

# Adult Education In The Light Of Anthroposophy

## Cultivating Intuitive Consciousness, Practicing Ethical Individualism

by Michael Howard

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Since the 1960s many anthroposophical adult education institutions have arisen throughout the world. Often they arose out of the need to train Waldorf teachers, but today they represent a primary avenue by which newcomers first meet and take up anthroposophy. Given all the destiny-changing influence these institutions have facilitated, we might ponder where the anthroposophical movement would be without them. Nonetheless, for all that can be credited to these adult education institutions, their activity does raise questions and concerns.

What is the relationship of the anthroposophical adult education institutions to the Anthroposophical Society? Is the work of these adult institutions the same or different than that of the Anthroposophical Society?

It is a fact that these adult institutions were founded and, to this day, remain formally independent of the Anthroposophical Society. And yet, the carrying faculties of these institutions clearly see themselves as doing nothing other than serving the anthroposophical and Waldorf movements.

Are there good reasons for making it possible for so many people to meet anthroposophy independent of the Anthroposophical Society? Are the reasons conscious and tied to views expressed by Rudolf Steiner? Or did this just happen for ambiguous and circumstantial reasons?

One might say it doesn't matter whether people meet and take up anthroposophy in the Society or in one of the adult education institutions; the important thing is that people meet anthroposophy in any way that attracts rather than repels them. However, there are two reasons that suggest that it does matter:

1. The one has to do with our understanding of the Society as the life body of the Being of Anthropo-Sophia and how that life body and Being are affected by so many people meeting anthroposophy through institutions not formally aligned with the Society.
2. The second lies in the fact that these adult institutions have a different form from that of the Society.

Virtually all anthroposophical adult education institutions have adopted a form which could be called the Waldorf College model. The merits of this form of adult education are easily seen:

- A college is a form of adult learning familiar to students, parents, friends and, for that matter, faculty.
- It offers a common-sense way to organize a diversity of activities.

Most impressive, is the way it weaves together two apparently disparate aims. It offers adults a concentrated equivalent to a Waldorf education (which in most cases they did not have as children). At the same time, in assuming the cloak of conventional academia and, especially when offering degrees, it allows anthroposophy to be validated in the eyes of the world. The term Waldorf College model of adult education suggests itself from this combining of Waldorf education for adult in a college format.

These merits can be so persuasive that it is easy to overlook or ignore any inadequacies of the Waldorf College model. A critique of the Waldorf College model of adult education is, by itself, not particularly fruitful. Comparing it with quite another model, which is based on the School of Spiritual Science, can perhaps lead to creative insights.

Can we think of the activities of the Anthroposophical Society and the School of Spiritual Science as a form of adult education? Perhaps we have never thought of it this way before, but just for this reason, the following questions may lead to new perspectives:

- What is adult education if it has the form of the School of Spiritual Science?
- What is the School of Spiritual Science if it is a form of adult education?

The first question invites those engaged in adult education to consider incorporating within adult education some of the elements of the School of Spiritual Science insofar as they serve the needs of contemporary adult development. The second invites those active within the Society (often the same people) to reconsider the way the Society and School are meeting the needs of contemporary adults.

The thoughts developed in this essay begin with the assumption that the anthroposophical adult education institutions and the Anthroposophical Society share the same purpose:

to be an association of people whose will it is to nurture the life of the soul, both in the individual and in human society, on the basis of a true knowledge of the spiritual world.

Statute 1, Constitution of the General Anthroposophical Society

### **The Study of Anthroposophy and Anthroposophical Study: The Development of Freedom, Intuitive Consciousness and Ethical Individualism**

The study of anthroposophy is the obvious work taken up in both the Society and the adult institutions. Or is it anthroposophical study that is their common task? The difference between the study of anthroposophy and anthroposophical study leads us to a deeper understanding of nurturing the life of the soul.

Humans remain in an incomplete state if they do not take in hand the transformative substance within themselves through their own power. Nature makes human beings merely natural creatures; society makes them law-abiding actors; but only they can make themselves into free beings.

Rudolf Steiner, Chapter 9, *Intuitive Thinking as a Spiritual Path*

The study of anthroposophy is to be understood as a first step towards taking in hand the transformative substance within ourselves through our own power, which can lead to making ourselves free beings. The activities of both the Society and the adult institutions introduce the content of knowledge that can inspire and guide individuals to take up a self-transformative process. But, on many occasions, Rudolf Steiner made it clear that the very activity of studying the content of anthroposophy is to embark upon an inner training.

The book [*Intuitive Thinking as a Spiritual Path*] is a living organism, and to work one's way through the thoughts it contains is to undergo an inner training ...When Rosicrucians use the word "study" they do not mean it in the usual sense. The Rosicrucian meaning conveyed rather "living in pure thought."

I tried to write a book—my *Philosophy of Freedom [Intuitive Thinking as a Spiritual Path]*—for people wanting to develop sense-free thinking ..it is a thought organism, intended as guidance for what the Rosicrucians called “study.”

