book *Because of Yolande* deals in part with this interval, which was, I believe, caused by the incarnating difficulties faced by those born during and just following the Second World War. Now a new generation is coming in. People born in the 1960's and 1970's. These people are satisfied by nothing less than the very heart of anthroposophy, the nourishing truth.

When I look at teachers in our schools now, I don't see the kind of people I just mentioned by name. You might argue that I was only a teenager when I encountered them, that I was a student, who, by definition, at least archetypally, respects her teachers (though I was, in actuality, quite jaded by 5 previous schools on 3 continents). But later, a mere decade or so later, many of these people were my colleagues.

What they stood for was first and foremost, anthroposophy, and of course they didn't always agree about the details. But there was no mistaking their anthroposophical integrity. It was a time before the notion of political correctness had cloaked us, and they were forthright. These teachers stood in front of us, teenagers in the early 60's, with a whole world behind them, and we saw that world. They exemplified the "full humanness" which Rudolf Steiner refers to at the very beginning of one of the lectures suggested as reading for this conference: "The strength modern humanity requires if it is to go forward in its full humanness can only come from the spiritual world."<sup>9</sup>

It seems to me that ascertaining and asserting our "full humanness" is our real task, today more than ever, and that the particular challenge for us Waldorf teachers, for us who are students in the School of Michael, is to find our authority as teachers in ourselves.

In the aforementioned lecture, the first in the cycle entitled *Education as a Social Problem*, the three phases of development known as imitation, authority and love are considered in relation to a sentence which concerns us deeply at this time and in this place: "Look toward America, the climax of the mechanization of the human spirit!"<sup>10</sup>

Well, that is certainly what we are up against now. And my point, allow me to repeat it, is that we are not immune just because we are aware.

Imitation, authority and love, these are archetypal phases. I have observed them in the teacher trainees. First, imitation. The incoming students, many of whom have been on a long and difficult odyssey toward a vaguely perceived goal, are overwhelmed with an experience I have often heard described as a “homecoming.” Along with their joy, there comes awe, a kind of feasting for the longing soul, and the tendency to be enthusiastic without the capacity, still being born, to penetrate the science of the spirit. Then comes a second phase, not without travail, for it usually requires some inner shifting, of being able to think the anthroposophical thoughts independently, on one’s own authority, as it were. And finally, and sometimes this takes a few decades to happen, the relationship to Anthroposophia out of selflessness, out of love. Who in the Waldorf profession has not been taxed to the limit by this one? For this capacity lies in the future of human development. Now, in the time of the ascendant consciousness soul which is both our teacher and our goal, the second phase, authority, should, it seems to me, be our immediate aspiration.

What I mean is that all of us must now become not just spokesmen for, but representatives of, the “difficult work of soul” which alone can create the bulwark against the mechanization of which Silicon Valley is the capital.

Already there exists a massive movement of rebellion against technology, led in good measure by those in the know, and it would be absurd, not to say tragic, if we get distracted from what our true task is, namely, the study of anthroposophy, which is the Truth. This is a difficult proposition for people, that anthroposophy is Truth. “If we strive honestly for Truth, it will become the victorious impulse in the world.”<sup>11</sup> That is the “victorious spirit,” as it were, that we know from the verse, “Victorious spirit, flame through the impotence of irresolute souls ....” That is the Michaelic impulse informing all of us here today.

In the 1960’s, my own personal teachers were still in direct contact with the 1920’s, the time when Rudolf Steiner lived; many of their teachers knew him. I think they were able, because of who they were and when they lived, to imitate him, to receive something of the living quality of his soul and spirit. Please understand that I don’t in any way mean to detract from their achievements. I am trying to point to a historical, developmental aspect of our movement, which must now develop its own authority in relation to the school of Michael. We must develop our individual relation to that authority. Only then will we become authorities in that School, the one for which humanity is thirsting.

So many of the problems our schools face, problems which take up such endless amounts of time in spite of our gleaming technological assistants, distracting us from the needs of the children and our studies, result from a kind of inadvertent appearance of amateurism, even dilettantism. It is we ourselves who unintentionally promote this perception, failing as we do to stand firmly, and that does not mean inflexibly, but rather it means, authoritatively, upon our convictions. I am not talking about commitment, or even courage, but about knowledge, which must be the source of our authority.

Authority is the exact opposite of the “choice mentality” broadcast by technology. Authority requires a conscious self capable of the spiritual activity necessary to sustain spiritual scientific truths.

In the summer of 1923, Rudolf Steiner alluded to the difficulty of the smallness of the anthroposophical movement. He called the anthroposophists “ein kleines Häuflein,” literally, “a little heap,” meaning a little handful, and he said that this little handful of anthroposophists will not march ahead, setting examples, “until such time... as Anthroposophy is taken as a living being, wandering about invisibly in our midst, and for which we feel responsible .... And,” he added admonishingly, “the little handful of anthroposophists should be marching ahead setting examples.”<sup>12</sup> We are still a little handful, but if we are to “feel responsible” for anthroposophy, we shall have to do so out of our own authority.

The parents in our schools, the children in our classrooms, the students in our teacher trainings look to our certainty of purpose, and it can only come from inner certainty, from individual research, from study of spiritual science, from “hard work of the soul.” There we will find nourishment for ourselves, and for those we seek to serve. Such nourishment is unavailable on the Information Highway. Our highway boasts no fast foods. On the contrary, ours is a painstaking path, but the path itself, our own process of self-development, is the goal, and thus every step is progress, and not just for ourselves. For let us remember that the nourishment which spiritual scientific truth bestows, sustains not just us, not just humanity, but the entire cosmos. It is a grand picture. And I would like to end with another rather grand view.