Rudolf Steiner, Munich Conference, 1907

The study of anthroposophy has layers of meaning. We may at first read anthroposophical material in the same manner as any other written content, but in time we can come to appreciate Steiner’s books and lectures, not only for their content but for the new capacity of thinking they develop. “The study of anthroposophy” leads to “anthroposophical study” in the sense that, “through their own power,” individuals extend their innate capacity for sense-bound thinking into a capacity for “sense-free thinking.” Furthermore, the development of sense-free thinking is the ground from which our potential to become free spirits unfolds.

Of course, Steiner uses the term “free” in a particular way: “Freedom of action is thinkable only from the standpoint of ethical individualism.” (Rudolf Steiner, *Intuitive Thinking as a Spiritual Path*).

Archiati elaborates the relationship between individuality and freedom as follows:

True humanity will arise within mankind to the extent to which each human being comes to individualize himself realizing his individuality in an increasingly pure and consistent way.

...the individualization of the will, as a process of increasing consciousness, has nothing to do with the egotism of the lower ego -for this is not individual at all. We can recognize real individuality by its spiritual and intuiting character, which can, in turn, only be grasped by thinking.

It has been my concern to show how urgent and necessary it is to recognize in Rudolf Steiner’s *Philosophy of Freedom* the earnest task of forming and salvaging the free individuality, which is both specifically Christian and human. This moral task is the most urgent of our times: the ego-directed, Christ-imbued individuality is threatened on all sides ....

Pietro Archiati, *From Christianity to Christ*

Steiner is unequivocal in asserting the profound significance for the development of individual freedom:

The forces of Ahriman, which would otherwise have worked on the earth in what had fallen from the gods, were thus countered by the Christ force .... As a consequence of this, man now has the possibility of putting everything he possesses on freedom’s side of the scale, of pursuing a path without reservation individualistic, for moral fantasy is to be found only in the individual. That is why my *Philosophy of Freedom* has been called a philosophy of individualism in the most extreme sense. It had to be such because it is also the most Christian of philosophies ....

Rudolf Steiner, Dornach, May 7, 1922

Both Steiner and Archiati have indicated that the unfolding of “real individuality” is tied to the development of sense-free thinking or as having a “spiritual and intuiting character; which can, in turn, only be grasped by thinking.” Henri Bortoft helps clarify the nature of this intuitive thinking:

There is now a growing body of evidence to support the view that there are two major modes of human consciousness which are complementary. In our technical-scientific culture we have specialized in the development of only one of these modes, to which our educational system is geared almost exclusively. This is the analytical mode of consciousness.

The holistic mode of consciousness is complementary to this analytical one .... When consciousness is thus restructured into an organ of holistic perception, the mind functions intuitively instead of intellectually. There is a lot of confusion and misunderstanding about intuition, as if it were something intangible and mysterious. But in fact it is a very dear and precise notion...

Etymologically, “intuition” means “seeing into”. The authentic unity of the phenomenon... is literally a further dimension of the phenomenon itself which is seen as such only when the mind functions in the intuitive mode of “seeing into.” The intellectual mind misses this dimension, because it is not visible in the analytical mode of consciousness, and therefore must compensate for what is missing by adding on its own thought construction to the phenomenon as it is presented to sensory experience ....

Thus intuition is connected with a change of consciousness, and moreover in a way which can be made quite precise and not just left vague. It now follows that Goethe’s procedures are practical exercises for educating the mind to function intuitively instead of intellectually, leading to a science which is intuitive instead of organized intellectually.

Henri Bortoft, *The Wholeness of Nature*, pp. 57-69

Weaving together the reflections of these thinkers presents us with an imagination of adult development that can shine before us as a guiding star for adult education:

The purpose of adult education in the light of Anthroposophy is to create opportunities for individuals, through the study of anthroposophy and related disciplines, to extend their powers of perception and thinking from the purely sense-bound to the sense-free, from analytical to intuitive thinking.

Adult education in the light of anthroposophy is the schooling of a new mode of consciousness that participates in the spiritual forces active in the physical world. This intuitive or participatory consciousness does not replace but complements the analytical or on-looker consciousness we already possess.

Developing intuitive consciousness provides the practical foundation for becoming ethical individuals.

If the development of intuitive consciousness and ethical individualism are the concrete aims of adult education, then the adult educator has the very clear task of learning how to guide and support individuals, “through their own power,” to cultivate intuitive consciousness and practice ethical individualism. In the following sentences Rudolf Steiner speaks about the way a teacher can best serve the education of children. His insights are equally applicable to the way an adult educator can serve the development of another adult:

All instruction must therefore be permeated by art, by human individuality, for of more value than any thought-out curriculum is the individuality of the teacher and educator. It is individuality that must work in the school ....

Steiner goes on to make clear that individuality is not a given but rather something which each individual must develop through rigorous inner activity:

...We must purify our thinking and mould it into will. To this end we must make our individuality stronger and stronger, and this happens when we work our way through to pure thinking .... Whoever works his way to pure thinking as I have described in my *Philosophy of Freedom* will

find that this does not bring him simply to the possession of a few concepts which make up a philosophic system, but that it lays hold of his own individuality, of his pre-earthly existence ....

Thus it is a bringing down of pre-earthly existence into the life of the human being. But it is also the preparation for the vocation of teacher, of educator. Through study we cannot become teachers. We cannot drill others into being teachers, because each one of us is already a teacher. Every human being is a teacher, but he is sleeping and must be awakened, and art is the awakener. Nevertheless he will still be a good teacher because it does not depend on the giving out of knowledge but on activating the individuality of the soul upon the pre-earthly existence. Then it is really the child who educates himself through us. And that is the truth. In reality we do not educate at all. We only disturb the process of education when we intervene too energetically. We only educate when we behave in such a way that through our own behavior the child can educate himself.

R Steiner, *The Younger Generation*, pp.142-145

If the development of the teacher's true individuality is so essential for the development of the child's individuality, surely this applies all the more for the adult educator serving the adult student.

The office of adult educator is no less awesome than the office of physician, priest or class teacher. No one is truly worthy of such an office, but life demands that we do our best. That we will again and again fall short of the spiritual need is a given. The greater harm is in not recognizing or aspiring to be worthy of such an office through a mighty striving towards becoming an ethical individual.

Is this too lofty and unrealistic an ideal for the educator, both of children and adults? If we look upon the spiritual needs of our time with a clear heart and mind, do we have the luxury of avoiding this high challenge? We enter the office of the adult educator only when and to the degree that we strive to practice ethical individualism. The following thoughts from Steiner can help us see that the practice of ethical individualism is not an abstract ideal but one founded in the spiritual realities of our time:

No one can adequately describe the impulse that has entered human evolution, unless he draws attention to the relationship of ego to ego, free from the sheaths, which is emerging in a totally new way, though slowly, today .... In our age we are going from experiencing the other man through sheaths, to direct experience of the other man's ego.

And this is the difficulty in our life of soul; we have to live into this quite new relation between man and man. Do not think that we must learn all the teachings about the ego. It is not a question of learning theories about the ego ....

But in the sense of modern evolution we must increasingly experience human beings without sheaths. This has gradually arisen. But in a certain sense men are afraid of it. If we had a cultural psychology then it would describe, in connection with recent centuries, men's fear of being obliged to consort with human beings whose egos are unsheathed. It is a kind of terror. In the form of a picture, one might say that those people who in the last century really experienced their own times have frightened eyes ....

The great transition to this newer age consists in man meeting man free of his sheaths - according to his inner disposition, to what the soul demands; but the capacities for this untrammelled encounter have not yet been acquired; above all we have not yet acquired the possibility for a relation between ego and ego. But this must be prepared for by education. That is why the question of education is of such burning importance.

And now let me tell you quite frankly when the great step forward in educational method can first be made towards the individual ego-men of the new age .... We shall work rightly in education

only when we have learned to feel a certain bashfulness about speaking about it at all, when we feel abashed at the idea of talking about education ....

But under the cultural conditions of today we have to do many things that ought to make us ashamed. The time will come when we shall no longer need to talk about education. Today these ways of thinking are lacking.

R. Steiner, *The Younger Generation*, pp.157-62

## **Two Models for Anthroposophical Adult Education**

This essay continues on the assumption that the aim of adult education in the light of anthroposophy is to serve the development of intuitive consciousness and ethical individualism. Secondly, it will present the view that the form of the educational activity - the lesson, the course, and the educational organization as a whole - and not simply the content - is practically relevant to developing these capacities. Furthermore, we will see that these developmental goals provide the criteria by which to compare the Waldorf College model of adult education with the School of Spiritual Science model.

How do the Waldorf College and the School of Spiritual Science forms of adult education compare in supporting the cultivation of intuitive consciousness and the practice of ethical individualism:

- Within the faculty?
- Within the students?

### **The Faculty**

The Waldorf College model usually assumes the form of Programs and Program Directors while the School of Spiritual Science has Sections and Section leaders. Are these just different names for essentially equivalent activities, or do the different names reflect a different quality of spiritual activity?

Rudolf Steiner did not abstractly create departments when he instituted the Sections of the School. Instead, he invited a handful of mature students whose insight, practice and initiative in a field of activity he could recognize as serving the life of the Anthroposophical Society. It was the ability of these individuals to unite outer practice to spiritual insight and a freely chosen sense of responsibility to the spiritual worlds that qualified them to assume the office of Section leaders.

With the form of the School of Spiritual Science as a model for adult education the term faculty member refers to someone who may be a teacher, but who is not only or primarily a teacher. A member of a Section of the School has developed a faculty of insight into the spiritual issues of his or her field and would exhibit a mature level of practice within their discipline. From such faculties leadership is born in the form of initiatives of various kinds, according to the nature of the Section work. Teaching is only one possible activity, and even that would take a form appropriate to the nature of the discipline.