We know that imitation, authority and love are related to truth, beauty and goodness. That is the foundation of our work in the three phases of pre-school, elementary school, and high school.<sup>13</sup> In *The Riddle of the Human Being*, Rudolf Steiner relates the acquisition of the capacities for truth, beauty and goodness to successive phases of planetary evolution. It would take us too far afield for me to develop this now, but I could sum it up like this: it takes four planetary stages of earth evolution for human beings to develop one of these capacities. And truth, which was seeded as a capacity during the Sun phase, will not have ripened until the Jupiter phase. All that belongs to the aesthetic sphere will culminate during the Venus phase. And goodness will finally have purified the “I” only during the Vulcan phase.<sup>14</sup>

Our education, which traffics in truth, beauty and goodness, is sowing seeds of indescribable importance.

There is no such thing as “anthroposophical education.” There is only our striving as anthroposophists to become educators in the truest sense. As we find in ourselves the requisite authority, we shall, I have no doubt, be ready to provide insight into the true content of education, as process, as art, as activity in the teacher igniting activity in the student through truth, beauty and goodness. The public dialogue in the aftermath of Littleton, Colorado, so bereft of any reference to education, shows us that Waldorf, though still small, has at its core, the goods. More and more, we will find that more and more people turn to us for answers.

For 233 years sailors missed the Golden Gate. We now have another narrow aperture, a chink in time, during which we can still find the Gate, travel along the swath of gold which, being spiritual, is always there for us, if we would but become inwardly active as anthroposophical students and teachers.

Let me end with one last quotation from Rudolf Steiner. It is, I believe, where our future lies:

The time is coming when human beings will, for one reason or another, feel depressed and miserable. Increasingly the time will come, when there is less and less meaning and value in what one human being can offer another by way of help, because the force of individuality, of individual life, will count for more and more, while the power of one person to work helpfully upon the soul of another, which held good in the past, will tend constantly to diminish. In its stead, the great Counsellor will appear in etheric form.<sup>15</sup>

Dorit Winter is the Founder and Director of the San Francisco Waldorf Teacher Training of Rudolf Steiner College. She started her Waldorf career in 1973. She is a flutist and painter. Her most recent publications include “Glimmers of Truth,” in *Golden Blade* 2000, and “Sheets of White Light,” a collection of short stories published by Rudolf Steiner College Press.

Notes

---

<sup>1</sup> Steiner, Rudolf(1991). October 20, 1923 Lecture in *Man as Symphony of the Creative Word*. Sussex, England: Rudolf Steiner Press.

---

<sup>2</sup> Winter, Dorit (1997). “Karma and the Internet.” *The Golden Blade*, No. 49.

<sup>3</sup> Steiner, Rudolf (1914). November 20, 1914 Lecture in *The Balance in the World and Man: Lucifer and Ahriman*.

<sup>4</sup> Steiner, Rudolf (1914). December 28, 1914 Lecture *Art as Seen in the Light of Mystery Wisdom*.

<sup>5</sup> Rudolf Steiner (1998). December 3, 1911, Nuremberg Lecture “Faith, Hope, Love” Part II quoted in *Love and Its Meaning in the World*. Trans. D. Winter. Hudson, NY: Anthroposophic Press.

<sup>6</sup> Stoll, Clifford (1995). *Silicon Snake Oil: Second Thoughts on the Information Highway*. NY: Doubleday.

<sup>7</sup> Stoll, Clifford (1999). *High Tech Heretic: Why Computers Don’t Belong in Classrooms and Other Reflections by a Computer Contrarian*. NY: Doubleday.

<sup>8</sup> Steiner, Rudolf (1911). June 14, 1911 Vienna Lecture *Die Mission der Neuen Geistesoffenbarung; Das Christus-Ereignis als Mittelpunktsgeschehen der Erdenevolution*. (GA 127)

<sup>9</sup> Rudolf Steiner (1969). August 9, 1919 Lecture *Education as a Social Problem*. Spring Valley, NY: Anthroposophic Press.

<sup>10</sup> Rudolf Steiner Ibid, p. 10. The entire paragraph reads: “Look toward America, the climax of the mechanization of the human spirit! Look toward the European East, toward Russia, the wild and frightful impulses and instincts that run riot there—the animalization of the body. In the middle, in Europe, the sleepiness (Ed. Note: or vegetablization in some translations) of the soul.”

<sup>11</sup> Rudolf Steiner (1911) Op cit. June 5, 1911 Copenhagen Lecture. (GA 127)

<sup>12</sup> van Emmichoven, Zeylmans (1995). *Who Was Ita Wegman?* Spring Valley, NY: Mercury Press. (p. 149)

<sup>13</sup> Steiner, Rudolf (1980). *Waldorf Education for Adolescence*, Chapter 8. Forest Row, Sussex, England: Steiner Fellowship Publications. (GA 302) Also by R. Steiner (1966). *Study of Man*, Chapter 9. London: Rudolf Steiner Press. (GA 293) [In Study of Man, Steiner reverses the order presented here, speaking of morality, beauty and truth, in that order.]

<sup>14</sup> Rudolf Steiner (1990). July 29-September 3 Lectures *The Riddle of Humanity: the Spiritual Background of Human History*. Sussex, England: Rudolf Steiner Press. (GA 170). [See especially chapters 4 and 5].

<sup>15</sup> Rudolf Steiner (1998). Op cit. “Faith, Love, Hope,” Part I. Trans. D. Winter.