With the Waldorf College model, the term faculty member is usually synonymous with teacher. Such teachers are expected to be authorities on the spiritual issues of their field and for the most part this is based on past, if not present, practice in that field. However, it is usually the case in the Waldorf College institutions that any present practice is done on the side. Teaching and related administrative activities are so prominent that no time or inner forces, not to mention financial resources, are allocated to creative research and practice. The primary reasons teaching predominates to the point of eliminating, or at least not formally embracing, faculty practice is twofold:

1. The needs of the students are seen to be primary and classroom teaching is assumed to be the best, if not only way to serve those needs:
2. The financial foundation of these institutions is primarily the tuition from students and gifts tied to the training of as many students as possible.

What are the spiritual issues underlying this difference between being a faculty member of a Program in contrast to that of a Section?

All anthroposophical adult education institutions including those based on the Waldorf College model will surely include in the content of their activities a study of *Intuitive Thinking As A Spiritual Path* where the concept of ethical individualism is introduced. Although self-determination rises up as an inner need in almost everyone today, humankind remains fundamentally cynical of individualism; that individuals are inherently egoistic and therefore antisocial. The Waldorf College model is a paradox in that it offers content on ethical individualism while in its form it remains distrustful of it.

For example, it could be argued that individual faculty members cannot be objective about the relationship of their work to that of other faculty; that the faculty as a whole cannot be expected to create a balanced program of activities. The need for a form that unifies the diversity of activities can seem self-evident. It is assumed that the only logical and efficient way to achieve a unified order is to have one person, the Program Director, create an organizational form into which all the activities can be accommodated in a balanced and fair manner. In the name of pragmatism this approach short-circuits one of the central spiritual challenges of our time, namely to create unity through diversity rather than through uniformity. To create unity is not enough; the way the unity is achieved is everything.

Again we turn to Henri Bortoft to see that we come to two very different kinds of unity depending on whether we exercise analytical or intuitive consciousness. Bortoft develops these thoughts in relation to scientific knowing, but they are equally relevant to the way unity is created in the organization of human affairs:

Once it has been recognized that the unity of the phenomena is not given in sensory experience, the question arises naturally: Is this unity simply imposed on the experience of the senses by the mind, or is it there in the phenomenon itself with the mind functioning as an organ of non-sensory perception?

There is no doubt that, to a far greater degree than we usually realize, the mind organizes experience by imposing an organizational framework ....

According to the understanding of the intellectual mind, the unity of experience is produced by unification i.e. unity is unification. It is the synthetic unity of an organizational synthesis. Now this is certainly true for the intellectual mind. But the unity which Goethe perceived in the color phenomenon is not a unity that is imposed by the mind .... It is not reached by a process of intellectual thought, but by a change of consciousness ....

In terms of this distinction we can say that Goethe perceived the belonging together of the colors, instead of trying to make them belong together. We will now see that the difference between these two perspectives of belonging together and belonging together, corresponding to the two kinds of unity, can be understood in terms of two different modes of consciousness.

The factor which matters particularly here is the way of understanding unity... Whereas the customary way of seeing unity eliminates differences and promotes commonality, Goethe's organic unity is a way of seeing which includes differences. It avoids reducing multiplicity to uniformity.

Henri Bortoft, *The Wholeness of Nature*

In social life analytical consciousness imposes unity by suppressing diversity, and requiring uniformity. If analytical consciousness prevails among the individuals of an organization, such as the faculty members of an educational institution, there will be lack of unity because each individual is limited to his or her own interests. More typically, an organizational structure is constructed to insure unity and avoid anarchy. To analytical consciousness an organizational structure seems as self-evident a need as the need to have a building to live and work in. This form of unity is needed so long as individuals have not discovered their capacity for intuitive consciousness whereby they will seek to create organizational unity out of the complementary nature of the diverse insights and capacities of their colleagues. The individuality of faculty members would become the very lifeblood of institutional unity rather than its antithesis. Rudolf Steiner asks and answers the obvious question:

But how is it possible for humans to live together socially if everyone is striving to express his or her own individuality? This objection is characteristic of misguided moralism, which imagines that a society of human beings is possible only if they are all united by a commonly determined ethical order. Such moralism fails to understand the unity of the world of ideas. It cannot conceive that the world of ideas that is active in me is none other than the one that is at work in my neighbor.

Rudolf Steiner, *Intuitive Thinking as a Spiritual Path*

In his book *From Christianity to Christ*, Pietro Archiati builds upon Steiner's thinking about individuality. The view he develops has such far-reaching implications for collegial relations that they are offered here at some length:

No two individuals can share an identical will. Every individual person is a species of its own. Many people assert that love is an expression of two or more individuals "wanting the same" as each other. In terms of *The Philosophy of Freedom*, though, this "identical will" is the essence of immorality. Wherever people "want the same" individuality is extinguished. Since human individuality consists of the sum both of each person's moral good and of their moral responsibility, we can say with full justification that any prevention or suppression of our potential for individualized will represents the very essence of immorality.

The future of human social order can never consist in people wanting the same as each other. This apparently common will is always the will of one or several that is forced upon the others. Of course people have to accommodate each other, agree upon things so that they can work together. But such agreements are only an outer framework, not an expression of each individual's actual will. Within this larger framework, each person must know his own individual will. If the individual will of each does not come to expression within the outer framework, it remains an empty vessel with no purpose. The enormous difficulties which people experience nowadays in their common work, in their relationships, do not derive from not wanting the same as each other, but from the fact that most of them do not know what they individually want.

The more a person recognizes and acts upon his true individual will—the will of his higher ego—the more his intentions and actions will differ from those of others. There arises the most wonderful multiplicity and variety of ego-expressions; and it would be quite unthinkable that two individuals should want to will the same, for then they would stop being individuals. What is right and proper for one person at a particular moment is not right and proper for someone else.

At this point one must reply to the objections of a misconceived morality, which asks how people can possibly work together if every individual wills, or ought to will, something different from every other. But just as the future of the free ego depends upon a continually increasing

individualization of the will, so the future of society depends upon thinking becoming increasingly universal ....

At present, humanity encounters great difficulties because most people consider such a communion of truth and objectivity to be far-fetched and [too] insubstantial an aim. Wherever thinking does not manage to unite people, they strive instead for a commonality of feeling and will impulses. But this ‘common ground’ is a communion not of spirit but of nature. The only possible way to achieve true communion with one another is to strengthen the thinking so that it becomes an organ of objective understanding of the phenomena of the world ....

Rudolf Steiner speaks in his lectures on *The Social Future* of three basic social forms .... In ancient times there existed a social structure controlled by “power”: a single will - not human but divine ruled the social organism .... The individual will had not yet awoken within separate human beings. Rudolf Steiner calls the second stage, in which we still find ourselves today, the “bargaining society.” In this phase, the individual will has woken within each person .... But the capacity to harmonize these will-atoms... is hardly developed at all. All the distinct will-directions, therefore batter against each other; one can only stand back and wait to see what the chance outcome of all these conflicting directions will be.

The third social phase offers the promise of great hope for humanity. Rudolf Steiner calls it the “communing society” .... In the communing society, the multiplicity of individual will impulses are harmonized with one another, without them being compromised or constrained; the distinctness of every single individual is, as far as possible, supported and encouraged. In the bargaining society by contrast, each person’s will is constantly conflicting and hindering the will of every other person.

In Rudolf Steiner’s vision, the communing society is underpinned by a striving to form the “comprehensive will” — another quite new term: notice that he does not speak of a “common will,” which would mean a return to a single, shared will— as existed in the power society .... The concept “comprehensive” or “total will” means something quite different —an integration of the two dimensions: the individual and the social.

To form the total will it is necessary to affirm the individual will of each person, to create a shared, outer framework which allows all individual wills to mutually foster and advance each other. Of course this is a much harder undertaking than reducing everything to a single will. But easier is not better. Freedom is harder than unfreedom, but not worse.

Pietro Archiati, *From Christianity to Christ*

We have established the need for the adult educator to be a living model of ethical individualism. One of the primary arenas where life challenges us to develop ethical individualism is in our personal and work related relationships. Although lengthy, the above sequence of quotations prepares us to see that every social relationship challenges us to develop a “comprehensive or total will” instead of continuing to bargain, will against will, or fall back into a “common will.”

*To form the total will it is necessary to affirm the individual will of each person, to create a shared, outer framework which allows all individual wills to mutually foster and advance each other.*

For a faculty of adult educators to form their work together out of a comprehensive will rather than a common will or a bargaining will is to practice ethical individualism. The practice of ethical individualism does not depend on any outer organizational form; it can and must be striven for in any and every context. But life must have form and certain forms challenge us to ethical individualism while others allow us to avoid it.

We might contemplate that the reason Rudolf Steiner formed the School of Spiritual Science as he did was specifically to challenge students of anthroposophy towards the practice of ethical individualism in the way they work with and take initiative out of anthroposophy. This is not to say that ethical individualism cannot be exercised within the Waldorf College form of adult education, but tracing the history of traditional academic forms reveals that they have their roots in the analytical mode of consciousness.

For all its common-sense practicality, the Waldorf College model is formed through the synthetic unity of an organizational synthesis. It is a unity which “eliminates differences and promotes commonality;” it reduces multiplicity to uniformity. A diversity of activities is offered, but in a manner that requires all disciplines to conform to a uniform format of academic time and space slots.

In contrast, the School of Spiritual Science model of adult education does not impose a unity upon the diversity of disciplines and initiative of the different faculty, but allows it to unfold from the diversity of the resident faculty.

In this sense the form of the School of Spiritual Science can be appreciated as a new model for any institution aspiring to serve contemporary cultural life and the spiritual needs of contemporary adults insofar as it promotes the practice of ethical individualism. It does so in at least two ways. Firstly, it challenges the faculty members to heighten their individual sense of responsibility for taking initiative within their discipline. Secondly, it challenges each individual faculty to find a free relationship to the inner activity and initiative of other faculty members.

Each faculty member would be challenged to expand beyond his or her individual will in order to awaken to the comprehensive will that embraces the will of colleagues, and from which the form of the adult institution would arise and continually evolve. All that would be sought is the minimal organization needed by each faculty to realize the creative will impulses living in them to which they themselves feel accountable to the spiritual worlds and in a manner that ideally complements, but at the very least does not obstruct, the free initiative of other faculty.

This way of working is fraught with challenges and problems. Such challenges and risks can be avoided by creating institutions and programs that have a pre-determined organizing principle which students and faculty may appreciate. The price to be paid is that it may side-step rather than directly challenge the faculty to practice ethical individualism.

## **The Student**

How does the ideal of ethical individualism pertain to the students? Let us begin with a general comparison of what newcomers encounter if they meet anthroposophy through the Society in contrast to an anthroposophical adult institution.

The Society offers a very loose structure of activities which varies in intensity from area to area, consisting of one or more study groups, occasional visiting lectures, possibly some artistic courses. In some areas such activities are sponsored by a branch of the Society, but with or without a branch, the activities always depend on individual initiative. For the most part, newcomers are left entirely on their own to determine what activities they will participate in. There is no one, except in the most informal, spontaneous way, advising, let alone requiring that they must read certain books or attend certain courses. There is no one overseeing their progress or setting goals as to what they must know and develop in any particular time. With an art course or lecture a teacher/student relationship exists, but this is of limited scope. For the most part, there is no formal distinction between teacher and student. Certainly, in a study

group, some will share their knowledge more than others and in that sense function as a teacher. But this is all informal; the prevailing mood is that of everyone being a student of varying kinds and degrees.

Except for the admission to a lecture or course and perhaps a modest branch or Society membership fee, the study of anthroposophy within the Society costs very little. Lastly, the students remain in a normal life situation earning their living where they offer some service to the world.

By contrast, an adult education institution offers a much more defined structure. Typically, a newcomer meets the possibility of a full-time program, either a general year introducing an overview of anthroposophy and the activities arising from it, or some specialized training such as preparing to become a Waldorf teacher. Some efforts are made to accommodate individual scheduling or financial restraints, which allow for such

trainings to extend over a longer period. Nevertheless, the student meets a prescribed program of studies which is the same for all students. There is a clearly defined distinction between students and the faculty. The faculty will certainly speak of themselves as students of anthroposophy, but their role as teachers is unambiguous. This is embodied in the form of programs with one faculty member as Program Director determining the course of study to be followed by all students alike. Furthermore, especially when it is a matter of preparing to become a teacher, a Program Director assumes responsibility for the knowledge and capacities the adult student will acquire within the prescribed period of usually two years. Some efforts towards extending such trainings to three or more years does not change the fundamental premise that the Program Director and faculty take responsibility for the development of their students.

Included in this picture is the practical necessity that a student must pay large sums of money for such a full-time training. Likewise, as a full-time student, one is of necessity a student full-time. Obviously a student is not studying all the time, but his life is that of a student.

Are these two equally valid approaches that suit different people? What are the implications of these two paths in the light of serving the development of ethical individualism within the student?

Clearly, there are logistical issues regarding when and where students can work with particular faculty members. Also, there is the legitimate concern that, left to their own devices, students will choose subjects and faculty based on sympathy or antipathy and not on their objective value. These are considerations which must be addressed, but they are not the only factors.

All individuals come with particular aptitudes and gifts from their past experience, and unique potential capacities and aspirations for the future. Every adult has certain capacities that are developed and inevitably areas that are not developed. Higher education serves the purpose of developing what is undeveloped in the way of knowledge and other capacities. But is it the teacher or the student who should be responsible for deciding what knowledge and capacities the student is to develop?

The ideal of ethical individualism is founded on the reality that there are deep spiritual reasons why each person comes with certain capacities developed and others undeveloped. And yet, there is a powerful inclination to organize educational institutions, including Waldorf and anthroposophical ones, in a manner that leads to uniformity of knowledge and capacities.

In relation to the endless differences between individualities, it is barbaric to demand from someone with greater abilities that he/she should study medicine for the same length of time as someone less capable. It must be clearly brought into consideration, that one individual can complete in two years, what another needs five years for.

For the average student, it may be desirable to learn ways of working down into the details with the help of a teacher, but one should not consider only the average student .... What is good for the average student can hinder the exceptional one in the unfolding of his/her personality. Then such things have a withering effect on his/her independence. And when it is demanded that every student must partake of a certain number of practical exercises, then one is creating through such a measure chains for individuals who want to go their own way.

Rudolf Steiner (1898-99) "Essays on Higher Education" in the *Magazine for Literature*, 1898-99

Education in the light of evolving ethical individualism suggests that a wisdom greater than our own guides each individual to his or her particular constellation of capacities and aspirations. Human life is a challenge to develop insight and capacities beyond those given to us but the process by which we develop is more important than the results. Education is a vehicle by which we can unfold our latent capacities that will surely make us more whole and helpful human beings. Great harm, however, can be done in the name of serving human development if it is imposed from outside instead of unfolding according to the inner lawfulness of each individuality.

Actually only the individual can intuitively discover the developmental laws of his or her own being. The spiritually significant issue is the individual's effort at developing new insight and capacities, not merely the attainment. Therefore any educational process between teacher and student which does not allow and actively support individual owning of questions and working towards answers does not serve the development of ethical individualism.

Here is reason for serious pause. Is the Waldorf College model not founded on the premise that there are certain things everyone needs to know in order to be a student of anthroposophy or to be a competent, if not good, Waldorf teacher? Does it allow for different individuals to have different questions and inclinations at different times? Are such individual impulses to be marginalized as personal sympathy or antipathy, or are they to be honored and affirmed as intuitions stirring from the core of the individual's being?

If the ideal of ethical individualism is the guiding light for adult education, then the developmental effect of the form, and not just the content, of the educational experience must be assessed in this light. In this context, the form of the School of Spiritual Science offers a framework that directly serves the faculty in their cultivation of ethical individualism. It serves the students insofar as they meet in the faculty living models of striving to be ethical individuals. These are additional benefits to the students.

The School of Spiritual Science model would offer a student some activities working with one or another faculty, but not all day everyday. Students would engage in two kinds of activities: those initiated by a faculty and those initiated by themselves. Whether in a lecture format, seminar or workshop activity, the intention for attending faculty-initiated activities is to enter into the faculty members' ongoing work, whether it be research, artistic or applied. The student would come to learn from the faculty, but not as an end in itself. The entire educational context would make clear that the only reason to enter into someone else's work is to stimulate the students towards discovering their own work by entering into the different ways individuals work with and out of anthroposophy. Presumably some ways even in unfamiliar fields will speak to a student, giving a positive impulse, while other ways even in familiar fields will not speak. But even negative responses can serve the positive steps of finding one's life questions and learning to work at them.

Parallel to working with faculty in this way the students would be expected to face the threshold of taking up a research question or extending their capacities within a familiar or new discipline. The ratio of the two kinds of activities would vary from the beginning depending on the disposition of the student.

Generally speaking, one would expect that the amount of time given to self-initiated activity would increase over time. Throughout the educational process, each student would meet regularly with one or more mentors.

This brings us to a sensitive issue regarding the way a faculty mentor speaks to a student but even more critically how faculty speak *about* a student. Simply put, the relationship between adult faculty and adult student can be nothing less than ego to ego, individuality to individuality. It is not the actual attainment of this relationship in every moment, but the unwavering striving--for it, particularly from the side of the faculty, that is essential. In other words, an astral body to astral body relationship falls out of the professional and into a personal relationship. In many instances such personal relationships can be an enhancement so long as the faculty member can distinguish between the personal and the professional relationship.

Distinguishing between an ego and astral relationship influences the way faculty inwardly carry their students. The way the faculty members feel responsible for the development of their students is also a factor. To care for and inwardly carry students does not mean the same as being responsible for the development of their students. You can appropriately feel responsible only for something that you have the insight and capacity to accomplish. No one can accomplish the inner development of someone else. It is a misplaced sense of caring for any student, child or adult, to assume responsibility for ensuring that a student will know or be capable of any capacity within a pre-determined time frame. Not only is this not possible, but it is out of such a misplaced sense of responsibility that a faculty member can trespass against the ideal of ethical individualism — that is to violate the inner lawfulness by which each individual comes to new insight and capacity, even heals significant weaknesses or one-sidedness in the freedom of his or her own time and way.

In an astral to astral relationship, one can say anything, any way, any time. In an ego to ego relationship, one does not offer advice unless directly asked and furthermore one responds with objective ideas and/or disciplines which allow the individual the freedom to understand or not, and to take up something or not, in his or her-own way and time.

In conclusion, is ethical individualism an unrealistic, Utopian ideal for adult educators and students or is it a real, attainable ideal? If we mean, can it be realized in a day, a month or a year, then it is unrealistic. The issue is not can we achieve an end result, but rather do we find new meaning and life simply through the striving toward such a goal irrespective of progress.

The institution is the daily, developmentally necessary temptation of the individual. It exercises a form of seduction by comforting him with its common aims, absorbing him with the mechanisms of its orientation towards official roles, and tempting him to relinquish his own free, unique individuality. The will of his true ego works daily to overcome this temptation, and to allow egohood to assert itself by combating any assumptions that it is automatically present and constant, or that it is an abstract task or mission.

Freedom can only ever be grasped anew in every new, wakeful moment; the individual, specific ego must wrest itself continually from the inertia of what confronts it. This happens when the cognitive Intuition of an institution's true being and function—as the focal point of an outer framework to facilitate the realization of individual potential—is complemented by the moral Intuition of an individual will; in other words, the will which is a unique, self-directed ego forms within a particular situation through its “moral imagination.”

The future of both Christianity and humanity depends upon this: will each person learn to form institutions into instruments for the unfolding of human individuality, or will the outer power of institutions be regarded as so impressive —because at least they are seen to “achieve” something

“real”—that people consider them something more important than the human being himself, than his physical, soul and spiritual evolution?

Pietro Archiati, *From Christianity to Christ*

Having compared the Waldorf College and the School of Spiritual Science models of adult education in the light of ethical individualism, we must return to our original question:

*What is the relationship of the adult education institutions to the Anthroposophical Society?*

This essay began with the premise that the adult education institutions and the Anthroposophical Society share the common task of serving the life and cultivation of anthroposophy and thereby serve the spiritual development of contemporary adults. The cultivation and practice of ethical individualism, both by faculty and students, has been presented as the central ideal which can guide us to determine, not only the content, but also the form of the adult educational process. Furthermore, the thought has been introduced that Rudolf Steiner gave the School of Spiritual Science the form it has because it best serves the cultivation and practice of ethical individualism. With such perspectives the anthroposophical adult education institutions can contemplate the merits of the form of the School of Spiritual Science, as a model for their educational activity. If they were to embody elements of this form, they could do so while remaining totally independent of the Society. However, the following question is inevitable:

*What are the reasons for the adult institutions to remain independent of the Society?*

It is not in question that all anthroposophical adult institutions must be born and develop out of free initiative, unfettered by any centralized control. But, at the same time, valid concerns for autonomy do not in themselves constitute a reason for the institutions to be separate from the Society. If we assume that such concerns would be addressed and resolved, then other considerations of even greater significance come to the fore.

What can it mean for our understanding and actions that the Anthroposophical Society is not just another administrative organization, but is the physical/life body of the spiritual Being of Anthroposophy? What significance is to be found in the fact that, in forming the Anthroposophical Society, Rudolf Steiner did not merely create an organization, but served as a midwife mediating the incarnation of this Being into a life body in order to be active in the realm of earth existence?

Can we so easily turn away from the possibility that the life forces flowing into and through the anthroposophical institutions are contributing, if only in part, to a withering of the Society, and thereby contributing to a life-threatening decline of the physical/life sheath of the Being of Anthroposophy?

Perhaps the situation is less dire than this picture suggests. Is it possible that through the years this bodily sheath of Anthroposophia has metamorphosed and that we may simply be misreading a change in appearance for a decline in health? Could it be that it is only our perception and thinking that has not kept up with the developments of the Society's body by judging the adult institutions to be outside it when in reality they are inside it? If the Anthroposophical Society is ailing, perhaps it is because it is unable to integrate an essential part of itself into its being as a whole.

Would the life body of the Anthroposophical Society find renewed forces if the leadership of the adult institutions and of the Society, in freedom, formally declared these institutions to be organs of the Anthroposophical Society?

The implication of our deliberations is not solely a matter of re-thinking and re-constituting the adult institutions but equally rediscovering and re-founding the Anthroposophical Society. For example, what does it mean for the Society to see its activities as opportunities and challenges to cultivate intuitive consciousness and practice ethical individualism? What new initiatives might come to life through the Society if we were to realize more fully Steiner's intention that the Anthroposophical Society be an association of aspiring free individuals?

What is the use of telling people repeatedly that the Society is not a sect and then behave as if it were one?... That is why, if the Anthroposophical Society were standing on its proper ground, the 'we' should never play a role. One repeatedly hears anthroposophists saying we, the Society, have this or that view in relation to the outside world .... In ancient times it was possible for societies to face the world with such conformity. Now it is no longer possible. In our time each person who is a member of a society like this one has to be a really free human being. Views, thought, opinions are held by individuals. The Society does not have an opinion. And that should be expressed in the way that individuals speak about the Society. The 'we' should actually disappear.

There is something else connected with this. If this "we" disappears, people in the Society will not feel as if they are in a pool which supports them and which they can call on for support when it matters. But if a person has expressed his own views in the Society and has to represent himself he will also feel fully responsible for what he says as an individual.

This feeling of responsibility is something which has to grow as the Society remains a small group of people. The way in which that has been put into practice so far has not succeeded in making the world at large understand the Anthroposophical Society as an eminently modern society, because this practice has repeatedly led to a situation in which the image which has been set before the public is we believe, we are of the opinion, it is our conception of the world. So today the world outside holds the view that the Society is a compacted mass which holds certain collective opinions to which one has to subscribe as a member. Of course this will deter any independently minded person.

Rudolf Steiner, Dornach, June 16, 1923

There is every reason for both the Anthroposophical Society and the anthroposophical adult institutions to be organs through which individuals meet and take up the challenge of ethical individualism. The Being of Anthroposophia depends on the will of individuals to seek every practical means, both within the Society and in the institutions, of putting everything "on freedom's side of the scale, of pursuing a path without reservation individualistic ...."

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